
TABLE OF CONTENTS

UNIT ONE Understanding Your Stress	5
PERSONAL EXERCISE - <i>Wondering if you think you need to leave?</i> These surveys will show you where you are in your work life, your career and desires, and where you would like to go or should you stay.	
UNIT TWO This Wild Calling	18
PERSONAL EXERCISE - <i>Your workplace needs survey.</i> Are they getting filled? Isn't that a stressful job? But truly it isn't the 'work' - stress may be the workplace. True or not?	
UNIT THREE Know Thy Self	36
PERSONAL EXERCISE - <i>Your life values and purposes survey.</i> Have you ever taken just a moment in time to really think about what you value, your purpose, what you need to fulfill your life and is that happening now.	
UNIT FOUR Neutralizing Negativity	43
PERSONAL EXERCISE - <i>Burnout survey.</i> Are you surrounded by people who are negative; complaining, criticizing, blaming and shaming? Or, painfully enough, are you the one who is burned out and if so what do you need to do about that to have a long and happy career!	
UNIT FIVE Us Versus Them	53
PERSONAL EXERCISE - <i>Your conflict style.</i> We all react differently to conflict. Each 'style' has it's place depending on the situation. Find out how your style may affect you worklife.	
UNIT SIX Difficult People	69
PERSONAL EXERCISE - <i>Your own attitude survey.</i> This survey is how you see yourself. Do you have an optimistic outlook on life? If you do great, if not why not.	
UNITS SEVEN Your Body	80
PERSONAL EXERCISE - <i>Console Yoga.</i> Physical health is so very important for our caregivers. You need to be physically healthy to keep the promise of 911. Working shiftwork, eating habits, exercise and stretching after sitting for hours are all things to consider.	
UNIT EIGHT I Can't Get Past It	89
PERSONAL EXERCISE - <i>Compassion Fatigue Survey.</i> We know what you do. You handle calls that in the real world outside of 911 would break a heart. What about you?	
UNIT NINE Stress-Less Tips	100
PERSONAL EXERCISE - <i>Just for today!</i> Most likely you have many ways to avoid being burned out, overly tired, negative and unhappy. Here we go through many tips including the exercise JUST FOR TODAY.	
UNIT TEN Going Deeper	111
PERSONAL EXERCISE - <i>Are you living your life purpose?</i> What a great opportunity to take a moment to learn more about YOU and who you are, what you want and where you are going. We love this exercise - mandatory.	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	123

UNIT ONE

Understanding Your Stress

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, I don't want to hear stressed out one more time."* There are a few very good reasons for this in emergency communications.

This story is about a stress class I taught in Pennsylvania. Management felt there was a lot of negativity, in fighting, gossip and us against them. I had a good reputation as a mediator and workshop leader so the management hired me for a two day workshop. It was one of those trips! The flight was delayed, GPS took me on an unwanted tour of the countryside, I arrived at the hotel after dark, and I was exhausted.

The next morning I shook off the day before and felt energized to offer the workshop. I arrived to find the entire class of 30 dispatchers seated; arms crossed, looking at the table, out the window, or at their phones. This was a very chilly reception.

I began introducing myself and going over the timeline, then I stopped. I gently told the group that I sensed they didn't want to be here. If you don't want to be here, you won't learn anything, so you are free to leave. One tall, thin man about 40, stood up and walked out. In all my years, I never had that reaction. Everyone was stunned.

My mediator training kicked in. *"Can someone tell me about the 'elephant' in the room because we have two days ahead of us."* A few people were willing to share. No, they didn't want to be here as they were mandated. Some were on their only day off and others had worked grave. In addition they were told I was some west coast hot shot to come here and 'fix them.' And in their minds all that needed 'fixed' was the poor leadership. Yikes.

This was not good, so I had to come up with plan B. I asked the group to take a 15 minute break, out of the room. While they were gone I listed these things on the board.

*Scheduling *Overtime *Pay *Equipment *Negativity * Gossip * Favoritism * Supervision
*Leadership * Training * Hiring * Laziness * Cliques * Procedures * Fairness * Conflict * Unresolved Problem * Chair * CAD * Something Else Not Listed Here

When they returned, I asked each table of five to select two items they felt they needed to address. Then I would assign an amount of time to the items selected to discuss the issues they want to talk about.

Once the area was selected we would define the problem and then determine what the 'perfect' solution would look like for this problem. Next, list what would have to STOP and what would have to START for this problem to be solved. Finally we rated the control level 1, 2, or 3 that they in their own position had over the solution.

As you can imagine, this turned out to be the best stress workshop I had ever *facilitated*. I wasn't training, or offering the dispatchers all my supposed wisdom about stress, I was, yes, facilitating a problem solving session for them.

I do offer a unique perspective on stress. I have been where you are; on the console answering calls, supervising a shift, under pressure, burned out, and feeling so fortunate to be in this line of work - all at the same time!