

From Stress to Meaning
Peer Support
Critical Incident Stress
Management CISM

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Bay Area CISM Team

Centre for Living with Dying program of Bill Wilson Center

Pandemic Fatigue / 360 Grief

- ▶ COVID-19 Pandemic
 - ▶ Racial Tensions and Violence
 - ▶ Politics
 - ▶ Wildfires
 - ▶ Grief after death of a loved one
 - ▶ Shooting
 - ▶ Suicide
 - ▶ Job Stress
- Entire life impacted
 - Every area affected
 - Acknowledge magnitude
 - Share the experience

**We can't make it better.*

**We have found on the Team that it helps to get folks together who have survived the incident.*

**We are here to create a safe place for you.*

Bay Area CISM Team
Centre for Living with Dying
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408.278.2512

Provides:

- Critical Incident Stress Support for Responders, Healthcare providers and the community
- Education and training on these subjects
- Grief counseling, grief groups and one with one support

‘Not everything that is faced
can be changed, but nothing
can be changed until it is
faced.’

James Baldwin

**You are the best support
for each other...**

What is a Traumatic Event / Critical Incident?

- Distressing (may causes reactions of intense **fear, helplessness, horror**, etc.)
- Involves the **perceived threat** to one's physical integrity or the physical integrity of someone else.
- Undermines sense of **safety** resulting in traumatic stress.
- You don't have to be directly involved to be impacted.

Positive

Brief increases in heart rate,
mild elevations in stress hormone levels.

Tolerable

Serious, temporary stress responses,
buffered by supportive relationships.

Toxic

Prolonged activation of stress response systems
in the absence of protective relationships.

How we're taught

- Tough it out
- Sick Humor
- Shut down
- Perky person
- Incident commander
- POP

Pandemic Exhaustion

Don't know when it will end???

- Every area of life is impacted
 - Loss of Meaning
- Anger, Fear, Guilt, Sadness, Loneliness
 - Physical Symptoms
 - Relationship Issues
 - Invisible threat
 - Financial loss/threat

What's stressful for Law Enforcement?

CISM Can Help!

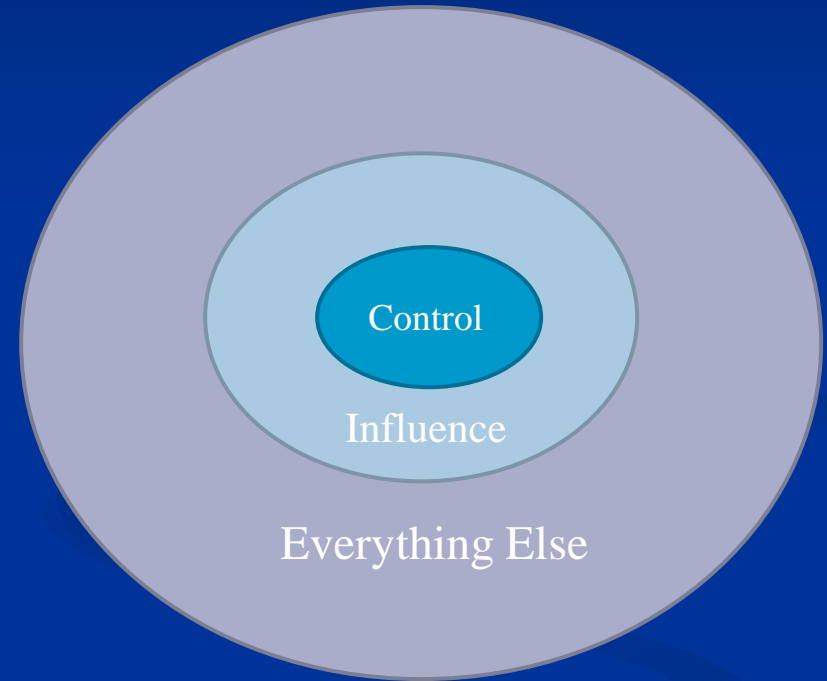
- OOC: Out of Control
- Isolation

- In Control
- In Team/Community

- *The Upside of Stress*, by Kelly McGonagal

How to overcome feelings of OOC and Isolation?

