

NH Integrated Emergency Volunteer Training Conference

June 3, 2023

360° OF RESPONDER HEALTH & SAFETY 50+ STRATEGIES

Jennifer Schirmer, LCMHC NCC CCTP CCISM
Disaster Behavioral Health Coordinator

Bureau of Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Recovery
Division of Public Health Services

OBJECTIVE

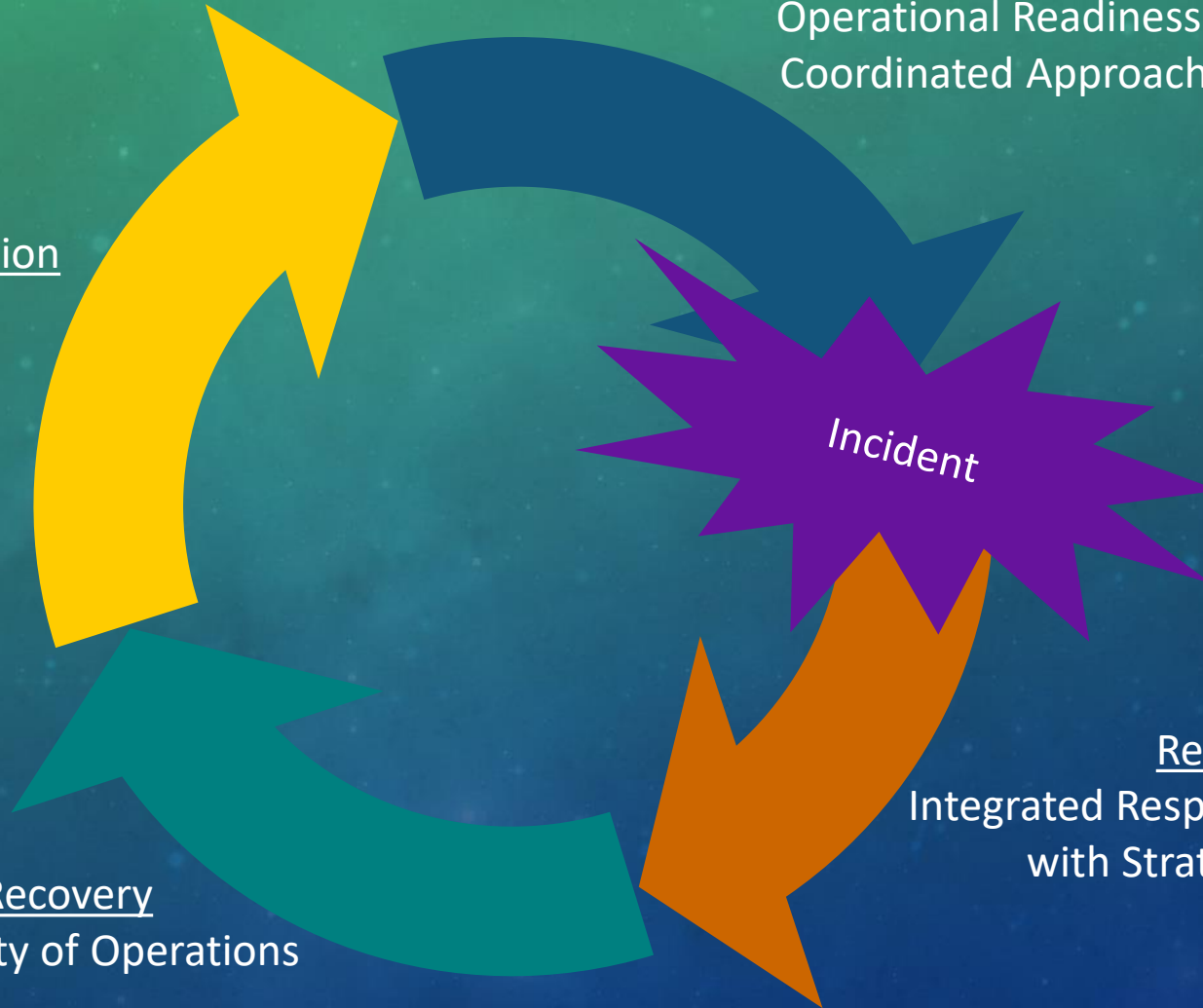
Prevention & Mitigation
Reduce Risk

Preparedness
Operational Readiness
Coordinated Approach

Incident

Response
Integrated Response in Accordance
with Strategic Priorities

Recovery
Continuity of Operations



OBJECTIVE



* Identify one strategy to use with purpose for each phase of mobilization

RESPONDER CHALLENGES

- Unprepared for their own reactions
- Repeated exposure to grim experiences
- Lack of sleep and fatigue
- Inability of being able to “do enough”
- Guilt over privileged access to resources
- Facing moral and ethical dilemmas
- Angry at seemingly ungrateful victims
- Frustrated by leadership decisions & policies
- Detached from personal supports

COMMON RESPONDER REACTIONS

On Scene

- Fear
- Disbelief
- Grief
- Numbness
- Sorrow
- Anguish

After the Response

- Anger, irritability and sorrow
- Detachment, shame, and guilt
- Dreams and nightmares
- Distractibility
- Intrusive thoughts
- Intrusive images (flashbacks, vivid nightmares)
- Fear, shattered sense of assumptions
- Fatigue, collapse

COMMON STRESS REACTIONS

Burnout / Compassion Fatigue / Secondary Trauma / Vicarious Trauma...

- Wounded ideals
- Cynicism
- Feeling unappreciated
- Loss of enthusiasm
- Heroic but reckless
- Self neglect
- Mistrust of others
- Antisocial behavior
- Excessive fatigue
- Lack of concentration
- Sleep disruption
- Inefficiency
- Misuse of alcohol, tobacco or drugs

E.O.G.



RESILIENCE



RESPONDER WELLBEING

- Actions can be taken before, during, and after an incident to help manage emotional impact of disaster response work **(planning)**
- Knowing possible psychological and physiological reactions of disaster trauma helps manage impact **(education and preparation)**
