How Long Has Your “Check Engine” Light Been On?
Enhancing Your Understanding of Yourself and Stress During COVID-19

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Learning Objectives

I. Identify challenges and stressors in the COVID-19 environment
II. Understand burnout/compassion fatigue/caution fatigue/moral injury/complex grief
III. Explore individual mitigation strategies and self-assessment tools
Who is this about?
Behavioral Health Federal Disaster Engagement

**Primary Engagement**
- State, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) entities
- Voluntary organizations active in disasters (VOADs)

**Federal Engagement**
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

**Disaster Behavioral Health**
- ASPR
- SAMHSA

**Federal Disaster Behavioral Health SERVICES**
- Technical assistance
- Education
- Grant assistance
- Responder deployment
- Responder support

Through

CONOPS: Coalition guidance
Assessment tools: CCP, Applications
Information Clearance Center
- DTAC
- Helpline

Federal Emergency Coordination Partners
Where are we now?

Steady State

Disaster

Steady State

Sustained Operational Engagement

Disaster
## Individual COVID-19 Stressors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Long-term ambiguity</th>
<th>7. Increased workload</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Isolation</td>
<td>8. PPE-related challenges</td>
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<td>3. Risk of exposing self and others to the virus</td>
<td>9. Vaccine: &quot;Should I?&quot; &quot;When will I be able to?&quot;</td>
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<td>4. Pressure to finish objectives quickly with limited resources</td>
<td>10. Changes in professional roles/responsibilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Facility surges</td>
<td>11. Social distancing</td>
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<td>6. Professional and personal responsibilities</td>
<td>12. Unclear/sudden changes to guidelines</td>
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Stress: What is it?

- A response characterized by physical and psychological arousal as a direct result of an exposure to any demand or pressure on a living organism.
- Stress is the response to a stressor and can be positive or negative.
Another example of a continuum of stress with verbs listed along the bell curve. The x axis is "ability to cope" and the y axis is "pressure".

Continuum of Stress: Where are you?
Continuum of Stress: Where are you?

Performance

Stress Level

Ready  Reacting  Injured  ill
Consequences for Responders/Providers

- Impacts on decision making
- Increased risk of mistakes
- Impact on systems outside of work (family, friends, etc.)
- Mental/physical health implications
- Substance use
- Professional burnout
Building Awareness
Signs & Symptoms of Stress

• Prolonged exposure to stress can present in a variety of symptoms and levels of severity.
• Active self-assessment as a tool.
• What are your early warning signs?

- Insomnia
- Libido Changes
- Anxiety
- Social Isolation
- Irritability
- Personal Hygiene
- Aches & Pains
- Low Energy
- Frequent Sickness
- Mood Swings
- Increased Acne
- Depression
- Headaches
- Appetite Change
Stress Disorders & Adverse Conditions

Severity of Symptoms

Acute
Chronic
Traumatic

Examples

- Acute Stress Disorders
- Anxiety
- Depression
- PTSD
- Burnout
- Compassion Fatigue
- Caution Fatigue
- Complex Grief
- Moral Injury
Consequences: Burnout

• Cumulative emotional exhaustion and withdrawal as a result of workload and institutional stress.
• Occurs over time.
• Presents:
  ▪ Decreased performance
  ▪ Increased absenteeism
  ▪ Poor morale/attitude
Consequences: Compassion Fatigue

- Related to exposure working with those suffering from traumatic or distressing events.
- Prolonged exposure = Risk for responders/providers
- Presents:
  - Detachment or numbing
  - Rigid thinking
  - Over-engagement
  - Blurred boundaries/roles
- Difficult to self-diagnose
Self-Assessment: ProQOL

A measurement of the negative and positive affects of helping others who experience suffering and trauma.

ProQOL Self-Assessment Tool

Professional Quality of Life

- Compassion Satisfaction
- Compassion Fatigue

- Burnout
- Secondary Trauma
Caution Fatigue (Complacency)

• When a person understands the actions needed to protect their health, but is willing to stop being careful because they believe it to be too exhausting.
• Why this happens?
  ▪ It can be especially difficult to stay motivated to be cautious when nobody within a person’s circle has gotten sick.
  ▪ What are some indicators of Caution Fatigue?

Source: MUSC
Complex (Complicated) Grief

• A chronic, impairing form of grief
• Brought on by interference/interruption to the healing process
• COVID-19 impact on grief
  • Communication
  • Disrupted Processes
  • Isolation
  • Fear

Mental Health Disorders Related to COVID-19-related Deaths
Moral Injury

The psychological, behavioral, social, and/or spiritual distress experienced by individuals who are performing or exposed to actions that contradict their moral values.

How does it feel?

I did something bad.

I cannot forgive myself.

