A collection of military medals and a compass on a wooden surface. The medals include a red ribbon with a circular emblem, a blue ribbon with a circular emblem, and two large silver star-shaped medals with intricate designs. A pair of gold-rimmed glasses and a silver compass are also visible.

# Stress Reactions: How they help you and How they hurt you

Understanding Some of the Issues  
Dealing with Critical Incident Stress as  
a Dispatcher and Supervisor



# What You Need to Know

- ◆ When the signs and symptoms of stress are within “normal” ranges
- ◆ When stress reactions are interfering with the job
- ◆ When you or a colleague is indicating a need for intervention
- ◆ If suicide is a potential for the individual

# Stress Response Syndromes

- ◆ *General Stress*

- ◆ All
- ◆ Normal
- ◆ Eustress
- ◆ Distress



Recovery

- ◆ *Cumulative Stress*

- ◆ Pile up
- ◆ Takes time
- ◆ “Burnout”
- ◆ Destructive
- ◆ Changes in health, performance, relationships, and personality



# Stress Response Syndromes

- ◆ *Critical Incident Stress*

- ◆ Event
- ◆ Normal
- ◆ Painful
- ◆ Interpretation

Resolution

- ◆ *Post Traumatic Stress Disorder*

- ◆ Event
  - ◆ Intrusion
  - ◆ Avoidance
- >
- ◆ Arousal
  - ◆ 30 days +
  - ◆ Disruption to normal life pursuits

# Stress Equals Change



# Arousal

- ◆ Cognitive
- ◆ Emotional
- ◆ Physical





# Routine Signs and Symptoms

- ◆ Alert
- ◆ More rapid breathing
- ◆ Yawning
- ◆ Heart rate increases
- ◆ Pupils widen
- ◆ Increased adrenalin
- ◆ Increased other stress chemicals
- ◆ Eyes scan
- ◆ Perceptual focus
- ◆ Active listening
- ◆ Mental review of past
- ◆ Preparations for fight or flight
- ◆ Selective activation or suppression of bodily functions




These early signals of reacting to a strong stimulus are actually adaptive and can help you to perform better and in a safe manner



# Other Common Expected Reactions to Stressful Events

- ◆ Increased anger
- ◆ Increased irritability
- ◆ Aggressive stance
- ◆ Seeking defensive positions
- ◆ Seeking cues to danger
- ◆ Seeking cues to safety

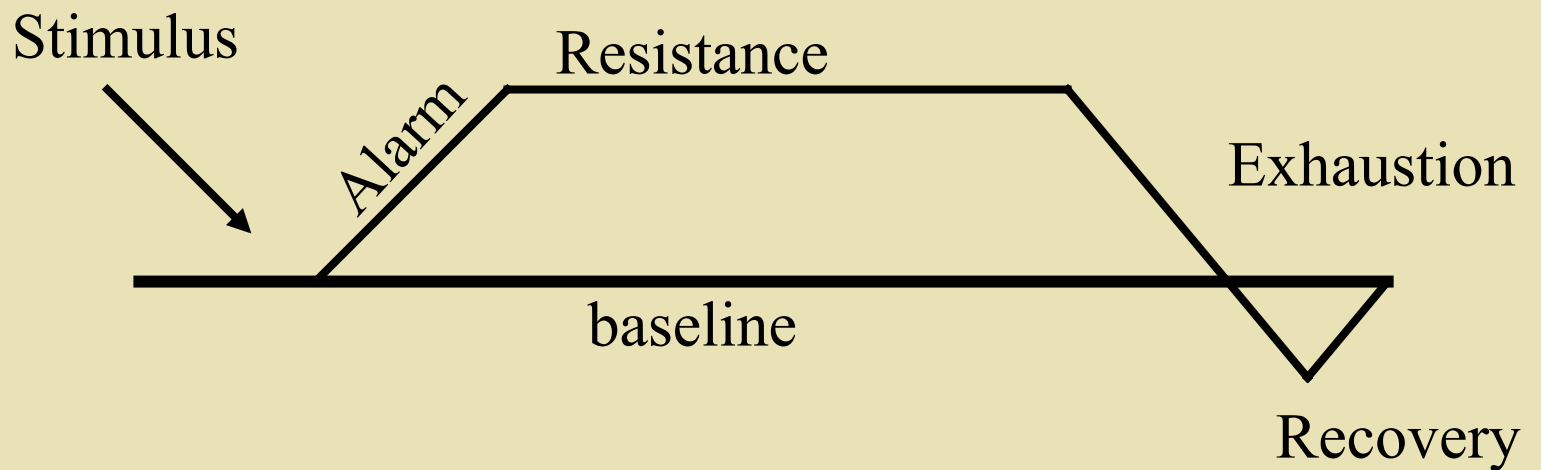
A collection of military medals and a compass are arranged on a wooden surface. On the left, a wooden board with a checkerboard pattern holds several medals. One medal has a red ribbon with a circular emblem, another has a blue ribbon with a circular emblem, and a third is a large silver star-shaped medal with a central emblem. A pair of gold-rimmed glasses with thin temples lies across the board. In the bottom left corner, a circular compass with a white face and black markings is visible.