- Learn to manage stress **(develop coping skills)**

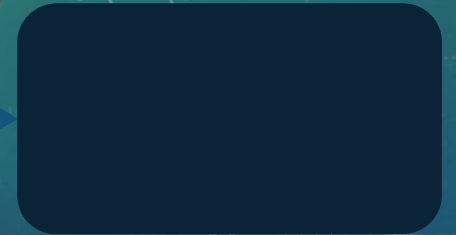
BEFORE: PRE-DEPLOYMENT

$$T + E = B$$

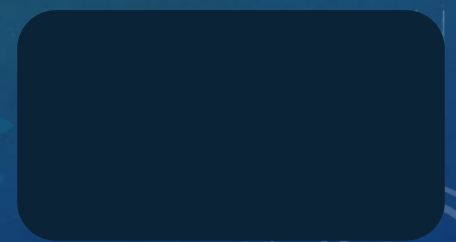


Event: Getting stuck in traffic

Thought: I'm going to be late & get in trouble



Thought: Why do I always get stuck behind stupid drivers



Thought: I have a good excuse for missing the boring meeting



Event \neq Trauma

BEFORE: PRE-DEPLOYMENT

- Responder training (the spirit of preparedness!)
- Brief beforehand – information decreases uncertainty
- Reinforce being part of a team
- Establish an area for breaks that is away from the incident site
- Establish a culture of acceptance
- Practice PROACTIVE resilience
- Introduce responding volunteers to one another – sense of shared experience

BEFORE: PRE-DEPLOYMENT

- Evaluate your individual circumstance and readiness
 - Your own personal losses or experiences
 - Working in your neighborhood
 - Assisting neighbors, family, friends, peers or coworkers who have also been impacted
 - Not feeling safe and secure
- Plan for transitions
- Explain to family members and friends what you may need:
 - Listen when you want to talk
 - Don't force you to talk



BEFORE: PRE-DEPLOYMENT

Self report inventories

- Perceived Stress Scale



Perceived Stress Scale – 10 (Cohen et al., version 2011)

1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?
2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?
3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and “stressed”?
4. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?
5. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?
6. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?
7. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?
8. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?
9. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that were outside your control?
10. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?

