

# Stress Management in the Field

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July 2008

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# A Definition for Stress

Stress is a state of psychological and physical arousal that comes about as a result of a threat, a challenge or a change in one's environment.

(Mitchell And Bray, 1990)

# Basic and Cumulative Stress

- You...and your virtual backpack
- Climate
- Poverty
- Meeting new people
- Communication(s) and Language(s)

# Basic and Cumulative Stress

- Work and Colleagues
- Transports
- Health
- Friends and Family

# Basic and Cumulative Stress

- Couple or Single
- Home : Cooking , Shopping
- Conveniences
- Animals
- Sports and Leisure Time

# Recognizing Signs of Cumulative Stress (CS)

They can appear as the result of a prolonged, unrelieved exposure to a variety of work, personal and incident specific events.

# Physical reactions

- Extended fatigue
- Sleep disturbances
- Appetite changes

# Cognitive Reactions

- Tired of thinking
- Difficulty concentrating
- Problems with decisions and priorities
- Feeling indispensable
- Diminished tolerance to ambiguity

# Behavioral Reactions

- Irritability
- Blaming others
- Social withdrawal
- Absenteeism
- Disregard for security / Risky behavior

# Emotional Reactions

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Negativism / Cynicism
- Feeling pressured / overwhelmed

# Spiritual Reactions

- Doubt of value system / religious belief
- Feeling threatened and victimized

# Preventive Measures to Decrease Cumulative Stress

- Take regular breaks during the day
- Make physical exercise (20mn/day)
- Try to eat balanced food and possibly take a hot meal a day
- Control your alcohol/ coffee/ nicotine....

# Preventive Measures to Decrease Cumulative Stress

- Communicate and ask questions as soon as misunderstandings could arise
- Use the « Buddy System »
- Sleep enough in a secure place

# Preventive Measures to Decrease Cumulative Stress

- Stay realistic and modest towards the situation and your impact on it
- Check regularly your security and always act with respect
- If possible, avoid driving yourself

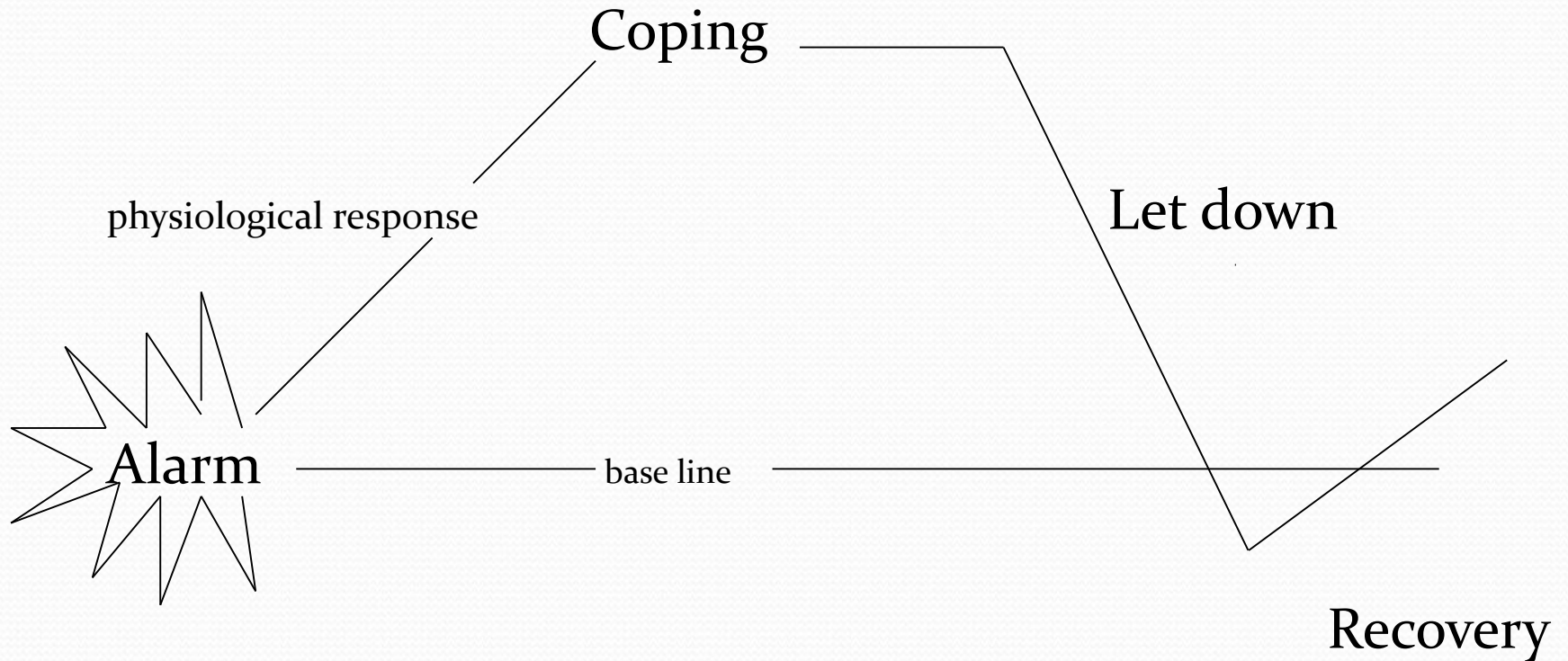
# Preventive Measures to Decrease Cumulative Stress