Having stress is  
not bad in itself.  
What is bad is  
experiencing  
excessive or  
prolonged stress



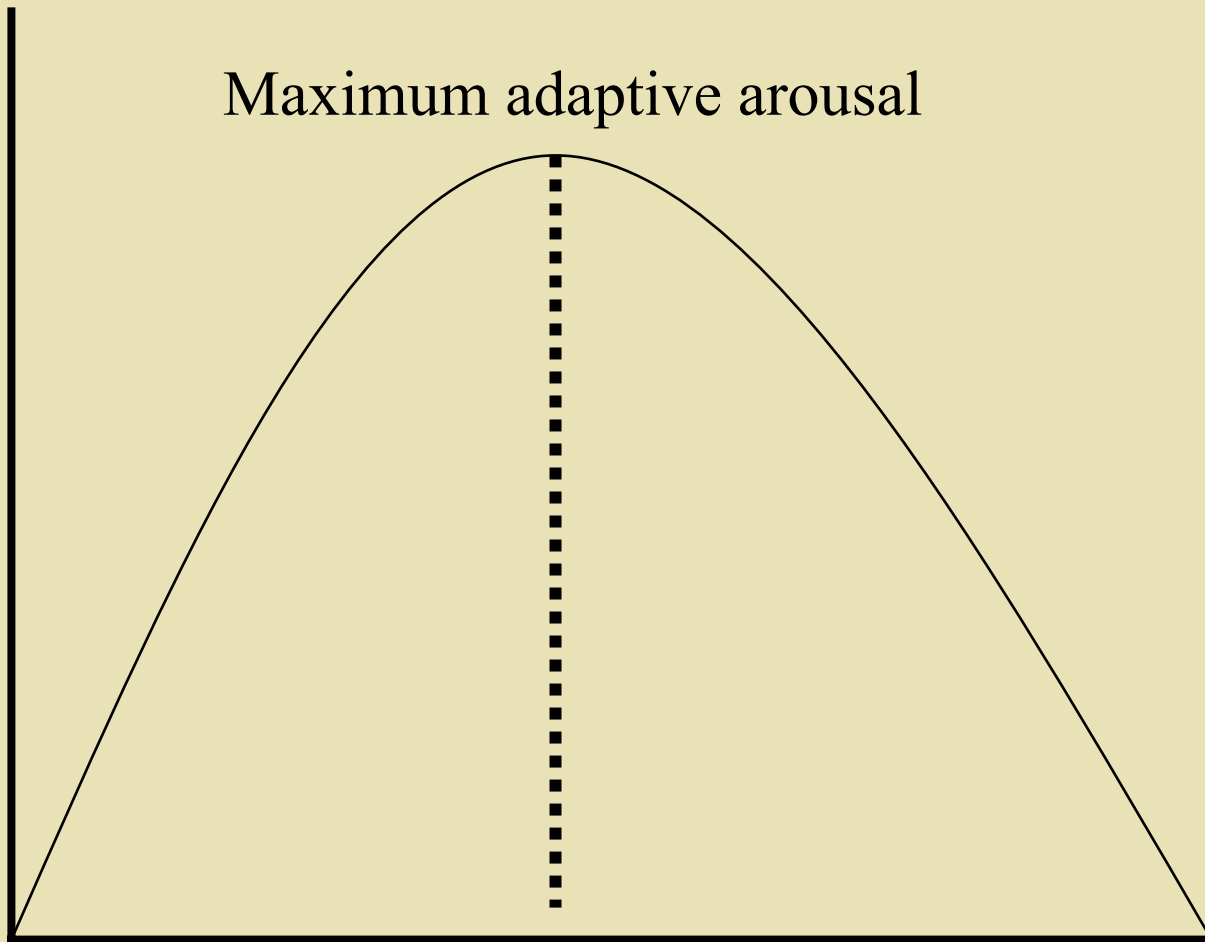
Initially stress reactions are adaptive and helpful. As the stress reactions increase, however, there is a greater chance that they will be maladaptive and disruptive

# General Adaptation Syndrome





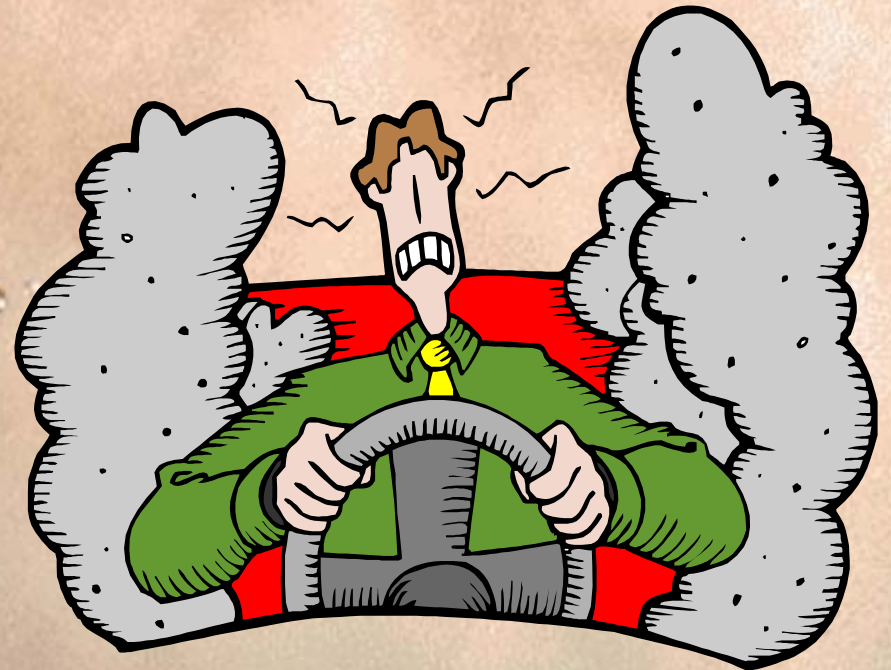
Health and performance



Stress arousal




Cumulative Stress:  
When arousal turns into  
malfunction





# Early Signs of Distress

- ◆ Chronic fatigue
- ◆ Feelings of boredom
- ◆ Increasing anxiety
- ◆ Vague feelings of depression

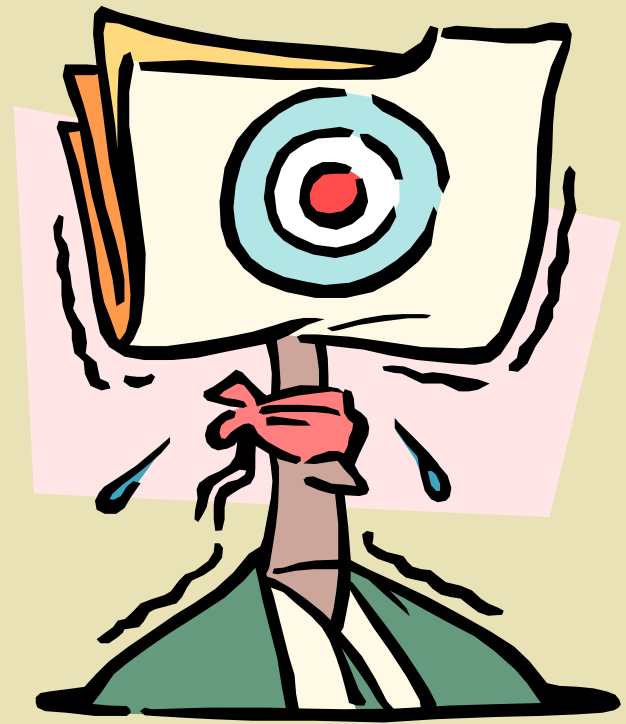


# When we do not pay attention to the early signs

- ◆ Anger
- ◆ Irritability
- ◆ Frustration
- ◆ Emotional outbursts
- ◆ Labile
- ◆ Forgetting important things
- ◆ Problems in decision making
- ◆ Problem solving difficulties
- ◆ Loss of attention
- ◆ Risk taking increases
- ◆ Depression
- ◆ Increased alcohol
- ◆ Withdrawal from others
- ◆ Loss of concentration

# And if we ignore all the previous signs

- ◆ Intense depression
- ◆ Chronic irritability
- ◆ Loss of objectivity
- ◆ Paranoia
- ◆ Extreme frustration
- ◆ Thoughts of suicide
- ◆ Feelings of intense pressure



