
DEALING WITH STRESS WHEN IT'S PART OF THE JOB

When it comes to negative stress, everyone can succumb, but those who are exposed every day in their jobs are particularly susceptible. Professionals like firefighters, police, EMTs, nurses, and others who are exposed to stressful situations day after day, hour after hour, must have a defined strategy to alleviate the stress or feel its negative results.

There are many signs of stress, but anyone who must stay at "high alert" for eight to ten hours a day, will eventually start feeling the effects. Most people can manage their day-to-day stress states by keeping a balanced life, including the following "Six R's of behavior" provided by the Central Florida Police Stress Unit. To stay balanced and effectively manage day-to-day stress, practice these Six R's:

- Responsibility
 - You control your emotional state
 - Establish priorities
 - Keep it simple
- Reflection
 - Know your stress triggers
 - Be aware of stress symptoms
 - Plan balance into your life
- Relaxation
 - Do something good for yourself
 - Schedule "worry time"
 - Schedule "personal time"
- Relationships
 - Manage your relationships
 - Maintain supportive relationships
 - Improve your relationships with yourself
- Refueling
 - Eat a balanced diet with high fiber, low cholesterol
 - Be aware of poisons: caffeine, fats, nicotine, fast food
 - Drink lots of water
- Recreation
 - Laugh and love
 - Learn how to have fun with your family
 - Enjoy your life and treat others the way you want to be treated

Stress Overload

Even if you have great coping skills, if you can't deal with the pressures of the moment, it equals stress. Add a critical situation to your day's work or add a personal situation with a child or a spouse, and suddenly, the

day to day stress can be much bigger than you can handle. In this case, you reverts to biological stress reactions of “fight” or “flight”.

When your body reverts to a “fight” or “flight” response, you release survival hormones—the same hormones that allowed your prehistoric ancestors to survive in the jungles and caves. This is what happens inside your body:

Your heart rate and blood pressure increase sending more oxygen and blood sugar to the muscles that are needed to deal with the threat. Sweating increases to cool the muscles and keep them efficient. Blood is diverted to the core of the body and away from the skin, so that if we are hurt by the threat, blood loss is minimal. Biologically and hormonally, we focus our attention on the threat, to the exclusion of everything else.

When demands on you exceed your ability to deal with them you trigger these “old” stress reactions. Even with this old internal wiring, you can develop new reactions that keep you calm and collected, when life “happens”.

You can develop new stress reactions in a number of ways. One way, is to go back to balance, and possibly see a professional to help you remember and regain a state of calm, so you can think clearly and react to each situation, rather than your internally heightened stress state. Professionals such as counselors, psychologists, and even your clergy, can help you by listening and offering ways to re-establish the balance you need in your life.

Another way to deal with stressful triggers is to learn relaxation, meditation, and even self-hypnosis to calm the mind and the body. Professionals, such as hypnotherapists and Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) Practitioners can teach you other new techniques to regain and remain calm during stressful moments. When relaxation techniques are practiced in the presence of the stress trigger, it programs new reactions into your unconscious mind, your conscious mind, your body, and your emotions.

Note from the Author

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