Almost Never Fairly Never Sometimes Very Often Often



DURING: MOBILIZATION

- HYDRATE
- Take a purposeful breath
- Get enough sleep
- Maintain a sense of routine
- Movement or exercise
- Focus on de-stressing nutrition
- Balance work, play, and rest
- Allow yourself to receive as well as to give
- Connect with others
- Use spiritual resources

DURING: MOBILIZATION

- Brief responders during identified operational periods – information decreases uncertainty
- Check in with responders and remind everyone they are part of a team
- Rest and regroup
- Take breaks away from the incident site
- Hydrate and refuel your body
- Be aware of changes in teammates
- Rotate teams and duties
- Phase out workers gradually

DURING: MOBILIZATION

1 Minute
Somatic
Release

**Unclench
Your Jaw**

**Drop Your
Shoulders**

**Shake Your
Hands Out**

**Move Your
Eyes Side to
Side**

**Stick Your
Tongue Out
and Exhale**

**Take 3 Deep
Belly Breaths**

DURING: MOBILIZATION

Rest, Information, Transition (RITs)

- Primary purpose: to provide support and information to operations personnel
- Consists of two main segments
 - 1) brief information presentation (10 minutes maximum)
 - 2) rest, food, refreshments (20 minutes approximately)
- Command then informs personnel of the next steps or tasks (reassignment, rest, transition home, etc.)



DURING: MOBILIZATION

Informational Intervention (Operational)

- Rest, Information, Transition (RITs)
 - Informational session for staff only
 - Provided once at the end of a unit's first exposure to a critical incident
 - *Some form of follow-up is usually required.*



AFTER: POST-DEPLOYMENT

- Operational Debriefing
 - After Action Review
 - Evaluation and Corrective Action Focused
- Critical Incident Stress Management Debriefing
 - Responder Health & Safety
 - Informational or Interactional
 - Structured Conversation, Reaction focused

AFTER: POST-DEPLOYMENT

Operational Briefing Challenges

- Time
- Available personnel
- Changing shifts
- Follow up
- When distress is recognized... next steps



AFTER: POST-DEPLOYMENT

- Individual or Group
- Interactional – structured conversation
- 3 Phase defusing



AFTER: POST-DEPLOYMENT

- **INTRODUCTION** – Introduce team; lay out the guidelines; lower anxiety about the process
- **EXPLORATION** – Allows a brief discussion of the experience. A brief “story” of the event
- **INFORMATION** – Provide information, normalize, teach, guidance, summarize key points