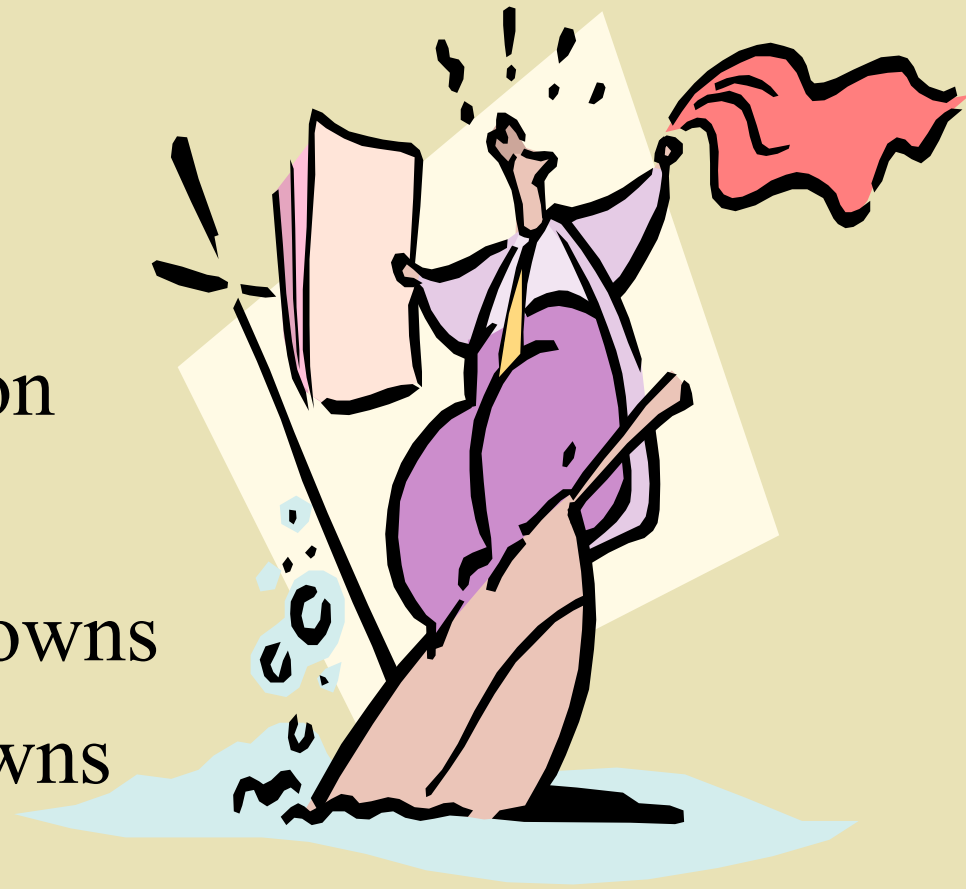


# The pathological end result

- ◆ Dramatic changes in performance
- ◆ Negative alterations in physical and mental health
- ◆ Destructive changes in relationships with family, friends and colleagues
- ◆ Significant negative changes in personality

# The Final Stages

- ◆ Loss of control
- ◆ Alcohol abuse
- ◆ Severe depression
- ◆ Rage reactions
- ◆ Physical breakdowns
- ◆ Mental breakdowns
- ◆ Suicide



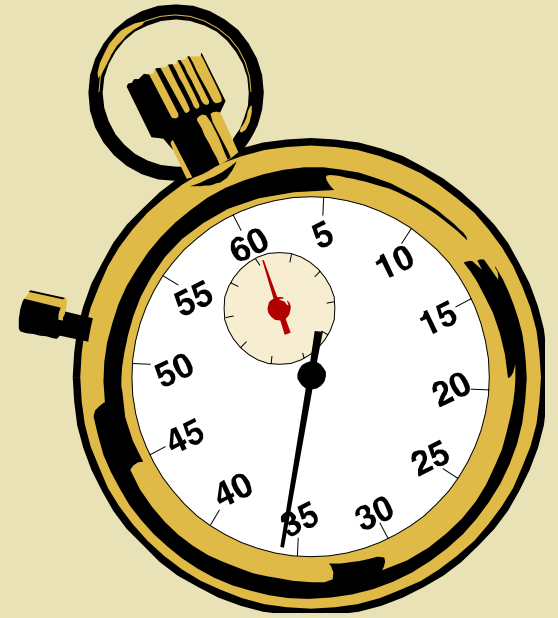


# The Numbers are Shocking

- ◆ 1 person succeeds in killing themselves in the USA every 17.1 minutes
- ◆ Over three hundred youngsters below age 15 kill themselves each year

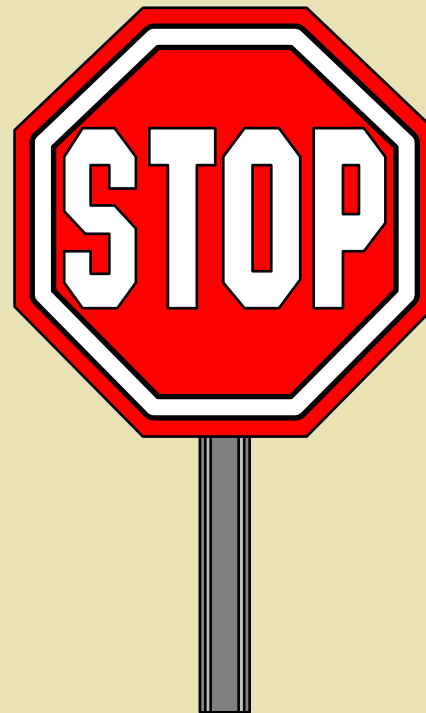


A suicide  
attempt  
takes place  
every  
39 seconds



# Suicide Warning Signs

- ◆ Talk of death, suicide, or harming oneself
- ◆ Chronic panic or anxiety
- ◆ Constant insomnia
- ◆ Altered personality





# Suicide Warning Signs

- ◆ Changes in sleeping or eating habits
- ◆ Dropping performance
- ◆ Dropping grades
- ◆ Giving away treasured possessions



# Suicide Warning Signs

- ◆ Becoming more isolated and pulling away from normal social activities
- ◆ Talk of depression, life is not worth living