- ▶ Focus on your circles of control and influence



Change creates trauma/stress

- Stress is the natural response to any change or loss
- Emotional trauma is similar to physical injury
 - *Stress creates a Thought, Emotional & Physical Imprints:
sight, sound, touch, smell, taste

PTSD now is PTSI

Can become

PTG

Stress

- Individual and unique
- Normal, universal human experience
- Natural response to any loss or change - even positive change
- Unpredictable waves
- The body remembers
- No timetable

Fight

Flight

Freeze

R
E
S
P
O
N
D

Types of Stress

Acute

Delayed

Cumulative

Occupational

Why CISM?

Keep Stress Levels Tolerable

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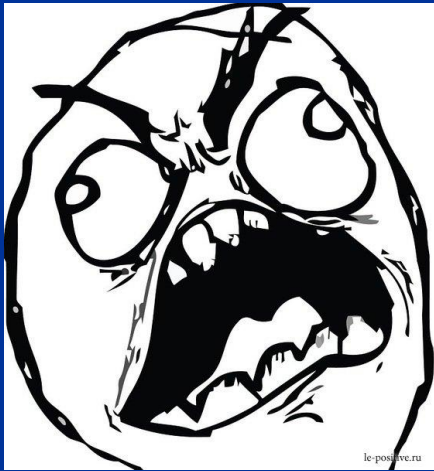
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What's in your backpack... *Can become your toolbox*

