

Integrated Emergency Volunteer Training Conference 2023

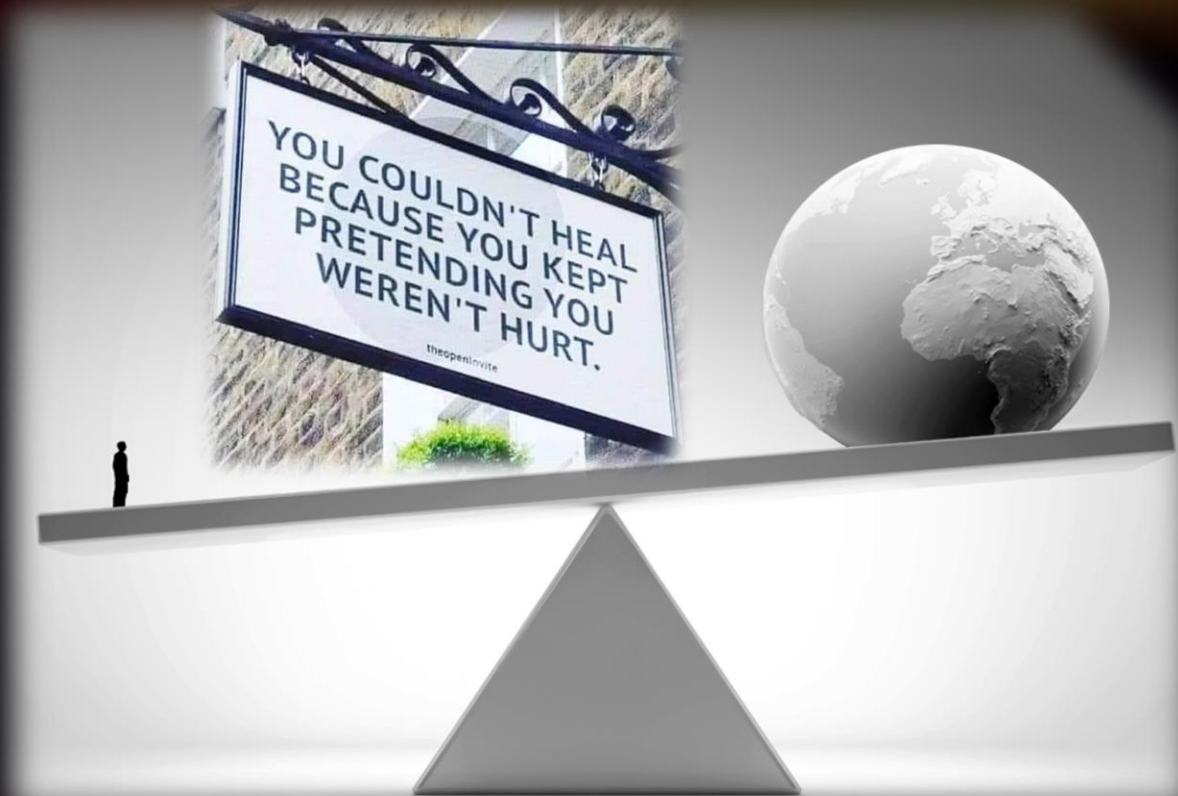
# Responder Resilience

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# Barriers to Stress Management and Resilience

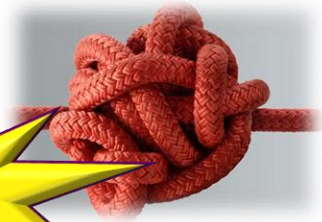


# Interconnected & Internalized



# Barriers to Stress Management and Resilience

- Self-care is just something else to add to my ever increasing to-do list... (and only half of the equation)
- Effecting change (individual or community) while navigating systems may be overwhelming
- Protective factors can change
- Cynicism (a stress response) is a state of mind in which nothing changes, diminishing hope
- Prolonged stress event (pandemic) impact
- Stress is not an event; it is a reaction to experience



