

## **Dispatcher Wellness**

### **I. Administration and Paperwork**

- A. Housekeeping
  - 1. Bathrooms
  - 2. Specific information for facility security if applicable
  - 3. Breaks
  - 4. Parking if applicable
- B. Paperwork
  - 1. Instruct Students to fill out their name tent
  - 2. Hand out P.O.S.T. course roster
  - 3. Collect Travel Reimbursement Request (TRR) forms

### **II. Introductions and Expectations**

- A. Introductions
  - 1. Students
    - a. Select an introduction activity that tells you:
      - 1) Who the student is
      - 2) Where the student works
      - 3) The number of years the student has been a dispatcher
  - 2. Facilitator
- B. Expectations
  - 1. What do the students expect to get out of the class
  - 2. What do you expect to impart to the class
    - a. Course overview and goals

### **III. Definition**

- A. Stress
  - 1. The non-specific response of the body to any demand made on it (Hans-Selye, 1979)
  - 2. General
    - a. A physical, mental, or emotional response to events that causes bodily or mental tension
    - b. Any outside force or event that has an effect on the body or mind
      - 1) Stress is considered the global crisis of the 21st century
      - 2) Impossible to go through life without stress
- B. Stressor
  - 1. An uncomfortable or unfamiliar physical or psychological stimulus
- C. Distress
  - 1. Associated as the negative effects on the body or mind
    - a. Factors to consider
      - 1) Duration
      - 2) Intensity
      - 3) Capacity

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- 4) Attitude
- b. Crisis
- c. Fight or flight
  - 1) Pulse
  - 2) Muscles
  - 3) Pupil dilatation
  - 4) Blood pressure
- d. Cumulative stress
- D. Eustress
  - 1. Associated as the positive effects on the body or mind
  - 2. Strong emotional state
    - a. Physical exercise
    - b. Sex
    - c. Meditation
- E. Stress Continuum
  - 1. Levels of stress
    - a. Coping
    - b. Reacting
    - c. Injured
    - d. Sick
      - 1) Persistent or extreme stress
      - 2) Requires medical treatment
      - 3) Ill due to stress
- F. Learning Activity & Student Assessment #1
  - 1. Students will be divided into groups of 4-6 and identify and evaluate their personal stress levels through a self-assessment questionnaire.
  - 2. Students will learn where they are on the stress continuum from the results of the questionnaire.
  - 3. Students will learn if they are exhibiting any manifestations of stress based on the stress continuum.
  - 4. Students will discuss the results and teach back what they have identified as stressors and how that may affect job performance.

### **IV. Understanding Stress**

- A. Types of Stress
  - 1. Emotional
  - 2. Physical
  - 3. Behavioral
  - 4. Cognitive
- B. Trauma Related
  - 1. Specific to a critical incident
    - a. Cumulative
      - 1) Exposure over time
- C. Learning Activity & Student Assessment #2

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1. Students will be divided into groups of 4-6 and through role play and self-assessment students will be able to identify the types of stress and the things that "push their buttons."
2. Students will discuss how their attitude can have an impact on their job performance and affect their coworkers
3. Students will perform a teach back as to how their attitude may impact the people they come into contact with such as citizens, sworn personnel, coworkers, or allied agencies.

### **V. Physiological Outcomes**

- A. Autonomic nervous system (ANS)
  1. Consists of sympathetic nervous system (SNS) and Parasympathetic nervous system (PNS)
  2. PNS
    - a. Associated with relaxation
    - b. Increase body's supply of stored energy
  3. SNS
    - a. Prepares body and mind for perceived danger
    - b. Uses stored energy
- B. Stages
  1. Balanced
    - a. Normal level of resistance
    - b. Homeostasis
  2. Alarm
    - a. Coping mechanism
    - b. Fight or flight
  3. Resistance
    - a. Continued release of chemicals into the bloodstream
    - b. Immunological system breakdown
    - c. Feats of strength
  4. Exhaustion
    - a. Organ damage
    - b. Immunological system breakdown

### **VI. Sources of Stress**

- A. Personal
  1. Relationships
- B. Financial
  1. Obligations
  2. Bankruptcy
  3. Uncertainty of future
- C. Illness
  1. Short-term vs chronic
- D. Injury
  1. Work-related
  2. Substance abuse

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- E. Organizational
  - 1. Job pressures
  - 2. Career Conflicts
    - a. Work demands
  - 3. Financial concerns
    - a. Layoffs and furloughs
    - b. Retirement changes
  - 4. Interpersonal Tensions
    - a. Friction between coworkers or subordinates
  - 5. Outside interfacing
    - a. Dealing with vendors
  - 6. Discipline
    - a. Subject of discipline
    - b. Supervisor responsible for discipline
- F. Media
  - 1. Public information act
  - 2. Watching the pursuit you are calling
  - 3. Increasing demands and public scrutiny
- G. Rapidity of change
  - 1. How fast the industry is changing
    - a. Technology
    - b. Human resource laws
- H. Job Characteristics
  - 1. Workplace change
  - 2. Shift work
  - 3. Overwhelming work demands
  - 4. Intense stimulation
  - 5. Dealing with human misery
- I. Unavoidable Stress
  - 1. 9-1-1 calls
  - 2. Memory triggers
  - 3. Physical tension
  - 4. Mental tension
    - a. psychological responses

