



CISM

Critical Incident Stress Management



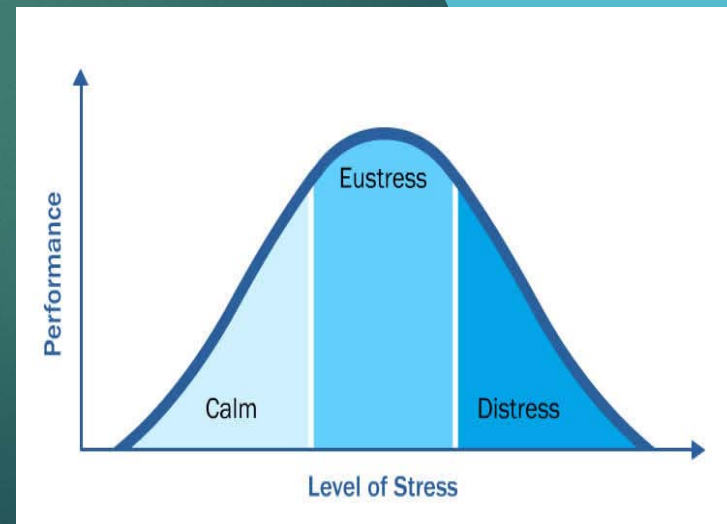
What is "Stress?"

- ▶ Daily stress
- ▶ Chronic stress and Burnout
- ▶ Critical Incident stress - CISM



Stress isn't *always* a bad thing

- ▶ Eustress – Good stress
 - ▶ Marriage, promotion, new baby, graduation = **changes**
 - ▶ Deadlines and challenges at work can make you productive and creative.
- ▶ Distress – Excessive/Chronic stress
 - ▶ Divorce, injury, punishment, financial/work difficulties, negative feelings = **changes**
 - ▶ Body produces Cortisol
 - ▶ Interferes with immune system
 - ▶ Problems with memory
 - ▶ Stays in bloodstream a long time
- ▶ Acute Stress – Fight or Flight
 - ▶ Dysfunction – Impairment
 - ▶ Need to reduce and control the harmful effects of this stress
- ▶ Stress management is the key, not stress elimination



Traumatic Events/Critical Incidents

- ▶ Sudden and largely unexpected
- ▶ Key element is threatened survival
- ▶ Heightened sense of danger
- ▶ Often disruption of personal or social values
- ▶ Powerful emotional reactions

What is traumatic for one person may not be for another.....



In just seconds you can go from calm,
to terror...

<i>Mental State</i>	CALM	AROUSAL	ALARM	FEAR	TERROR
<i>Regulating Brain Region</i>	NEOCORTX Cortex	CORTEX Limbic	LIMBIC Midbrain	MIDBRAIN Brainstem	BRAINSTEM Autonomic
<i>Thinking/ Judgment</i>	ABSTRACT	CONCRETE	EMOTIONAL	REACTIVE	REFLEXIVE

The job of CISM is to help bring you back down
and re-ground your body and brain.

Fight, Flight, or Freeze

- ▶ Fight – fear, becoming anger, presenting as Fight
- ▶ Flight – fear, becoming avoidance , presenting as flight
- ▶ Freeze - confusion



Acute/Critical Incident Stress

- ▶ Normal coping is overwhelmed – this is trauma
 - ▶ Flight (avoidance) – Fight (anger) - Freeze
 - ▶ Body is hard wired to react in these ways
 - ▶ Cold sweat
 - ▶ Digestion shuts down
 - ▶ Lens in eye flattens out
 - ▶ Sense of time slowing/speeding up
 - ▶ Fine motor skills dissipate
 - ▶ Don't feel pain until later
- ▶ Most signs and symptoms disappear within a few days.
 - ▶ Trouble sleeping, memory loss, reliving the incident, emotions from anger to guilt, numbness, and others, are common reactions to the event



- ▶ 1500 biochemical reactions occur EVERY time you experience FFF stress.
- ▶ “Normal” person goes through this Fight or Flight response 15-50 times per day
- ▶ If the stressor is gone, the Parasympathetic (PNS) kicks in to calm the body back down.
- ▶ If the stressor persists
 - ▶ Blood vessels on skin surface dilate
 - ▶ Sweat pores open up
 - ▶ Digestive system shuts down
 - ▶ Blood moves to the core of the body and to the large muscles, away from the arms and brain
 - ▶ Not just for survival...this is where sexual pleasure comes from, too!!