# Suicide Warning Signs

- ◆ Loss of interest in formerly pleasurable activities
- ◆ Loss of energy

# Depression - Suicide Relationship

- ◆ Withdrawal from social activities
- ◆ Feelings of being useless / worthless



# Depression - Suicide Relationship

- ◆ Hapless
- ◆ Helpless
- ◆ Hopeless



# Suicide and Alcohol

If you are depressed and drinking you have a 58% higher potential to commit suicide than if you are depressed and not drinking



# The Sudden Onset of Acute distress



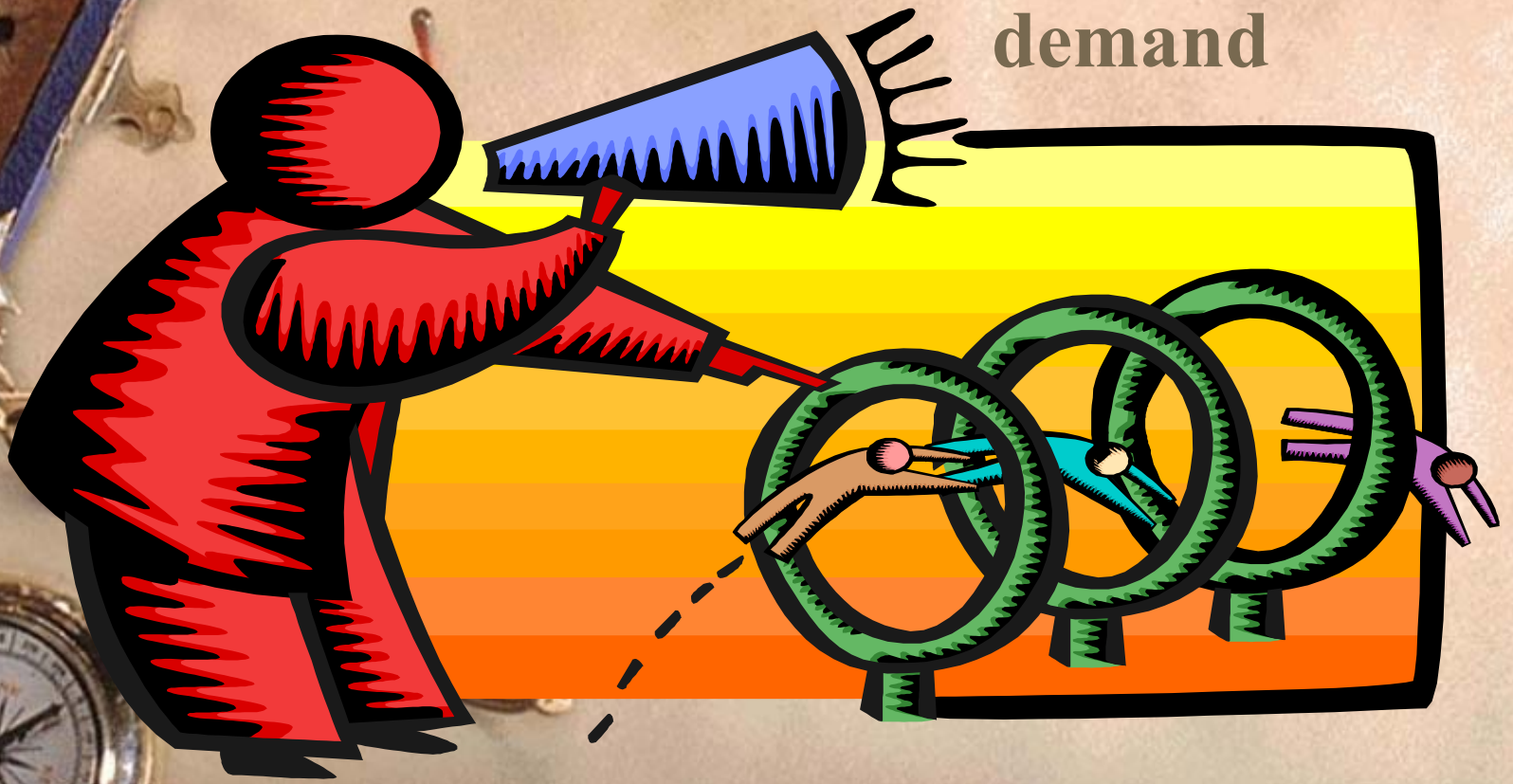


# Critical Incident

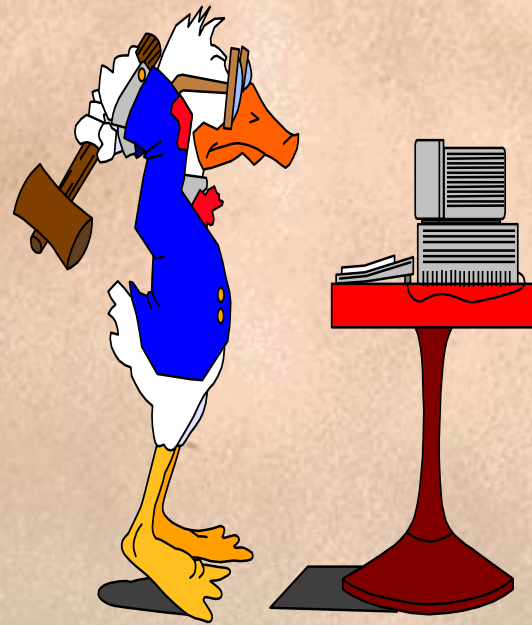
An event that has the capability of overwhelming the coping abilities of an individual or a group

# Crisis

An acute emotional  
reaction to a  
stimulus or a  
demand



Crisis is a state of emotional turmoil



# Crisis Response Characteristics

- ◆ The relative balance between thought and feelings is disturbed.



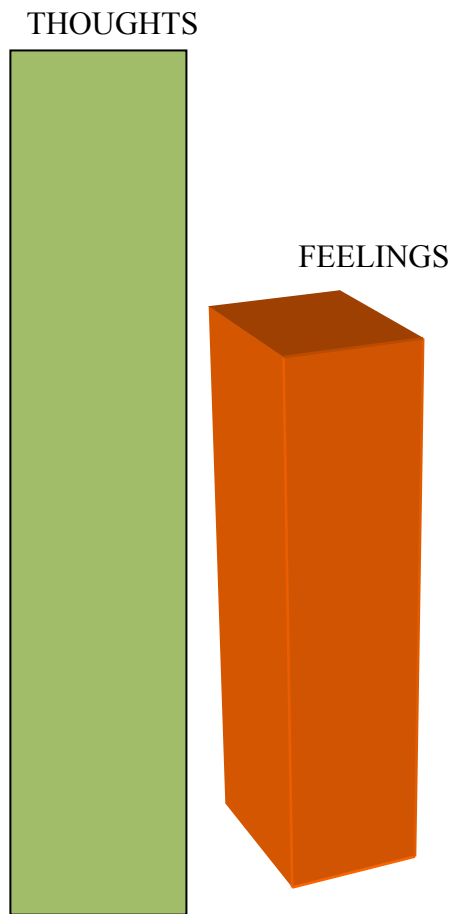


# Crisis Response Characteristics

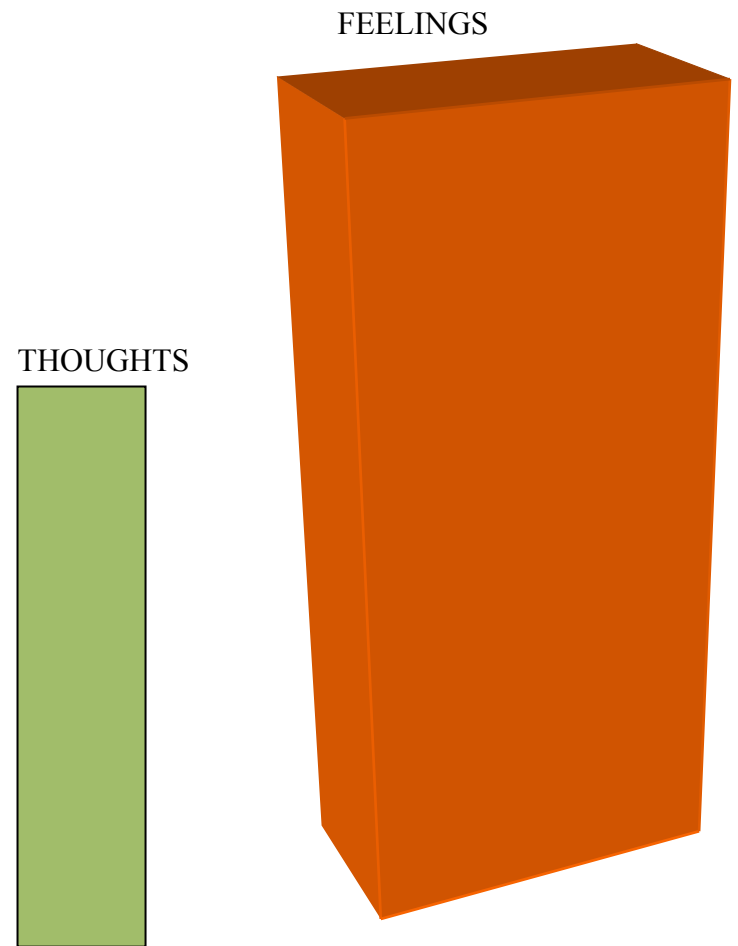
- ◆ The usual coping methods do not work effectively
- ◆ There is evidence of mild to severe impairment in the individuals or groups involved in the situation



## PRE-CRISIS



## CRISIS



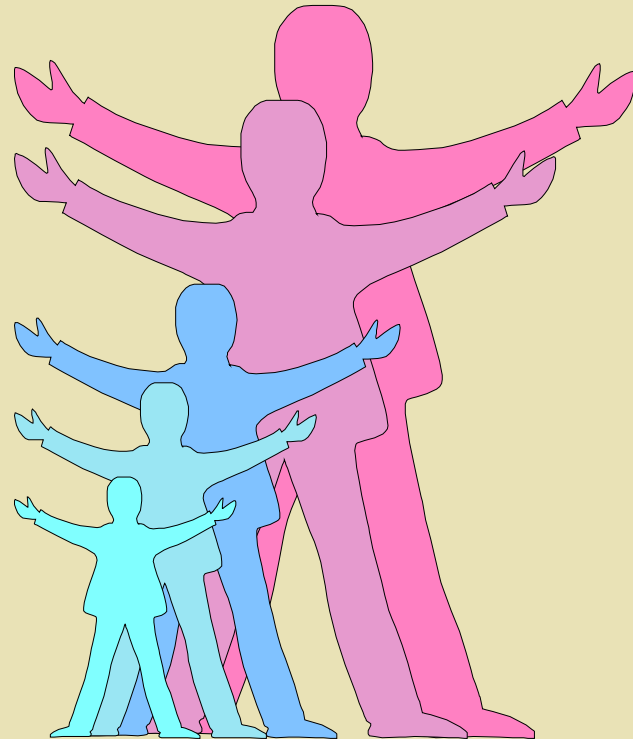


Anyone can  
experience a crisis  
at anytime in his or  
her life.



# Impairment factors

- ◆ Suddenness
- ◆ Intensity
- ◆ Degree
- ◆ Duration
- ◆ Level of loss





# Impairment factors

- ◆ Age
- ◆ Injury or death to relatives or friends
- ◆ Resources available
- ◆ Education, training , availability of coping mechanisms




# Why have a stress reaction?

- ◆ Protects the person
- ◆ Generates fight reaction
- ◆ Generates flight reaction
- ◆ Enables rapid reaction
- ◆ Enhances survival thinking
- ◆ Enables perceptual focusing



The Critical Incident Stress  
reaction is all  
about  
survival

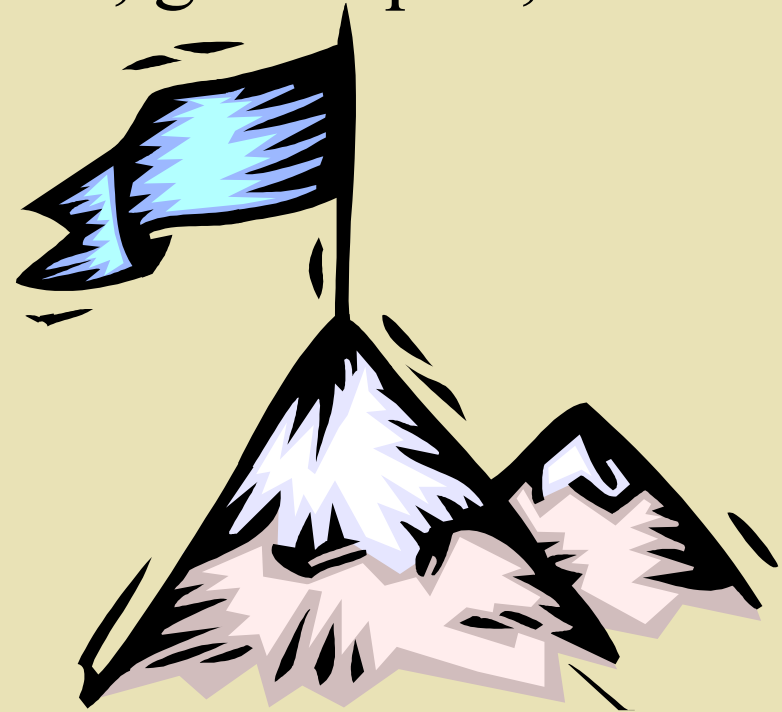
A collection of military medals and a compass on a wooden surface. The medals include a red ribbon with a circular emblem, a blue ribbon with a circular emblem, and two Maltese crosses with central emblems. A pair of glasses and a compass are also visible.

# Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

The Pathological End  
Result of an Unresolved  
Critical Incident Stress  
Reaction

# Six Essential Elements of PTSD

- ◆ Horrible, Terrible, Awful, grotesques, overwhelming event





# Six Elements of PTSD

- ◆ Intrusion of thoughts and images
- ◆ Avoidance of stimuli
- ◆ Arousal
- ◆ Must last thirty days or more
- ◆ Significant disruption in normal life pursuits



# Intrusion

- ◆ See aspects
- ◆ Hear it again
- ◆ Smell it again
- ◆ Taste it again
- ◆ Feel it again
- ◆ Cannot stop thinking about it
- ◆ Dreams / nightmares



# Avoidance

- ◆ Avoid place
- ◆ Avoid people
- ◆ Avoid conversations
- ◆ Avoid reminders
- ◆ Excessive sleep
- ◆ Limit activities
- ◆ Stay indoors



# Arousal

- ◆ Sleepless
- ◆ Restless
- ◆ Loss of attention
- ◆ Loss of concentration
- ◆ Loss of ability to relax
- ◆ Hyper-alert




# Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

- ◆ The system became stuck
- ◆ The normal has turned into the abnormal
- ◆ Can alter a person's life
- ◆ Needs corrective action
- ◆ Rarely goes away by itself
- ◆ New aggressive treatments available

As Human Beings, We All  
Suffer the Condition of  
“Universal Vulnerability”.  
That Is, Anyone of Us Could  
Develop PTSD



A corkboard with a blue border is pinned with several military medals. At the top left, a red ribbon with a circular emblem is pinned. Below it, a silver star-shaped medal with a central emblem is pinned. To the left, a blue ribbon with a circular emblem is pinned. At the bottom left, a silver star-shaped medal with a central emblem is pinned. A pair of gold-rimmed glasses is placed over the medals. In the bottom left corner, a circular compass is visible. The background is a light-colored, textured surface.

Recognizing the signs  
and symptoms of stress  
is not enough

We have to do  
something about it

As E-911 Dispatchers  
Failure to Provide  
Support and Care for  
the Team Members  
Jeopardizes Unit  
Cohesion and Capacity  
to Function Under  
Duress



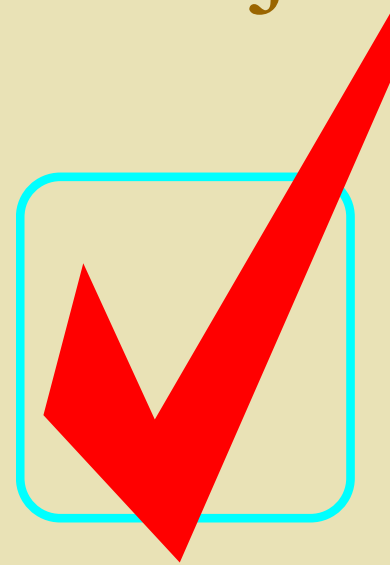
A collection of symbolic objects is arranged on a light-colored surface. On the left, a portion of a chessboard with a blue and brown checkered pattern is visible, featuring several chess pieces. Below the chessboard are two ornate medals: one with a red ribbon and a white star, and another with a blue ribbon and a white star. A silver compass is positioned at the bottom left. A pair of gold-rimmed glasses with thin temples is placed in the center, with one temple resting on the chessboard and the other on the surface. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

# Crisis Intervention

Emotional “first aid” designed to assist the person in crisis to return to adaptive functioning

# Crisis Intervention Objectives

- ◆ Stabilize
- ◆ Mitigate
- ◆ Mobilize
- ◆ Normalize
- ◆ Restoration to adaptive function





# Salmon Principles

- ◆ Simplicity
- ◆ Brevity
- ◆ Innovation
- ◆ Pragmatism
- ◆ Proximity
- ◆ Immediacy
- ◆ Expectancy

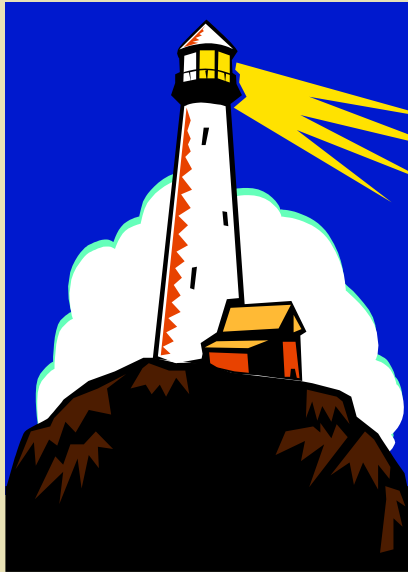
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# Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)

CISM is a comprehensive, systematic, and multi-tactic approach to managing traumatic stress within an organization or community

# CISM Components

- ◆ Before: Education, planning, protocol development, policy development





# CISM Components

- ◆ During: On-scene support services, one-on-ones, advice to command, support to victims
- ◆ After: One-on-ones, defusing, CISM, demobilization, spouse support, follow up services




# Critical Incident Stress Management - CISM

- ◆ Comprehensive
- ◆ Systematic
- ◆ Multi-component
- ◆ Before / During / After
- ◆ Individual
- ◆ Group
- ◆ Organizational
- ◆ Family



# Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)

- ◆ Preparation
- ◆ Education
- ◆ On-scene support
- ◆ Defusing
- ◆ CISD
- ◆ 1:1
- ◆ Family support
- ◆ Follow up and referral mechanisms

A vertical strip on the left side of the slide features a collage of military medals and a compass rose. At the top, there are several circular medals with intricate designs. Below them is a large, ornate cross-shaped medal with a central circular emblem. At the bottom, a portion of a compass rose is visible, showing cardinal directions and degree markings.

Crisis Intervention is relatively simple to learn and apply, but it has a real potential to make a difference in the lives of others, and it can save some of those lives when properly utilized.



International Critical Incident  
Stress Foundation

(410) 750-9600

emergency (410) 313-2473

[www.icisf.org](http://www.icisf.org)

# The End