Present
Stress



Stress Dynamic

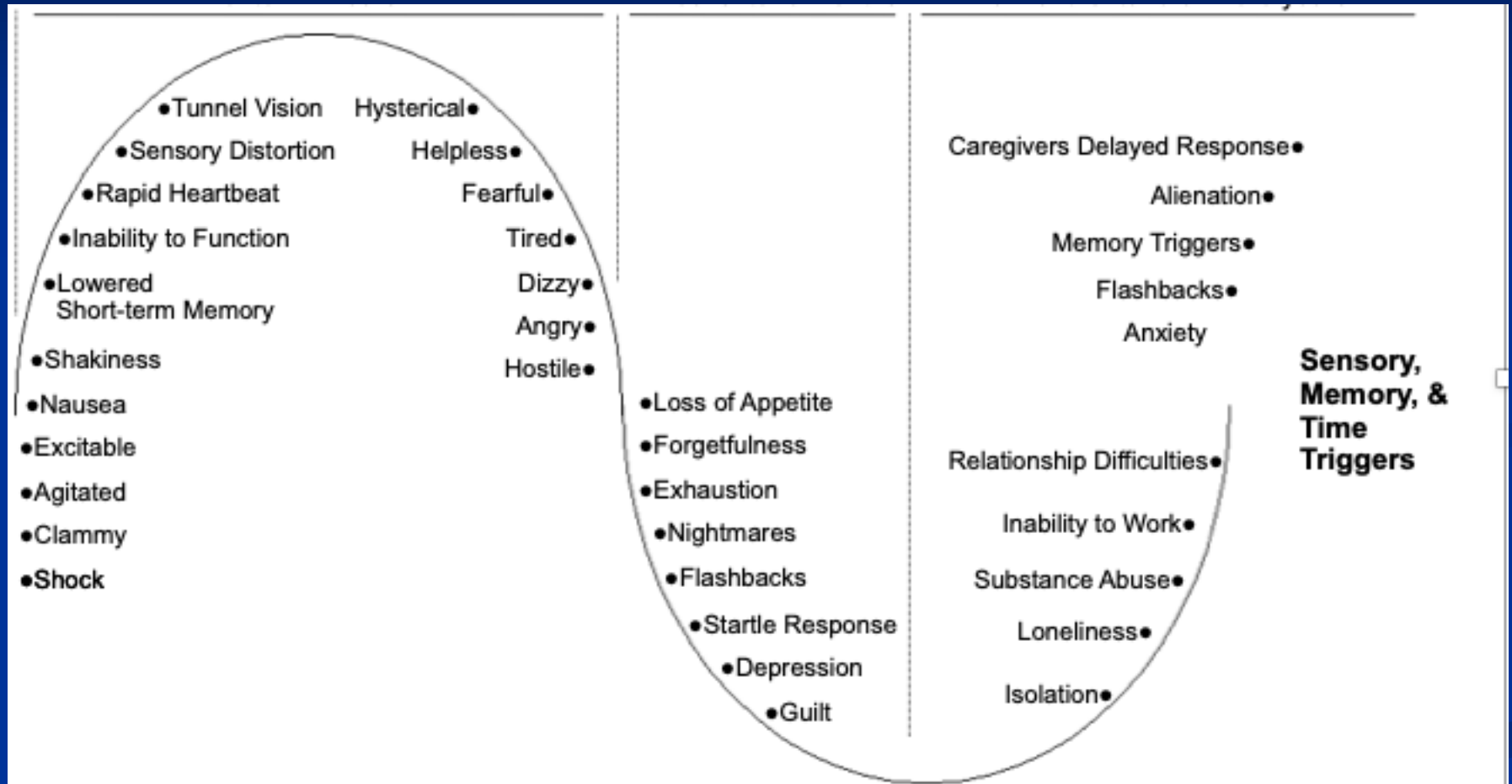


Stress Baseline for Responders

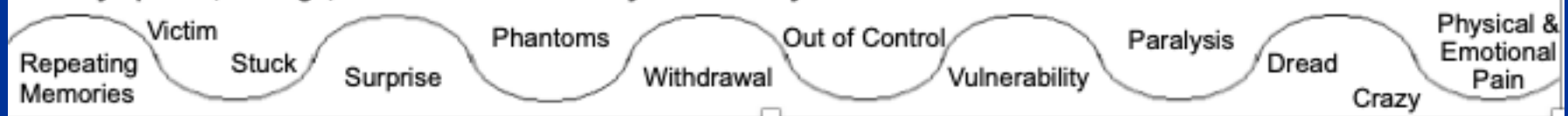
Stress and Change

- 3 types of landmines
Triggered by Senses,
Time or Memory

Common Feelings and Reactions to Critical Incidents



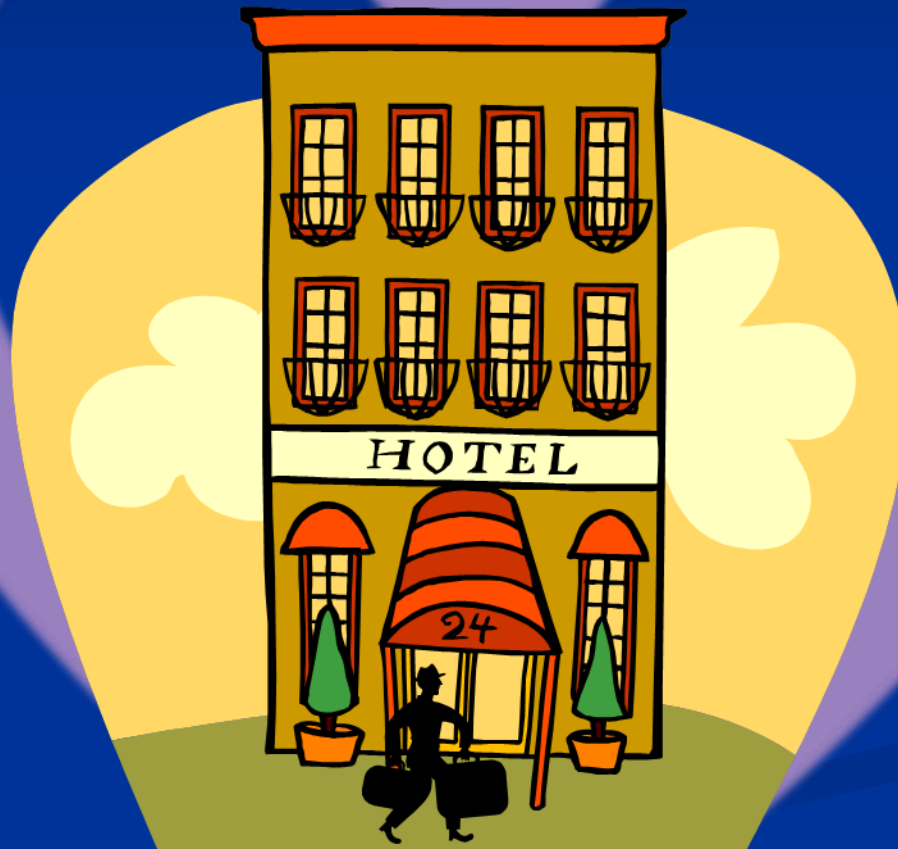
These symptoms, feelings, reactions or events may occur at any time:



Stress and Change

- Loss of Life's Meaning/Purpose
Rebuild a new normal

Heart Hotel



Family Dynamics

- Behaviors vs. thoughts/ feelings
- Each person has a specific role
- Conflict because each person reacts differently to stress
- Focus on individual experience and needs

Perceptions & Beliefs

- Stress: 80% perception, 20% event
- Beliefs:
 - I will make a difference vs. I can make a difference by my presence
- Building the new normal
- Changing and adjusting world view
- CISM can help!