- Keep private time for yourself
- Take the opportunity to discover a new culture
- Keep a track with the family/friends back home

# Acute Stress

- It results from the exposure to a critical incident, an event that is sudden, violent and beyond the range of “normal” human experience.

# How we experience Stress?



# Physical Reactions

- Elevated heartbeat, respiration
- Sweating, shivering
- Nausea, gastro- intestinal distress
- General weakness
- Headache

# Cognitive Reactions

- Racing, circular thoughts
- Confusion
- Intrusive images
- Loss of perspective

# Behavioral Reactions

- Sleep and appetite disturbances
- Constant talking about the event
- Exaggerated « black » humor
- Inability to rest or let go

# Emotional Reactions

- Rapid shifting of emotions
- Numbness / Anxiety / Fear
- Exhilaration
- Helplessness / Feeling overwhelmed
- Anger / Sadness

# Spiritual Reactions

- Profound loss of trust (in the future, in the organization, in the colleagues...)

# After a traumatic event, help and support should be given:

- Immediately
- On the spot
- Using a simple approach
- With a positive expectation

(Principles of Salmon, 1917)

# « The Coat Help »

- Provide a shelter
- Reassure
- Calm down
- Reintegrate into the group, the team

(Quintyn, Brussels, 1996)

# Psychological First Aid

- Bring the person to a quiet location
- Control if any need for a doctor (physical check)
- Help to calm down breathing, if necessary.
- Cover with a blanket, a jacket
- Give water to drink ( ! ? )

# Psychological First Aid

- Check if the person wants to call a relative by phone
- Talk to the person, reassure
- Do not avoid physical contact (but be spontaneous...)
- Explain what is going on

# Psychological First Aid

- Do not leave the person alone
- Encourage dialogue
- Listen to the person
- Do not minimize to reassure
- Do not try to calm the person by telling her to shut up

# Psychological First Aid

- Get the person involved in simple tasks as soon as possible
- Questions to ask: “What would you need now? “  
(open questions)
- Take very good care of yourself : you could feel very stressed after helping...

# The Defusing

- It applies especially for professionals at risks
- Shortly after the event
- Helps to interpret more correctly the event
- Gives indications about the potential reactions
- Lasts between 20 and 60 min

# The Debriefing : Objectives

- Stimulate group cohesion
- Alleviate tensions and conflicts
- Share information
- Underline the normality of emotional reactions

# The Debriefing : Objectives

- Liberate emotions associated with the incident
- Accelerate the healing process
- Prevent unnecessary after-effects
- Identify persons in need of further support

# The Debriefing: How it works

**Introduction**



**Facts**



**Thoughts**



**Emotions**

**Symptoms**



**Normalisation**



**Future**



# As a Conclusion

- Do not neglect any stressful event : Being recognized is fundamental for the survivors
- Be careful with your self-protection : Work in pairs, take care of yourself
- Be very patient...
- Call for specialists when appropriate : complexity, length of exposure, number of persons involved...