



911 Wellness

Stress Less Workbook

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UNIT ONE: UNDERSTANDING YOUR STRESS

I Hate the Word Stress

This book is about the work of emergency communications and how to enjoy your professional life more. Generally the word stress is overdone. "Not another stress workshop, don't want to hear stressed out one more time." There are a few very good reasons for this in emergency communications.

First, we have been told stress is our fault - that if we simply did the right things we wouldn't BE stressed. Not true - as you will learn. What is true is that you have the ability to manage stress better. We all do. That is if you know how, and that is called stress management - another blah blah term. However, being the manager of your life and your stress, instead of the servant - has advantages. If you study and follow the concepts and gain the skills offered in this manual you are guaranteed to have more peace of mind at work and in your life in general. Some of the rewards you may receive from this learning are increased wellness, more sense of purpose, improved self-image, and overall enhanced workplace satisfaction.

What stress are we talking about? Early research on psychological stress focused on extreme conditions: combat, concentration camps, nuclear accidents, loss of loved ones, and serious injury. Or, focus was on extreme responses to stress: psychosis, incapacitating anxiety, bleeding ulcers, high blood pressure, heart conditions, etc., which become stressful conditions themselves. Fortunately, most of us don't have to deal with such serious conditions, but we all have some stress. And the ability to understand and 'manage' that stress can result in less severe symptoms and eventually less ailments.

We will study the impact of stress on workplace satisfaction, overall skill level and performance in call taking and dispatching. To some extent, mild to moderate anxiety increases our performance, especially on simple, easy tasks that we know well. Of course, intense stress usually screws everything up; however, some people "keep their cool" responding to failure or a serious challenge with more determination and effort, and doing better. And although some they may cope better than most, that doesn't mean stress cannot damage them eventually. What should be done? There is NO stress free life. Even boredom is stress producing. To understand, recognize, accept and manage the stress with some SKILL is the goal. Yes, skill for managing self is what this manual is about.

External Stress (Input)

In looking at the definition of stress you may read something like "upsetting or disruptive condition, occurring in response to adverse" external influences. What are adverse external influences? We know external means coming from outside ourselves, something we have no control over, something that happens to us, around us, within our life. Are external stressors different for each of us? Are stressful events always out of our control? Before we look at toxic stress, let's explore each person's identification of stressful events.

Are there some external stressors that pressure us all? Of course. Most of us are stressed by external events such as death, rape, loss, illness, and misfortune to our loved ones or ourselves. Although the same event can create different responses in each person differently then we must assume that: