

# Stress, Extreme Incidents, and Stigma: How Healthcare Can Take a Page from Law Enforcement's Book

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## Objectives:

- 1) Develop working knowledge of 'stress' and 'Extreme incident'
- 2) Understand various types of stressors and Extreme incidents found in healthcare
- 3) Understand the similarities between healthcare and law enforcement professions regarding self-image and stigma
- 4) Know concrete examples of how law enforcement overcame barriers in response to prevention and mitigation of stress

# Stress

- ◆ Definition: General response of the body to any unusual demand made on it, pleasant or unpleasant, emotional, physical or mental.
- ◆ Short term or Long term
- ◆ Acute, Delayed, or Cumulative

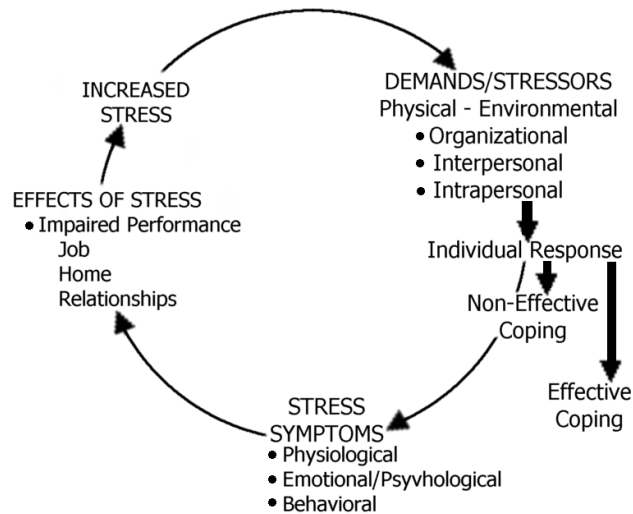
# Stressors Common in Healthcare

- ◆ Shiftwork
- ◆ Long hours
- ◆ Heavy patient loads
- ◆ Demanding patients/ high expectations
- ◆ Always being “on”
- ◆ Balancing needs of clinical and administrative staff
- ◆ Other:
  - ◆ Relationship/martial problems
  - ◆ Financial difficulties
  - ◆ Special needs children
  - ◆ Child custody
  - ◆ Commute
  - ◆ Extracurricular activities
  - ◆ Etc.

# Effects of Stress

- ◆ Physical
  - ◆ Circadian rhythm de-synchronization
  - ◆ Chronic fatigue/sleep problems
  - ◆ GI problems
- ◆ Emotional
  - ◆ Mood swings
  - ◆ Anxiety, guilt, grief, fear, etc.
  - ◆ Loss of emotional control
  - ◆ Depression
- ◆ Cognitive
  - ◆ Decreased attention span
  - ◆ Poor decision making/concentration
  - ◆ Confusion/ memory problems
  - ◆ Poor problem solving
- ◆ Behavioral
  - ◆ Withdrawal/change in activity
  - ◆ Outbursts
  - ◆ Appetite increase or decrease
  - ◆ Excessive/inappropriate humor

## STRESS CYCLE



## Extreme Incident

- ◆ An event or series of events that is TOO MUCH and TOO UGLY
- ◆ Vicarious or Impact

## Extreme Incidents

- ◆ Active shooter/ Lockdown
- ◆ Patient injury to staff
- ◆ Staff suicide
- ◆ Death of child
- ◆ Domestic violence
- ◆ Others

## Extreme Incident Stress

### Impact

Too Much

Too Ugly

Too Soon

### Vicarious

Too Much

Too Ugly

Too Similar OR

Too Different OR

Too Long

## Effects of Extreme Incident Stress

- ◆ Some people “bounce back” after an incident
- ◆ Impact of sensory modalities (intrusions/flashbacks)
- ◆ Shatters basic assumptions
- ◆ Shatters comfort zone
- ◆ Creates deviation from baseline

## Why Should You Care?

- ◆ Decreased absenteeism
- ◆ Increased performance and focus
- ◆ Employee retention
- ◆ Stress is contagious
- ◆ Improvement in both physical and mental health

## Commonalities between Healthcare and Law Enforcement

- ◆ Shiftwork and long hours
- ◆ Dealing with people in crisis
- ◆ Disdain for the weak
- ◆ “Buck up” and “be tough” culture; Fear of losing job → Stigma
- ◆ Idea that showing emotion makes you vulnerable

# How Law Enforcement Deals with Stress/Extreme Incidents

- ◆ Prevention
  - ◆ Training on stress during academy and during in-service trainings
  - ◆ Familiarity with EAP/Department psychologists
  - ◆ Normalizing stress response
  - ◆ Support at command/supervisory level
  - ◆ Having other resources that validate what they are going through (i.e. book: Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement)
  - ◆ Establishing Peer Support and Wellness Programs
  - ◆ Incentives for annual “resiliency check-ups”

**SUPPORT FROM THE TOP IS CRUCIAL**

# How Law Enforcement Deals with Stress/Extreme Incidents

- ◆ Response
  - ◆ Supervisors and peers trained in how to talk to a struggling co-worker
  - ◆ Referrals to competent providers who understand the job
  - ◆ After an Extreme incident, having providers available on-site
  - ◆ Mandatory vs. voluntary debriefs/meetings
  - ◆ Outreach from providers
  - ◆ Encourage work/life balance

# Questions?

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