

Stress & Burnout for Frontline Staff

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)

By: Jason Carey, Ph.D.
CISM Specialist
Counselling Manager at Kids Help Phone & Good2Talk
Post-Secondary Student Helpline

Wednesday, September 28th, 2017



Stress & Burnout for Frontline Staff

Agenda

CISMP-Structured Education (*Removing the fuse*)

- 1) Biography
- 2) What constitutes a Critical Incident (CI)
- 3) Defusings and Debriefings
- 4) Types of stress
- 5) CIS and Good2Talk / Kids Help Phone
- 6) Common reactions to CIS
- 7) "The process"
- 8) Coping strategies

Stress & Burnout for Frontline Staff

My Biography

- Involved in crisis counselling since 1991
- Directly involved in CISM for more than 15 years
- Certified through the City of Edmonton (Basic and Advanced CISM)
- Worked and trained with the RCMP and the DND
- Member of the Peer Training Team with Edmonton Garrison, Land Forces Western Area 1 PPCLI (first regiment deployed to Afghanistan)
- Responded to natural disasters, industrial accidents, MVAs, abductions, suicides, line of duty deaths/injuries, fires, operational theatre deaths (death notifications), bank robberies, homicides, sexual assaults and child abuse
- Past tenures: Edmonton Police Services Victim Services Unit (7 years), DND (pre and post deployment CIS and Stress Innoculation-4 years)
- Conducted numerous de-fusings and debriefings over my 26 years in the field and have witnessed the positive effects of CISM
- Conducted a workshop at the NOVA Conference in Los Angeles on The Efficacy of Police Based Victim Services (1999)
- Education- Mental Health (with a focus in trauma and crisis counselling), Religion, Christian Studies and Pastoral Counselling

Stress & Burnout for Frontline Staff

History of Critical Incident Stress (CIS):

- Spans from the time of the Romans to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq
- Shell shock, “malingering”, battle fatigue, war neurosis, combat stress reaction
- During WWII, 25% of personnel evacuated for psychological reasons
- Acute Stress Reaction expanded to other front line workers
- Later determined that Acute Stress Reaction could be triggered by trauma and catastrophic incidents
- Signs and reactions don’t differ between combat and non-combat events
- **These reactions are called Critical Incident Stress**
- Approach developed by Dr. Jeffery Mitchell to manage Acute Stress Reaction

Stress & Burnout for Frontline Staff

What is Acute Stress Reaction?

- Was introduced in the DSM-IV to describe acute stress reactions (ASRs), now falls under Acute Stress Disorder in the DSM-V
- Anxiety symptoms may occur within one month of the trauma
- A new diagnostic category introduced in 1994 to differentiate time-limited reactions to trauma from PTSD
- ASD trauma experiences will not include: Witnessing events on television and through electronic media.

Stress & Burnout for Frontline Staff

What is a critical incident?

"It is an event that is outside the range of normal human experience which has the potential to induce unusually strong physical, emotional and cognitive reactions. It involves the perception of a life threat to oneself or to another, usually unexpected and may include elements of physical or emotional loss."

Stress & Burnout for Frontline Staff

Defusings

vs.

Debriefings

- Is a brief structured intervention designed to take the fuse out of the emotional bomb. It occurs shortly after the Critical Incident (CI) and is conducted on or near the scene of the event. It's designed to alleviate the immediate stressors experienced by some staff.

- Is a structured psychological intervention designed to reduce the intensity and duration of reactions to a CI. It consists of an organized group meeting held usually 24-72 hours post-trauma.

Stress & Burnout for Frontline Staff

Anatomy of a Defusing

- **Fact Phase** - Allow the person to tell their story:
 "Tell me about the facts of the call" (or situation)
- **Thoughts** - "What were your thoughts at that time?"
- **Reactions** - "Where did you notice you reacted the most?"
 "Was the hardest part for you?"
- **Symptom Education** - Explain common reactions after a trauma
- **Current Functioning**

Stress & Burnout for Frontline Staff

Debriefings

- **Fact Phase** - "Just the facts"
- **Thoughts** - Insight to negative thought processes (*"bad recordings"*)
- **Reactions (Somatic)** - Insight to possible development of increased anxiety
(*'biological intelligence', 'biological computer'; "When did you react the most?"*)
- **Feelings** - *"What were you feeling at that time?"* → will help to identify potential future triggers
- **Symptom Education** - Common reactions
- **Current Functioning**
- **Re-entry Phase** - Short term coping strategies

Stress & Burnout for Frontline Staff

Different Types of Stress

- Cumulative stress
- Normal stress
- Burnout stress
- Critical incident stress
- Post traumatic stress

Stress & Burnout for Frontline Staff

Cumulative Stress

"It is a slowly developing state of chronic fatigue and frustration that results from too many stressors over a long period of time. It's source could be general unrelieved stress, an accumulation of traumatic incidents, too many disappointments and/or an accumulation of both home, social and work stressors."

Stress & Burnout for Frontline Staff

Normal Stress

"Is the natural response of the body to any demand. It's a normal occurrence which we experience in our daily lives. Stressors can be both positive and negative depending on how they are perceived."

