

Stress Management
Friday 18th November 2005
13:45 – 15:15



What is common to all of these photos?



6.1

**Dealing with
Stress**

•Session Objectives

Relate personal stress to security and safety – i.e.

- ◆ Discuss causes of stress (two types)
- ◆ Explain some psycho-social results of stress
- ◆ Recognize signs of “burn-out”
- ◆ Discuss tips on managing your own stress
- ◆ Discuss strategies for managing stress within the team or organization

**AND NOW –
A QUICK STRESS TEST**

See page 173 in the workshop guide

Exercise: Chronic Work-Related Stress Evaluation

Indicate the relative frequency with which you experience the following sources of stress.

Frequency Scale

1 – Never 2 – Infrequently 3 – Sometimes 4 – Often 5 – Always

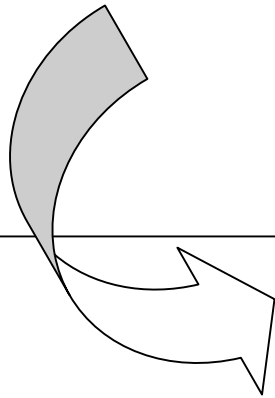
Condition

1. I am unclear about what is expected of me.
2. My co-workers seem unclear about what my job is.
3. I have differences of opinion with my superiors.
4. The demands of others for my time are in conflict.
5. I lack confidence in management.
6. Management expects me to interrupt my work for new priorities.
7. Conflict exists between my unit and others it must work with.
8. I get feedback only when my performance is unsatisfactory.
9. Decisions or changes that affect me are made with out my knowledge or involvement.
10. I am expected to accept the decisions of others without being told their rationale.
11. I must attend meetings to get my job done.
12. I am cautious about what I say in meetings.
13. I have too much to do and too little time to do it.
14. I do not have enough work to do.
15. I feel overqualified for the work I actually do.
16. I feel underqualified for the work I actually do.
17. The people I work with closely are trained in a field that is different from mine.
18. I must go to other departments to get my job done.
19. I have unsettled conflicts with my co-workers.
20. I get no personal support from my co-workers.
21. I spend my time “fighting fires” rather than working according to a plan.
22. I do not have the right amount of interaction (too much or too little) with others.
23. I do not receive the right amount of supervision (too much or too little).
24. I do not have the opportunity to use my knowledge and skills.
25. I do not receive meaningful work assignments

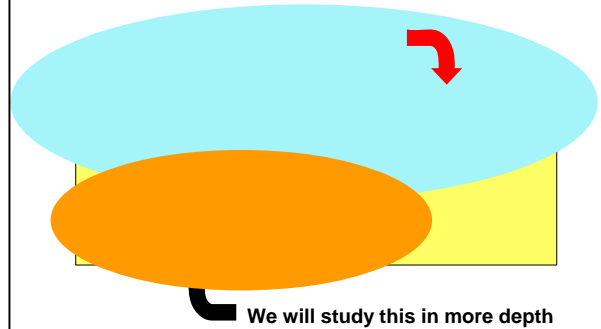
Total points _____

- ◆ All the participants were to take this test to see the result of the average stress level, maximum, and minimum level of stress among them.

What causes of stress have you seen or felt?



2 major types of stress affect humanitarian staff



What causes of stress have you seen or felt? What are the sources of your stress?

Participants' answers include:

Lack of strategies / food / uncooperative team / insufficient security environment / earthquake / communication / noise / capability of supervisor etc.

Points to be Considered:

- *Causes* of Critical Incident (or traumatic) Stress
- *Symptoms* of Critical Incident (or traumatic) Stress

Symptoms of critical incident (or traumatic) stress

The three main symptom clusters in PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) - particularly if they persist for more than a month after the traumatic event and cause clinically significant distress or impairment are:

Intrusions - such as flashbacks or nightmares, where the traumatic event is re-experienced.

Avoidance - when the person tries to reduce exposure to people or things that might bring on their intrusive symptoms.

And **Hyperarousal** - meaning physiologic signs of increased arousal, such as hyper vigilance or increased startle response.

causes of critical incident (or traumatic) stress

"...the person experienced a traumatic event involving actual or threatened death or injury to themselves or others -- and where they felt fear, helplessness or horror."

[See www.trauma-pages.com](http://www.trauma-pages.com)



Scores of people were injured when a bomb shattered the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad - August 19, 2003

Agence France-Presse

Tips for dealing with traumatic stress

- Understand that this is a “normal” reaction to abnormal events – not weakness
- Encourage talking or other communication about the event
- Understand that it may take time to return to “normal”
- In severe cases, seek professional help

CHRONIC – WORK-RELATED STRESS



One must understand that it is a “normal” reaction to have critical incident (traumatic) stress, and it is not a weakness. Everyone deals with stress everyday at everywhere at some level.

causes of chronic stress

Pressure

- need to find solutions urgently
- over-heavy workload with difficult and often unfamiliar tasks
- responsibility overload

Uncertainty

- fear
- Lack of adequate funding and support
- Lack of rules or procedures for day to day activities
- Lack of information