Parasympathetic Nervous System

- ▶ Conserves energy
- ▶ Calms the body back down, trying to return to homeostasis
- ▶ Increases bodily secretions – tears, gastric acids, mucus and saliva
- ▶ Turns off production of cortisol and other hormones.
- ▶ SNS and PNS are like two tug-of-war teams, with hormones as the strongmen. They are meant to balance each other out.
- ▶ If either one dominates the other without relief, then you will experience an on-going state of internal imbalance, known as stress.



Acute Stress/CISM

- ▶ Can actually draw people together



Discharging stress hormones



- ▶ Need to flush the body of toxins created
 - ▶ Over 1500 chemical reactions from one event
 - ▶ Cry, sweat, pee them out.
 - ▶ HYDRATE!!



On-going Symptoms of Critical Incident Stress

Behavioral

- Restlessness
- Irritability and moodiness
- Anti-social behavior
- Increased alcohol consumption

Cognitive

- Poor concentration
- Confusion or uncertainty
- Nightmares

Physical

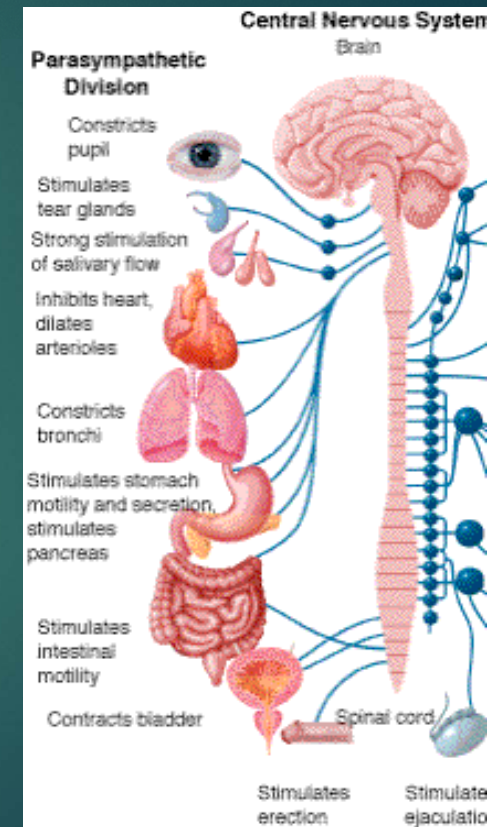
- Vomiting, Chills
- Headaches
- Disrupted sleep
- Muscle tremors
- Chest Pain

Emotional

- Depression and Anxiety
- Intense anger
- Grief
- Guilt

Immediately after event: Stabilize

- Breathe deeply to release endorphins which calm the body
- Restart digestion with sips of water
- Allow discharge:
 - Crying, shaking, sweating, moving
- “The worst is over, you are safe now.”
- Shifting to the Thinking Brain



CISM goal is to Normalize

Trauma and distress are normal reactions to abnormal situations



How CISM Helps

- ▶ Addressing stress reactions not normally discussed among work groups
- ▶ Return to normal stress baseline
- ▶ Gives closure and self-care education



Critical Incident Stress Management

- ▶ **Short-term** psychological helping-process that focuses solely on an immediate and identifiable problem.
- ▶ **Symptom driven** - if no symptoms, no intervention. People are handling event in a resilient way
- ▶ Purpose is to enable people to **return to their daily routine** (normal level of functioning) more quickly, thus helping to prevent PTSD.
- ▶ **Work group** based.
- ▶ **NOT** therapy
- ▶ Includes:
 - ▶ Pre-incident awareness training
 - ▶ One-to-one interventions
 - ▶ Debriefings, Defusings, CMBs