I feel disgusted and betrayed.

I am bad because of what I did.

NCPTSD: Moral Injury
Self-Care: Individual Coping Strategies

- **The Foundation:** Sleep, Food, Movement & Hygiene
- Assess your self-care toolbox:
  - What do you use?
  - What kind is it?
  - What can you add?
- Manage news/social media exposure
- Increase support connections
- *Who* can you turn to for support?
- Know *how* and *where* to get help
- Are there resources you need?
- [Digital Psych App Evaluation](#)
Holistic Resilience Approach: Optimism

“The main concern of optimistic thinkers isn’t whether the glass is half full or half empty. Instead, they focus their energy where they have control to make a situation better”. - Consortium for Health and Military Performance (CHAMP)

Source: CHAMP
Self-Check Activity

1. What are your thoughts?
   - My thoughts are consumed with past negative events or potential worst-case outcomes.
   - My thoughts are focused on where I have control in this situation and how I can take action to improve things.

2. What are you saying to others?
   - The majority of my conversations involve complaining about things outside of my control.
   - Most of my conversations are focused on problem-solving and finding potential opportunities.

3. How are you spending your time?
   - I'm avoiding this struggle by procrastinating or distracting myself with unproductive behaviors (for example, social media, drinking, shopping).
   - I'm taking on this struggle by developing a plan of attack.

4. How are you persisting through this struggle?
   - If it gets hard, I'll likely give up.
   - I'm willing to push through adversity to find a way to grow.

5. How are you approaching others during this struggle?
   - I'm isolating myself from others and/or unintentionally lashing out.
   - I'm reaching out to others who can help and support me.

Source: CHAMP
Self-Check Activity Cont.

6. How do you see yourself in this struggle?
   - I’m a victim who lacks the ability to overcome an overpowering threat.
   - I’m a warrior with the strengths needed to overcome a tough challenge.

7. How are your emotions impacting your ability to navigate this struggle?
   - I’m overwhelmed with negative feelings that are blocking productive action.
   - I’m finding ways to generate moments of curiosity, gratitude, peace, or humor despite my struggle to stay energized.

8. How’s this struggle affecting the rest of your life (for example, other relationships, work, hobbies, sleep, diet, etc.)?
   - This struggle is negatively impacting many parts of my life.
   - I’m finding ways to excel and find joy in other aspects of my life.

9. Where are you focusing your attention?
   - My focus is on the constraints that are limiting me in this struggle.
   - My focus is on those resources that can help me.

10. How is this struggle impacting your view of the future?
    - I have little hope the future will be better.
    - I’m hopeful and excited for the future.

Source: CHAMP
Optimism: How does it work?

- Where do I have control to make things better?
- What must I accept?
- How can I take productive action now?
- How can I keep one issue from affecting other parts of my life?
- What’s good in my life?

Source: CHAMP
Create a Personal Resilience Plan - Activity

Identify 1 resilience skill and strategy you currently use. Identify 1 resilience skill or strategy you would like to develop.

1. Engaging the support of others
2. Make connections and build your social support network
3. Personal or collective goals
4. Engaging in activities that are meaningful to you
5. Realistic sense of control/having choices - Focusing on what you can control
6. Faith/Spirituality
7. Not easily discouraged by failure and views it as a learning opportunity
8. Strong sense of purpose
9. Accept that change is an unavoidable part of life
10. Sense of humor
11. Optimism
Burnout/Compassion Fatigue: Cognitive Restructuring

Adaptive Engaging
- With others who understand and accept you
- In helpful activities
  - Increase coping skills
  - Build resilience
- Maintain integrity, dignity, and civility
- Avoid toxicity
- Avoid negative coping behaviors
- Use a buddy system

ASPR TRACIE. Beyond the Response: Addressing Compassion Fatigue and Behavioral Health Needs for Healthcare Providers
Moral Injury: Stress First Aid

Stage I
• Peer support targeting the suffering related to moral injury

Stage II
• Enhance coping skills

Stage III
• Treat specific moral injury issues

Stress First Aid: Patricia Watson, Ph.D.
# Moral Injury: Intervention Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Sessions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trauma Informed Guilt Reduction</td>
<td>6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptive Disclosure</td>
<td>6-8 90 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of Killing Treatment Program</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prolonged Exposure (PE)</td>
<td>2 - 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance and Commitment Therapy</td>
<td>Varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Spiritual Strength Therapy</td>
<td>8</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Strategies for Overcoming Caution Fatigue

- Understand *what* motivates your behavior.
- Consider who/what is important to you.
- Embrace the safety habits and routines you practiced earlier in the pandemic.
- When you forget to follow a guideline, simply correct it.
- Schedule news/social media intake at specific times of the day.
- Create a checklist.