### **VII. Stress Disorders**

- A. Compassion Fatigue
  - 1. Definition
    - a. Emotional fatigue resulting in the loss of empathy
    - b. Inability to extend compassion because of the overuse stimulation of compassion associated with the caring of others
- B. Secondary Traumatic Stress
  - 1. Definition

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- a. Presence of Post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms caused by at least one indirect exposure to traumatic material Assists the Primary Negotiator during event
- C. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
  - 1. Clinical diagnosis required
  - 2. Develops after a terrifying ordeal that involved the physical harm or the threat of physical harm
  - 3. May have happened to the person affected or to a loved one
  - 4. May be a witness to the harmful event that happened to loved ones or strangers
  - 5. Signs and symptoms
    - a. Re-experiencing symptoms
    - b. Avoidance symptoms
    - c. Hyperarousal symptoms
- D. Learning Activity & Student Assessment #3
  - 1. Each student will individually complete a compassion fatigue questionnaire.
  - 2. Students will assess and discuss the common stressors that indicated the potential for compassion fatigue, general satisfaction and burnout.
  - 3. Students will also consider how these symptoms may effect job performance and the competence of a 9-1-1 dispatcher.

### **VIII. Critical Incident Stress**

- A. Definition
  - 1. A stressful impact sufficient enough to overwhelm the usually effective coping skills of an individual
- B. What constitutes a critical incident
  - 1. Emotional aftershock following a horrible event
  - 2. Any reaction where one feels overwhelmed
  - 3. Sense of vulnerability
  - 4. Lack of control over the situation
- C. Sources of Critical Incident Stress
  - 1. Mass casualty incidents
    - a. Protracted or difficult incidents
    - b. Cumulative
- D. Learning Activity & Student Assessment #4
  - 1. Students will be divided into 4 equal groups and each group will identify which parts of the human body are affected by stress
  - 2. Students will discuss and describe the physiological and/or behavioral symptoms of stress
  - 3. Students will debrief the activity by discussing why it was done and how it relates to or can be applied to their personal lives or effect their job performance.

### **II. Coping and Resiliency**

- A. Avoidable Stress

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1. Attitude versus Fact
    - a. Personal attitude may be creating stress
    - b. Are you stressed or busy?
  2. Role ambiguity
    - a. Understand your role in the organization
    - b. Are you achieving your goals and expectations
  3. Work Overload
    - a. All consuming
    - b. Manage realistic expectations
    - c. Manage your time
    - d. Avoid procrastination
    - e. Communicate with your boss
  4. Responsibilities
    - a. Risk versus reward
    - b. Understand your fear
      - 1) Unnecessary worry
      - 2) It hasn't gone wrong until its gone wrong
    - c. Negative fantasy
      - 1) Focus on all the things that could go wrong
      - 2) Negative fantasy
    - d. Health versus success
      - 1) Make a decision
      - 2) What are your limits?
      - 3) Live within them
  5. Conflict
    - a. Not everyone will like you
    - b. Emotional involvement
      - 1) You choose what issues to be involved in
      - 2) You have control
    - c. Resolve the conflict
      - 1) Deal with it
      - 2) Let it go
    - d. Crucial conversations (Patterson, Grenny, McMillian, Switzler)
      - 1) Mastering crucial conversations
- B. Reducing the Impact of Stress
1. Return stress to the rightful owner
    - a. Learning to respectfully say no
    - b. Have you expressed your limitations?
  2. Tactical Breathing (Dave Grossman)
    - a. Can be used before, during or after a stressful situation
- C. Physiological
1. Sleep
    - a. When you are deprived of sleep for 24 hours you are the equivalent to being legally drunk (Dr. Jacques Gouws)

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2. Caffeine
    - a. Overuse, abuse, or addiction is detrimental to stress reduction and sleep patterns
  3. Nicotine
    - a. No positive benefit for stress reduction
  4. Exercise
    - a. Daily vigorous exercise to burn excess hormones produced during fight or flight
  5. Diet
    - a. Eat healthy and in moderation
- D. Resources
1. Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
  2. Peer Counseling
  3. Crisis Intervention Team (CIT)
  4. Professional Therapy
- E. Learning Activity & Student Assessment #5
1. Each student will individually identify what is important to the learner and recognize the impact that excessive stress may have on them.
  2. Students will discuss and describe how the effects of stress may impact those important to them.
  3. Students will discuss and describe the resources available for assistance.