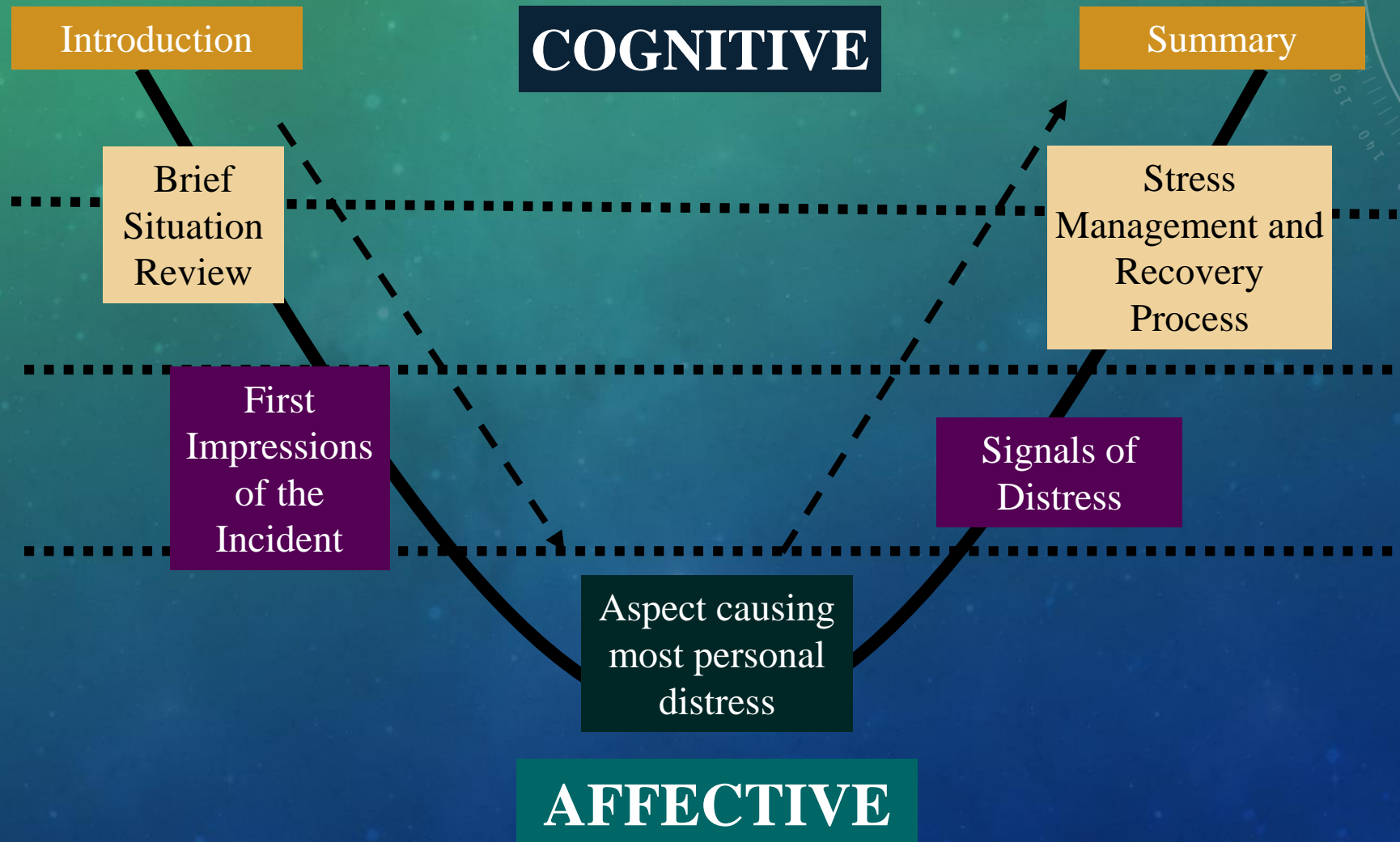
AFTER: POST-DEPLOYMENT

7 Phase Structured Debriefing

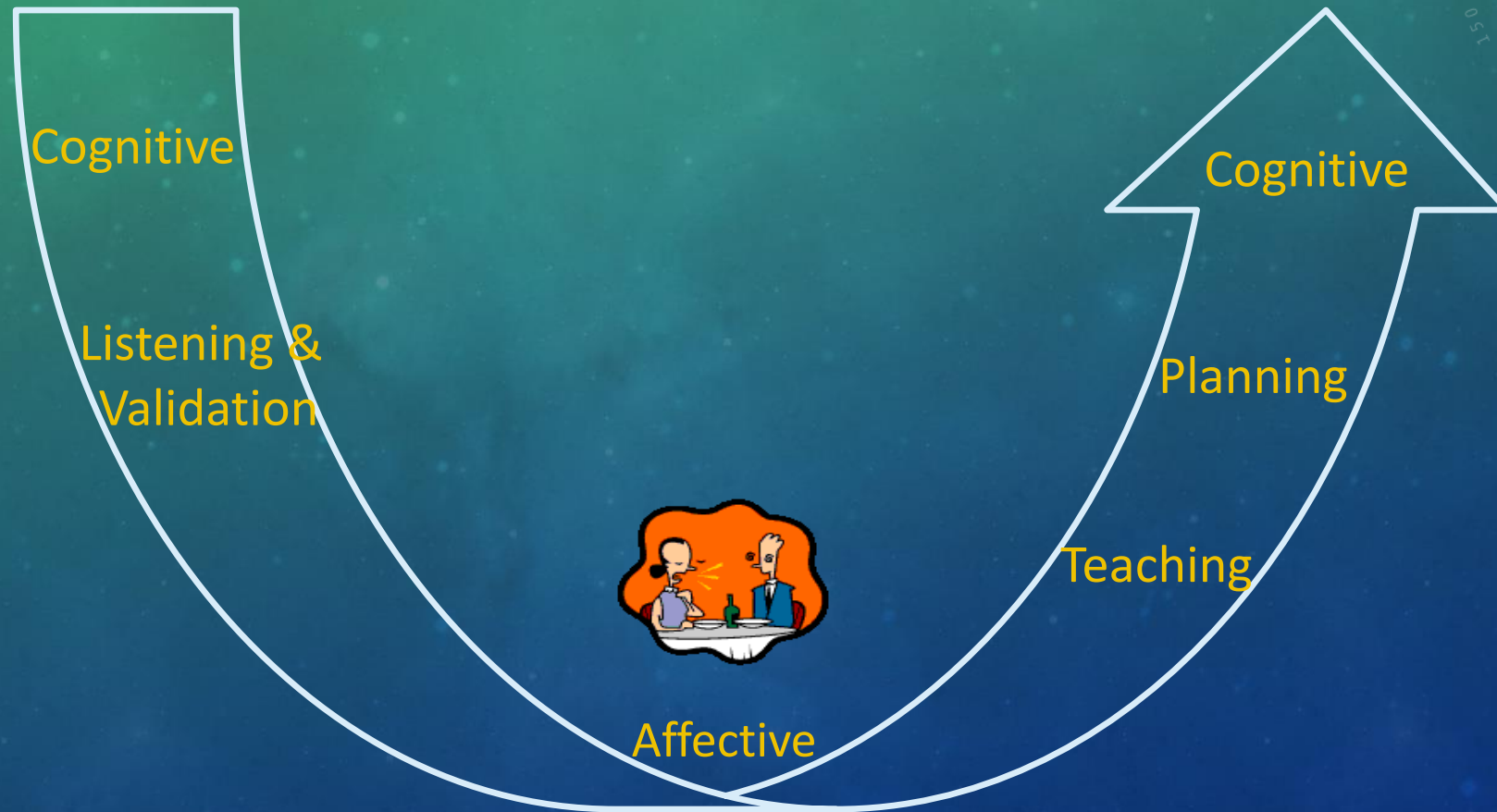
- Introduction
- Facts
- Thoughts
- Reactions
- Symptoms (what is lingering with you)
- Teaching
- Re-Entry