Traumatic / Unexpected

Increased Sensitivity to Stress

Chronic

Physical Toll

Cumulative


Daily

Reduced Overall Wellbeing



## PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM











"rest and digest" response

- Constricts pupils 
- Increases saliva production 
- Decreases heart rate 
- Indirectly dilates blood vessels 
- Constricts bronchi 
- Decreases blood flow to skeletal muscles 
- Increases stomach and intestine motility, increases blood flow to GI tract, and increases digestive enzyme secretion 
- No involvement 
- No involvement 
- Contracts bladder 



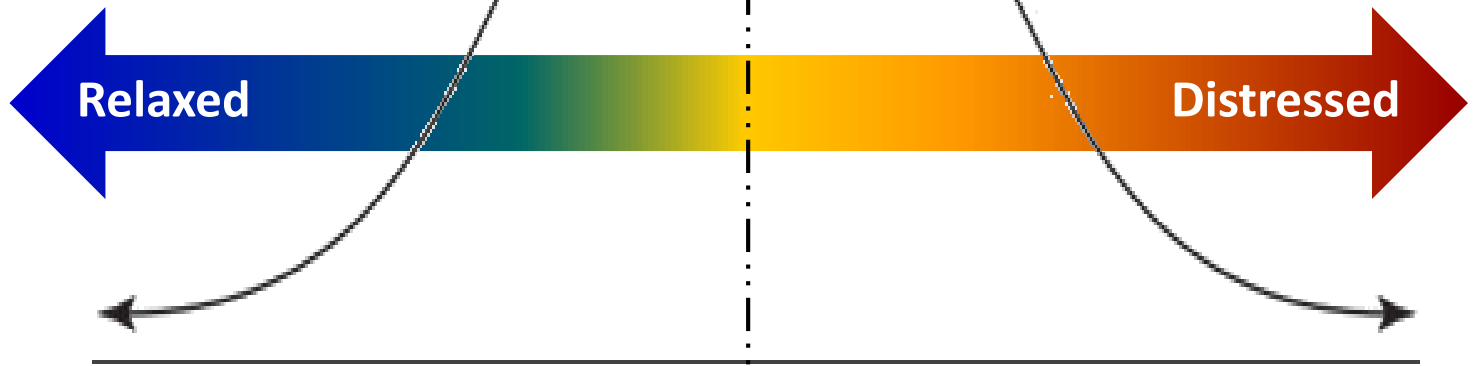
## SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

"fight or flight" response

- Dilates pupils to enhance far vision 
- Decreases saliva production 
- Increases heart rate 
- Constricts blood vessels, increases blood pressure 
- Dilates bronchi to allow more air into lungs 
- Increases blood flow to skeletal muscles 
- Reduces stomach and intestine motility, diverts blood flow away from GI tract, and reduces digestive enzyme secretion 
- Release glucose to increase blood sugar 
- Stimulate adrenal glands to secrete stress hormones 
- Relaxes bladder 

# The “Mechanics” of Stress...

In “the Zone”



Parasympathetic Nervous  
System Active

Sympathetic Nervous  
System Active

# Stress Reactions

## Physical

- Headaches, other aches & pains
- Fatigue, exhaustion
- Sleep disturbance
- Gastrointestinal problems
- Vision, hearing disturbances
- Changes in appetite
- Sweating or chills
- Tremors or muscle twitching
- Being easily startled
- Immune system disorders
- Worsening of previous medical or mental health problems

## Emotional

- Denial
- Anxious, fearful
- Sadness
- Grief
- Guilt
- Self-doubt
- Feeling heroic, invulnerable
- Euphoria
- Apathy, numbness, or disconnected
- Hopeless, despair
- Unpredictable mood swings
- Anger

## Cognitive

- Difficulty remembering
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty making decisions
- Difficulty setting priorities
- Disorientation or confusion
- Loss of objectivity
- Recurring dreams or nightmares
- Preoccupation, intrusive thoughts