*Caution Fatigue: NIHB*
Caution Fatigue: Communication Strategies

If someone says... You can respond by...

“*It’s just a small gathering of 10/12 of us for the holidays*”

*Emphasizing* COVID-19 can be contagious before symptoms appear so all gatherings carry risk.

“*It’s been a long year and I haven’t seen my family for too long*”

*Recognizing* the steps people have taken so far and *Discussing* ways to connect safely.

“I’m young and there’s a vaccine. Things can go back to normal now”

*Acknowledging* young people can transmit the virus to vulnerable persons and *Caution* it will take some time for everyone to get vaccinated.

“The government can’t force me to wear a mask”

*Reminding* that public health guidance and mandates are about protecting everybody.

Source
Emergency Responder Self-Care Plan: Behavioral Health PPE

EMERGENCY RESPONDER SELF-CARE PLAN
Behavioral Health PPE

Based on the Anticipate, Plan, Deter™ Personal Resilience Plan and PsySTART Responder Triage System.

PREDICT PROBLEMS

PRESCRIBE PROTECTION

ENGAGE YOUR PLAN

STRESS MANAGEMENT TIPS

BUDDY SYSTEM

PFA & RESOURCES

ASPR TRACIE: Emergency Responder Self-Care Plan: Behavioral Health PPE

SOURCES
CDC Traumatic Incident Stress: Information for Emergency Response Workers
CDC Coping with a Disaster or Traumatic Event
CHAMP 5 ways to power your performance with optimism
Self-Care: Development/Learning and Growth

- Skills for Psychological Recovery
- Mental Health First Aid Training
- Stress, Trauma, and Resilience (STAR) Brief Emotional Support Team (BEST)
- Emotional Consequences Of Public Health Emergencies
- ASPR TRACIE Mini Modules to Relieve Stress for Healthcare Workers Responding to COVID-19
Who do I want to be during COVID-19?

**FEAR ZONE**
- I grab food, toilet paper and medication that I don’t need
- I spread emotions related to fear and anger
- I complain frequently
- I get mad easily
- I recognize that we are all trying to do our best

**LEARNING ZONE**
- I make my talents available to those who need them
- I stop compulsively consuming what hurts me, from food to news
- I become aware of the situation and think about how to act
- I evaluate information before spreading something false
- I identify my emotions

**GROWTH ZONE**
- I live in the present and focus on the future
- I am empathetic with myself and with others
- I thank and appreciate others
- I keep a happy emotional state and spread hope
- I look for a way to adapt to new changes
- I practice quietude, patience, relationships and creativity

I think of others and see how I can help them

I start to give up what I can’t control

I identify my emotions

I recognize that we are all trying to do our best

I practice quietude, patience, relationships and creativity

Image from Twitter: @IndigenousX
**image may have another primary source**
When to reach out?

**Symptoms** *(Mental Health America)*

- Confused thinking
- Prolonged depression
- Feelings of extreme highs and lows
- Excessive fears, worries and anxieties
- Social withdrawal
- Dramatic changes in eating/sleep
- Strong feelings of anger
- Delusions or hallucinations
- Growing inability to cope with daily problems and activities
- Suicidal thoughts
- Denial of obvious problems
- Numerous unexplained physical ailments
- Substance abuse

Have a **plan** and **know your options** (EAP, Hotlines, peer support, etc)

Call 911-if you believe someone is in imminent danger

National Suicide Prevention Hotline
**Call 1-800-273-8255**
Available 24 hours everyday

Disaster Distress Helpline
Call **1-800-985-5990** or text **TalkWithUs to 66746** to connect with a trained crisis counselor
Available 24 hours everyday
Questions?
Additional Resources

- ASPR TRACIE: COVID-19 Behavioral Health Resources
- Preventing and Addressing Moral Injury Affecting Healthcare Workers During the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Mini Modules to Relieve Stress For Healthcare Workers Responding to COVID-19: Stress Management Exercise
- NCPTSD: Moral Injury
- Learned Optimism (Seligman)
- CHAMP: 5 Ways Power Your Performance Optimism
- Talking with Others About COVID Safety
At the end of the day…
keep it simple

CARING FOR YOURSELF IN THE FACE OF DIFFICULT WORK

Our work can be overwhelming. Our challenge is to maintain our resilience so that we can keep doing the work with care, energy, and compassion.

10 things to do each day

1. Get enough sleep.
2. Get enough to eat.
3. Vary the work that you do.
4. Do some light exercise.
5. Do something pleasurable.
6. Focus on what you did well.
7. Learn from your mistakes.
8. Share a private joke.
9. Pray, meditate or relax.
10. Support a colleague.

For More Information see your supervisor or visit www.istss.org, www.proqol.org and www.compassionfatigue.org

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