AFTER: POST-DEPLOYMENT

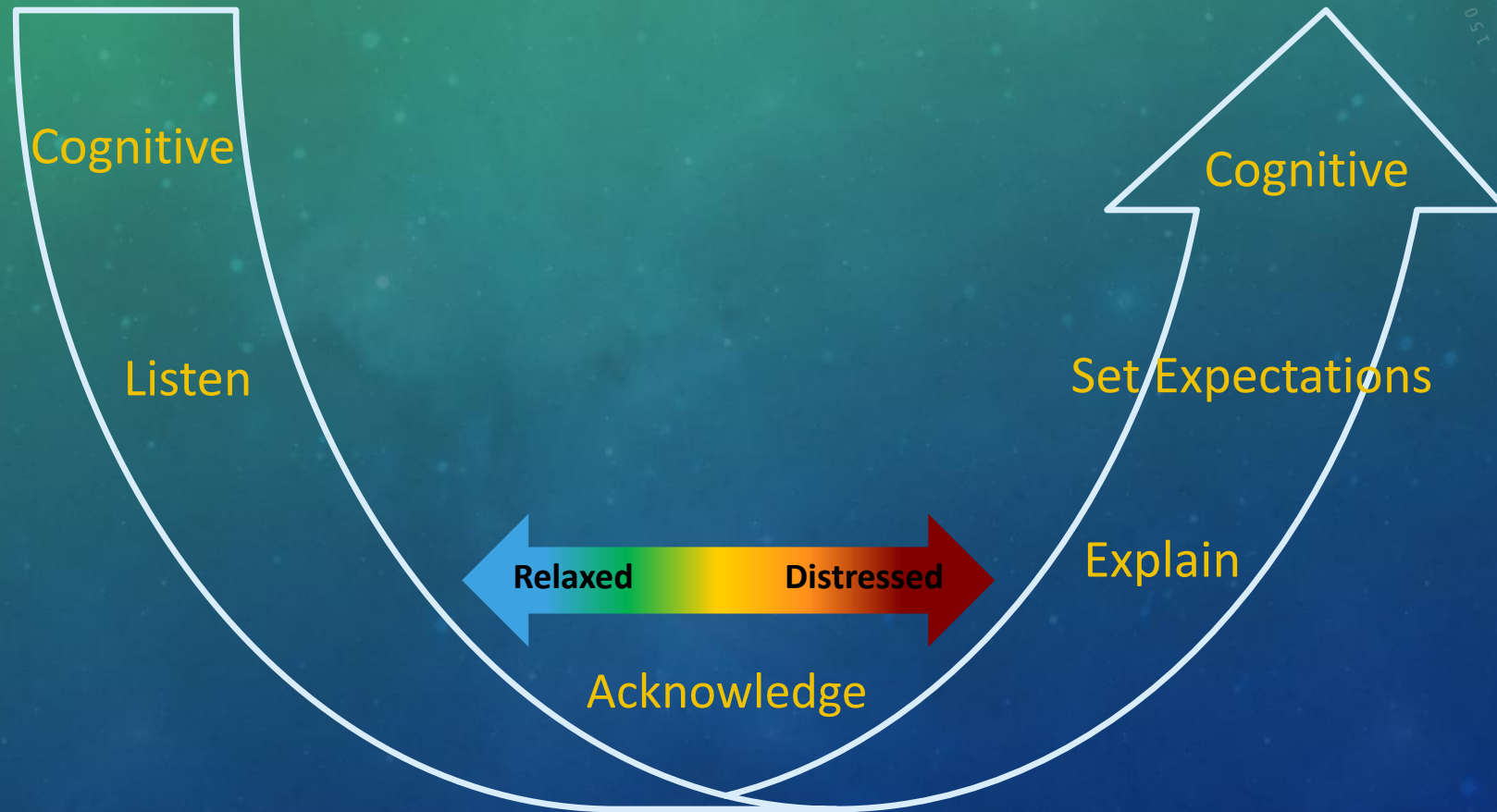


AFTER: POST-DEPLOYMENT



“U” Shaped Flow Contains Conversation

AFTER: POST-DEPLOYMENT



“U” Shaped Flow Contains Conversation

AFTER: POST-DEPLOYMENT

Self report inventories

- Perceived Stress Scale



Perceived Stress Scale – 10 (Cohen et al., version 2011)

1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?
2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?
3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and “stressed”?
4. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?
5. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?
6. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?
7. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?
8. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?
9. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that were outside your control?
10. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?