Stress & Burnout for Frontline Staff

Burnout Stress

"Is the result of cumulative stress for too long. It occurs when an individual experiences an ongoing high level of stress for a long period of time.

Basically, it's a state of exhaustion."

Stress & Burnout for Frontline Staff

Critical Incident Stress

"Is the physical, emotional, cognitive and behavioral reactions to a critical incident. These reactions have the potential to interfere with an individual's ability to function effectively."

Stress & Burnout for Frontline Staff

Critical Incident Stress @ Good2Talk & Kids Help Phone

- Child abuse
- Relationship/ Domestic violence
- Self harm
- Suicide- in progress or immediate threat, calls, chats* or posts with intense graphic language...limited control (real or perceived)
- Unknown outcomes of serious counselling interactions/ interventions
- Exposure to the repeated intensity of contacts
- “Trigger” contacts

**chat is available through KidsHelpPhone.ca – Good2Talk does not currently support an online chat function.*

Stress & Burnout for Frontline Staff

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

"Is the chronic pathological condition of psychological distress which may develop in a number of situations following one or more critical incidents.

Adequate management of CIS may prevent PTSD."

Stress & Burnout for Frontline Staff

Factors that affect the severity of CIS reactions:

- Severity and nature of the event or incident
- Role of worker - degree of personal danger
- Level of responsibility associated with the incident
- Physical and psychological proximity to the event
- Workers previous experience with personal crisis - could help through desensitization or hinder through cumulative stress
- Workers life at the time of the crisis - divorce, death, all impact the degree of stress and can reduce one's coping ability
- Availability of appropriate support services - EAP counsellors, CIS response
- Support or isolation from friends, family or general public
- Media involvement
- Management's attitude and knowledge towards traumatic stress This is key for a successful workplace!

Stress & Burnout for Frontline Staff

Common Post-Crisis Reactions:

- Hypervigilance
- Anxiety
- Nightmares
- Flashbacks
- Emotional numbing
- Depression
- Isolation
- Suicidal ideation
- Suicidal behavior
- Suicide
- Anger, rage
- Guilt (survivor)
- Fear
- Night sweats
- Feeling loss of control
- Feeling helpless
- Feeling hopeless
- Withdrawal
- Feeling worthless

Stress & Burnout for Frontline Staff

Organizational Warning Signs of CIS:

- Accidents
- Petty complaints
- High absenteeism
- Harassment
- Cynicism
- Rumors
- Verbal abuse
- Rudeness
- Theft
- Low morale
- Poor dress and deportment
- Scapegoating
- Negativism
- Lower productivity
- Ignoring rules

Stress & Burnout for Frontline Staff

Stress Recovery Process:

- Crisis can cause post-incident symptoms in anyone
- Intrusive imagery, numbing, rage, grief etc., is normal. It's our way of dealing with an abnormal stressor
- Some individuals experience symptoms years or even decades after the incident
- It's normal to fear losing control after a CI
- Symptoms usually get worse before they get better. Don't block what comes up. They should be worked through
- Post-critical incident distress is responsive to counselling and CISM. Get talking, the longer you wait, the more difficult it becomes

Stress & Burnout for Frontline Staff

Stress Recovery Process:

- Some symptoms may never go away, they become part of our narrative, our life story.

There are events both positive and negative that we never completely forget. What matters is that the symptoms don't interfere with normal functioning

- Sudden recall of past traumatic situations (feelings, images, dreams) are usually triggered by something in your current life that needs attention (stress, loss, fear, anger, etc.), it's important to engage with them.

- Some good can come from any trauma- (hope, strength, learning, derive meaning from it, goals, growth). Find the good...it heals!

Stress & Burnout for Frontline Staff

Coping Strategies:

- Recognize that it happened
- Look calm
- Talk about it with colleagues
- Stay fit- exercise
- Be patient and present with yourself
- Prayer
- Meditation
- Give your feelings/reactions a name- "They are part of you but they do not define you"
- Don't fight it- "It's going to be a wild ride so strap in!"
- Music
- Eat right
- Take time for yourself
- Take breaks when needed
- Keep alcohol, caffeine and nicotine consumption to a minimum
- Spend time with family, friends and co-workers
- Keep a journal- "Dream journal"
- Do whatever works for you provided it's safe
- Don't be afraid to learn about CIS- "It is the unknown that we are afraid of"
- Take time to grieve
- Heal at your own pace

Stress & Burnout for Frontline Staff

Compassion hurts. When you feel connected to everything, you also feel responsible for everything. And you cannot turn away. Your destiny is bound with the destinies of others. You must learn to carry the universe or be crushed by it. You must grow strong enough to love the world, yet empty enough to sit down at the same table with its worst horrors.

Stress & Burnout for Frontline Staff

Yay you made it 😊

- Thank you for being here today
- Made a great decision to have CIS training
- Questions ?



1.866.925.5454
or connect through 2-1-1

Post-Secondary Student Helpline

Thank You