## Behavioral

- Difficulty communicating or listening
- Irritability, outbursts, increased conflict
- Uncharacteristic behavior
- Inability to rest or relax
- Increase or decrease in activity level
- Decline in job or school performance
- Absenteeism
- Hypervigilance
- Excessive worry
- Avoidance
- Substance use or misuse

## Spiritual

- Hyper-religiousness
- Questioning spiritual beliefs (spiritual crisis)
- Shattered sense of assumptions or worldviews
- Shattered sense of meaning
- Questioning values or belief systems



# Possible Outcomes of Stress

## Identity

- Reduced empathy or compassion
- Isolation
- Patterns that can become pervasive



## Worldviews

- Skewed outlook
- “Us versus them” perspective
- Pessimism, cynicism, indifference

## Wellbeing

- Absenteeism, hitting “snooze” on the alarm
- Illnesses and other physical health concerns
- Mental health concerns
- Disconnection

From another Angle...



**Demand**

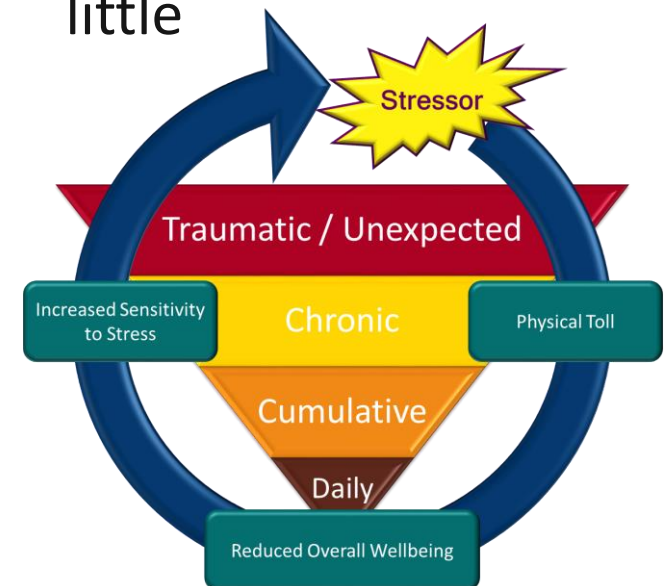
Stress Response

**Control**



# Compassion Fatigue, E.O.G., or Something Else...

- Wounded ideals
- Cynicism
- Feeling unappreciated
- Loss of enthusiasm
- Heroic but reckless
- Self neglect
- Mistrust of others
- Absenteeism
- Excessive fatigue
- Lack of concentration
- Risky behavior
  - Gambling
  - Shopping
  - Speeding
- Sleep disruption
- Inefficiency
- Isolation / withdrawal
- Excessive use of alcohol, tobacco, or drugs
- Eating too much or too little