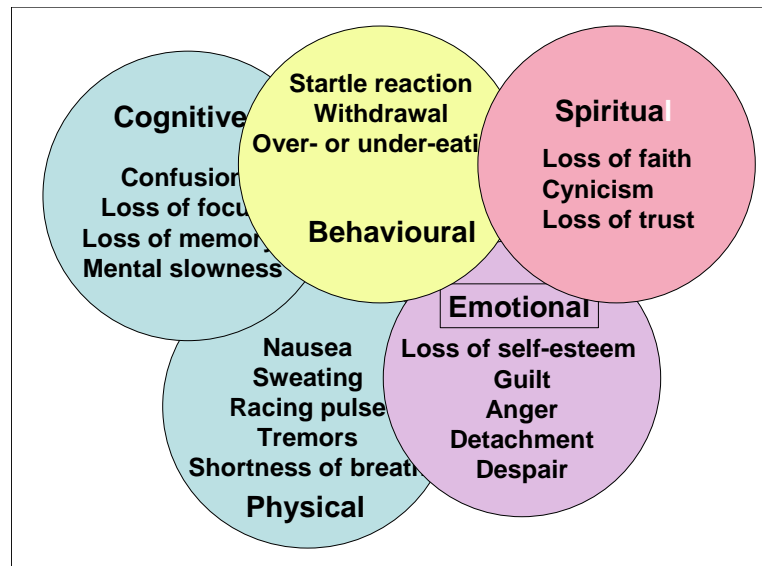
What are the effects of chronic stress?

These kinds of stress will be accumulated, if not treated, even when the causes of the stress is over.

Psycho-physical results

The usual human stress reactions fall in 5 general, and loosely defined, areas....

- physical
- cognitive
- emotional
- behavioural
- spiritual



signs of “burnout”

Definition:

According to New York psychologist Herbert J. Freudenberger, burnout is a state of fatigue or frustration brought about by a devotion to a cause, a way of life, or a relationship that failed to produce the expected reward.

Symptoms:

- emotional and physical exhaustion
- a sense of alienation, cynicism, impatience, negativism
- feelings of detachment to the point that the individual begins to resent work involved and the people who are a part of that work.



Stress affects teams!

Stress affects teams – how?

- Rumours
- Formation of cliques
- Conflict
- Loss of group energy and initiative
- “Scapegoating” of leadership
- Negative attitude towards workplace and organization
- Anger
- Abuse of alcohol, drugs
- Reduced work output, quality, and coordination
- Mistakes, errors, and dangerous behaviours
- High turnover rate of staff
- High incidence of sick days -

People usually think that the stress only affects the person who is stressed, therefore often keep the problem to themselves. However, stress can affect the other people around as well.

What can be done about stress in the field?

- **Raise your own awareness of stress (like right now)**
- **Stay healthy and fit – exercise, eat well, get sleep**
- **Maintain balance in life between work and family**
- **Develop healthy work-life routines**
- **Do routine “reality checks”**
- **Make a list of accomplishments (even small ones)**
- **Take leaves when possible– do not put them off**

Some real cases from UNHCR experience.....

See pages 174 – 177 in your workshop guide

FILM: *All in a Days Work* (UNHCR Somalia)

Real cases of stress among the UN staff working in the field are shown in the film. Some types of stress can be dealt in the field, but in some cases, the staff are forced to withdraw themselves from the field in order to recover from the traumatic stress

What can be done by the Organization?

- brief staff when they come on duty
- prepare staff for difficult or traumatic aspects of work
- keep lines of communication among staff and whole organization open
- get information to team members about family and vice versa
- communicate concern for staff
- never assume that people know you are pleased with their work...*tell them!*

The Buddy System

- pair up to keep an eye on each other's stress and fatigue levels
 - an exhausted person is not the best judge of his/her own efficiency
-

Giving Permission to Go Off Duty

- to staff and supervisors alike: give permission to take care of themselves
- institute shifts with breaks and rotation of staff
- set example by rotating tasks, eating and resting and check that staff do likewise

Case Studies:

Stress Case Study 1:

You are the head of office...

An assistant (44) in your office is a single mother of 3 children, is hardworking but has been very quiet and has kept to herself for the last 6 months. Previously she was known to be very friendly, outgoing and always willing to help everyone in the working team around her. She is now generally withdrawn, and speaks very little to others or in meetings. She looks unhappy and appears nervous. She just wants to get out of the office and get home as soon as she can each day. Her male supervisor is well-liked and has been in the office for 9 months.

The background story is:

She told you yesterday that she has been working for this humanitarian organization for 11 years. When the new protection officer arrived 9 months ago, she extended her cordiality to him as was her usual friendly self. However, things began to go bad when he got the wrong idea about her friendliness. He began to ask her to work late, kept making comments to her about her good looks and often invited her to dinner. She kept refusing but did not really understand what was going on. Then he began to send her small notes. He continues to get very close to her and touches her in inappropriate ways. She does not know what to do and feels that no one will understand what she is going through and how miserable this makes her feel. This situation is not going to resolve itself and is getting worse.