Almost Never Fairly Never Sometimes Very Often Often



AFTER: POST-DEPLOYMENT

Resilience is a Muscle (David Lee)

In the world of fitness there is a recognition of two principal actions:

- The Challenge – breaks down muscle
- The Recovery – replenishes muscle

Challenge Practices

- Embrace change
- Experiencing uncertainty
- Breaking out of routine

Recovery Practices

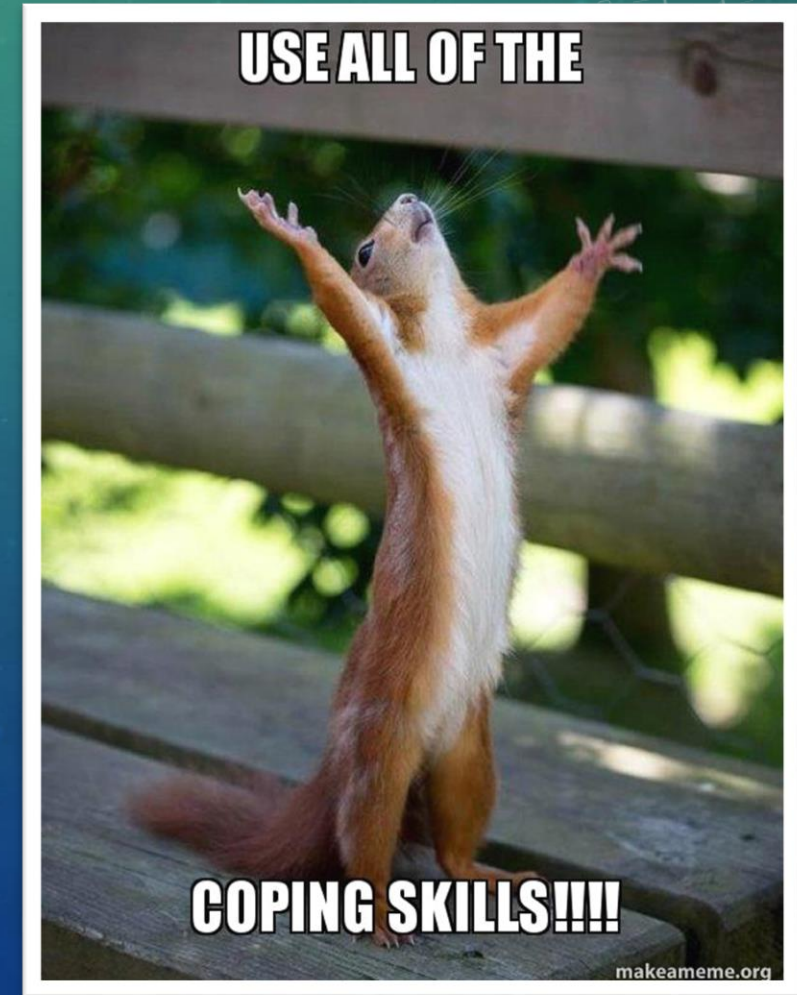
- Rest
- Recovery
- Refuge
- Relationships



AFTER: POST-DEPLOYMENT

Coping Skills:

- Movement
- De-stressing nutrition
- Relaxation
 - Deep breathing
 - Progressive relaxation
 - Grounding / orienting
- Cognitive reframing
- Meditation, prayer
- Music, journaling, art
- Laughter, yoga, being in nature



AFTER: POST-DEPLOYMENT

- Self-care can include everyday activities
- Resilience is both proactive and reactive
- There is nothing “magical” about self-care strategies...
- The magic comes from:

Definition **Intention** **Practice**

WHAT IS ONE STRATEGY YOU WILL USE FOR EACH PHASE OF MOBILIZATION?

Jennifer Schirmer, LCMHC NCC CCTP CCISM

Disaster Behavioral Health Coordinator

Phone: 603-271-9454

Email: Jennifer.L.Schirmer@dhhs.nh.gov



NH DHHS, Division of Public Health Services
Bureau of Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Recovery