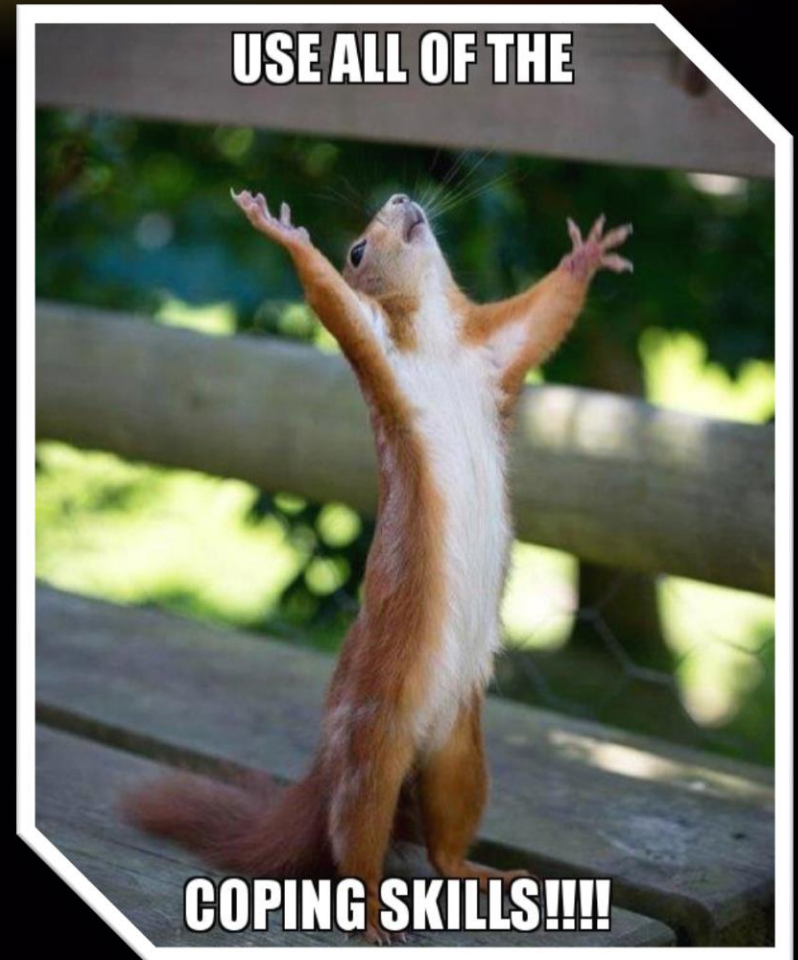
# Just In Case...

- \* How do you manage what you don't notice?
- \* The most important and effective strategy for enhancing responder resilience is **Recognizing the Stress Response**

# Discussion





## Coping Skills:

1. What are some of your strategies / skills??
2. What is it about coping skills that makes them so valuable?



# Hardwiring Happiness

Dr. Rick Hanson

- Negativity bias  learning
- Neurons that  **fire** together  **wire** together (passing mental states become lasting neural traits)
- Stress chemicals weaken neural activity 

# Hardwiring Happiness

Dr. Rick Hanson



# Hardwiring Happiness

Dr. Rick Hanson

## HEAL Yourself:

- **H**ave a positive experience
- **E**nrich it
- **A**bsorb it
- **L**ink it (positive material) with negative material

If you take care of the minutes, the years take care of themselves...  
Tibetan Saying





# 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

# 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

# Peer Support: Shared Experience as a Powerful Tool

- Interactions between people with shared or similar experiences may help break down barriers or power dynamics that exist in other relationships
- Experientially credentialed to provide strength-based support and reduce stigma
- Lived experience provides opportunities for learning how to navigate within the environment
- Help others to help themselves without judgment or expectations
- Effects cultural change through role modeling

# Ecosystems of Potential

Shawn Achor, M.A.

- Identifying opportunities to engage with your environment
- The most fragile system is a completely independent system
- Changing the way you connect with your environment



A man in a dark suit and patterned shirt is speaking on a stage. The background consists of a grid of blue-lit rectangular panels. A yellow-bordered box is overlaid on the video frame, containing a quote.

“I will never forget  
that cup of coffee.”

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Scroll for details  
▼

CC HD ⌵



# You get to choose

- Being present (“your best self”) doesn’t mean always being happy; it does mean being **intentional**
- We are not passive recipients of our thoughts and feelings ( $T + E = B$ )
- Thoughts and feelings aren’t facts, but they are **information**
- We have the **power to choose** the meaningfulness of our interactions and experiences

# Some additional activities:

- Write it down
- Schedule it; give it some guardrails
- Purposefully choose who
- Challenge the negativity bias by identifying positives or solutions or where you can identify a sense of control

Resilience may be both:





# Bringing it all home...

- Identify your barriers
- Practice recognizing the stress response
- Thoughts + Emotions impact physiology
- Physiology impacts thoughts + emotions
- Operationalize peer support
- Develop ecosystems of potential
- Choose how you show up
- Resilience is Proactive and Reactive

# The Take-Aways:

Stress is not an event...it's our reactions to events experienced

Intention and purpose are crucial ingredients to overall wellbeing

Taking a purposeful **pause** and an intentional **breath** are powerful tools for managing the stress response

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