Problem:

How are you going to approach this situation? The supervisor has been with the organization for a long time. He's married with children but they are not with him at the duty station. He is very highly regarded by his seniors in HQ. He has signed the Code of Conduct and should be aware about his behavior. He is also a very dominant character who does not accept criticism in any form.

Group's Answer:

- The Supervisor should change the position of the woman so she does not have to deal with the sexual harassment, and also this will indirectly allow the man to realize what he is doing is making her uncomfortable.

Stress Case Study 2

You are the head of your agency's office...

An office driver (47) has worked in a field office for 9 years and is well respected and efficient. It is noticeable that he is losing weight rapidly. He sometimes takes time off as sick-leave. He can be forgetful, but he works long hours and does not take breaks. He often volunteers for fieldtrips and does much more than the other drivers. He has 3 children and his wife died 12 months ago.

Background Story:

He was told 2 years ago that he was HIV positive. The drugs needed to control it are expensive and beyond his means to buy. He is worried about the children and does not have anyone to care for them should he die. He cannot afford to give up his job. He works hard and is often very tired at the end of the day. He doesn't know the organization's policy on HIV. He feels completely alone and is scared to speak to anyone in case he was to lose his job.

Note: The driver's supervisor is the Head of Office and is not approachable and NOT considered to be a sympathetic person. It is felt that the driver will have a road accident if his long hours and tiredness, and stress are not addressed.

Problem:

You have been informed of this situation by a junior staff member, who wishes not to be quoted. What course of action would you take?

Group's Answer:

- Explain the organization policies on HIV/AIDs to all the staff at the staff meeting.
- Do not allow the driver to work overtime, for his own and others' safety.

Stress Case Study 3

You are a newly arrived international staff member and operation in a high risk environment in which often verges on an evacuation situation. The government forces are in frequent conflict with a separatist fighting force. Heavy weapons are in use including tanks and artillery. The civilian population are victims and you are constantly out in the battle areas and trying to locate IDP's in the hills and forests, but can do little to mitigate their situation as the government forces are not willing to minimize their violence against the villagers. Killing of villagers and the burning of their homes is a common occurrence. When you are in the field, you have to cross government checkpoints and you are sometimes abused, harassed and intimidated by the soldiers. The separatists cause no problems and treat staff with respect. You and your 10 colleagues have been managing this situation for 6 months but are becoming tired and unhappy. The cruelty of the government forces and the situation of the victims has caused all staff to be no longer objective and they openly sympathize with the victims and have come to dislike the government forces and only tolerate civilians of the same ethnicity. The staff are no longer impartial. All staff have become tired and work an 18 hour day 7 days a week. The head of office does not often go into the field and may not fully appreciate the stress levels that his staff are under.

Problem:

How do you manage your own personal stress?

How do you improve the morale of the group?

Group's Answer:

- Make a suggestion to the head of office to set the rules to require the workers to rest.
- In order to manage the stress level of the workers, what do you do? → Encourage the workers to get together, give them some opportunities to "relax" and to relieve their stresses, such as having some "get together".

Stress Case Study 4

You are a field officer in a remote area in East Africa serving several refugee camps totaling over 100,000 people. In order to reach your camps daily you must travel many miles through the countryside in which bandits lurk. They often mount ambushes on police and intimidate civilians. It has become so dangerous that you must use an armed escort. Your agency pays the soldiers and provides both their vehicles and fuel. The soldiers are unreliable and untrustworthy and often use the transport to move refugees by operating a “taxi service”. The risk of ambush and physical injury to you is high and you have no confidence in the host government security forces to protect you. Corruption is common at all levels of the security forces and government. You have been in this stressful situation for 2 years. You are no longer coping well with your personal fear and you suspect that there are many other colleagues in the same situation.

Problem:

There is a fear that some staff are burning out but they are afraid of admitting it and compromising their jobs. You are the head of office and have become increasingly worried about the situation. What do you do?

Group’s Answer:

- Check leaves taken by each staff
- Organize an informal meeting with staff on stress situations
- Arrange for periodic visits with a counselor
- Report HQ to arrange alternative means of transportations
- 24-hrs free internet service/internet calls

LOWEST STRESS IN THE GROUP - 38

AVERAGE FOR THE GROUP = 65.7

HIGHEST STRESS IN THE GROUP - 88

This is the overall result of the past of the same stress evaluation test that was taken by the participants earlier in this section of the presentation in the past.

Below is the result of the evaluation of the workshop participants.

No.	Total Points	No.	Total Points
1	54	12	53
2	54	13	51
3	59	14	64
4	82	15	55
5	57	16	53
6	87	17	59
7	68	18	69
8	48	19	53
9	62	20	48
10	39	21	56
11	70		

Average for this group: 59.1

Lowest for this Group: 39

Highest for this group: 87

conclusions

- Many signs and symptoms of stress (both critical as well as chronic) are very common – they can be easily recognized - by others
- Burnout is a serious condition that often occurs in dangerous, humanitarian field situations
- High levels of stress can lead to increased risk of safety and security incidents
- Managing personal stress is your responsibility – do not underestimate the importance of this high priority task
- Managing organizational or team stress is everyone's responsibility. Find ways to openly recognize and accept this fact as a group.