Offering Support

Adapted Maslow's Hierarchy

Self Actualization

Making Meaning from the incident

Giving and receiving support and love

Safety

Survival

How to support others

Need

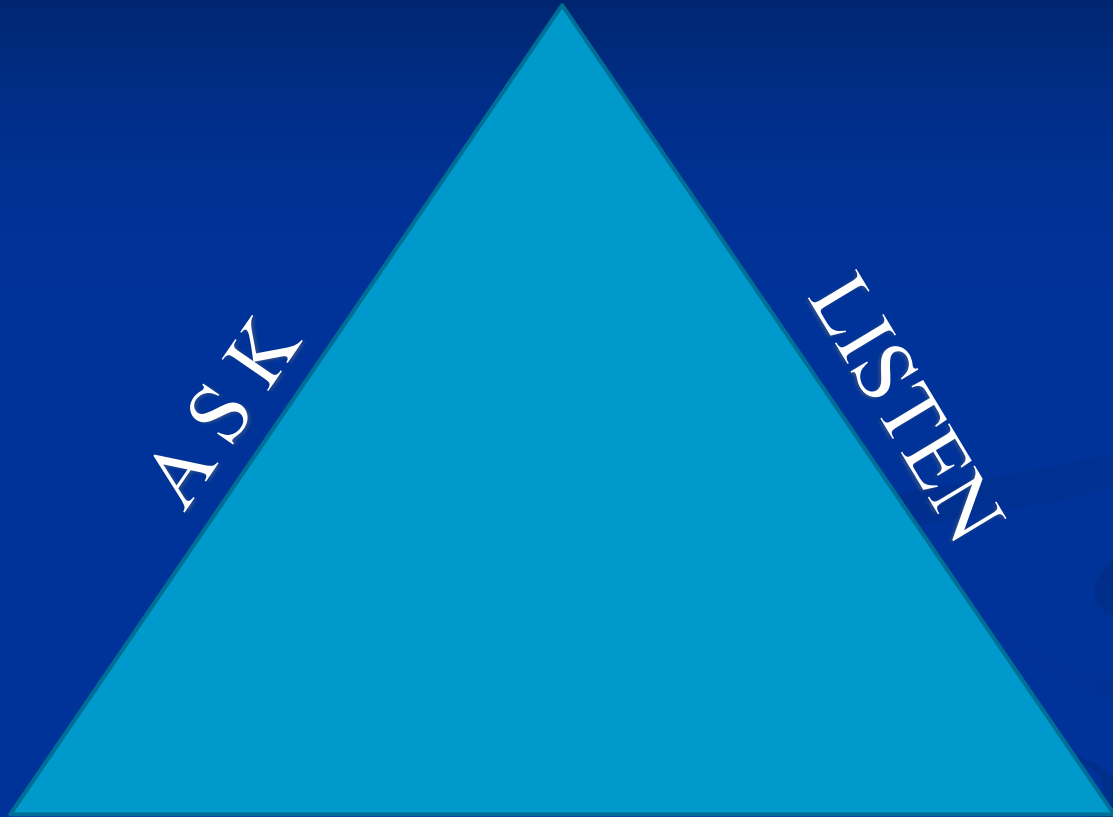
- Honesty
- Acknowledgement
- Listen
- Presence
- Choice
- Space
- Validation
- Empowerment

Don't Need

- Pity
- Advice
- Judgment/critique
- War stories
- Platitudes/cliches
- Ignored
- Fix-it
- Personal Power taken away

Support Tips

- Stay in the present moment
- Reassure stress response is normal
- Focus on most difficult issue
RIGHT NOW
- Assess what is needed RIGHT NOW
- No easy way over stress, but moment by moment, we get through and build the NEW NORMAL



ASK

LISTEN

VALIDATE

Tools for Survival



ACKNOWLEDGE

EXPRESS

ACT

RECONNECT

Circle of Meaning

Peace

Comfort

People/Pets
Places
Activities
Hopes & Dreams
Beliefs
Traditions
Possessions

Joy

Meaning

Walk Talk

- Moving Forward. Breathing.
- Equal Relationship: Balance of power.
- Out in Nature/Fresh Air.
- Neutral Environment.
- Less ‘Counseley’. More natural.

Circles of Response

Involved Personnel

Affected Personnel

Family, Friends

Victims, Witnesses,
Survivors

Community

Debrief Debriefers

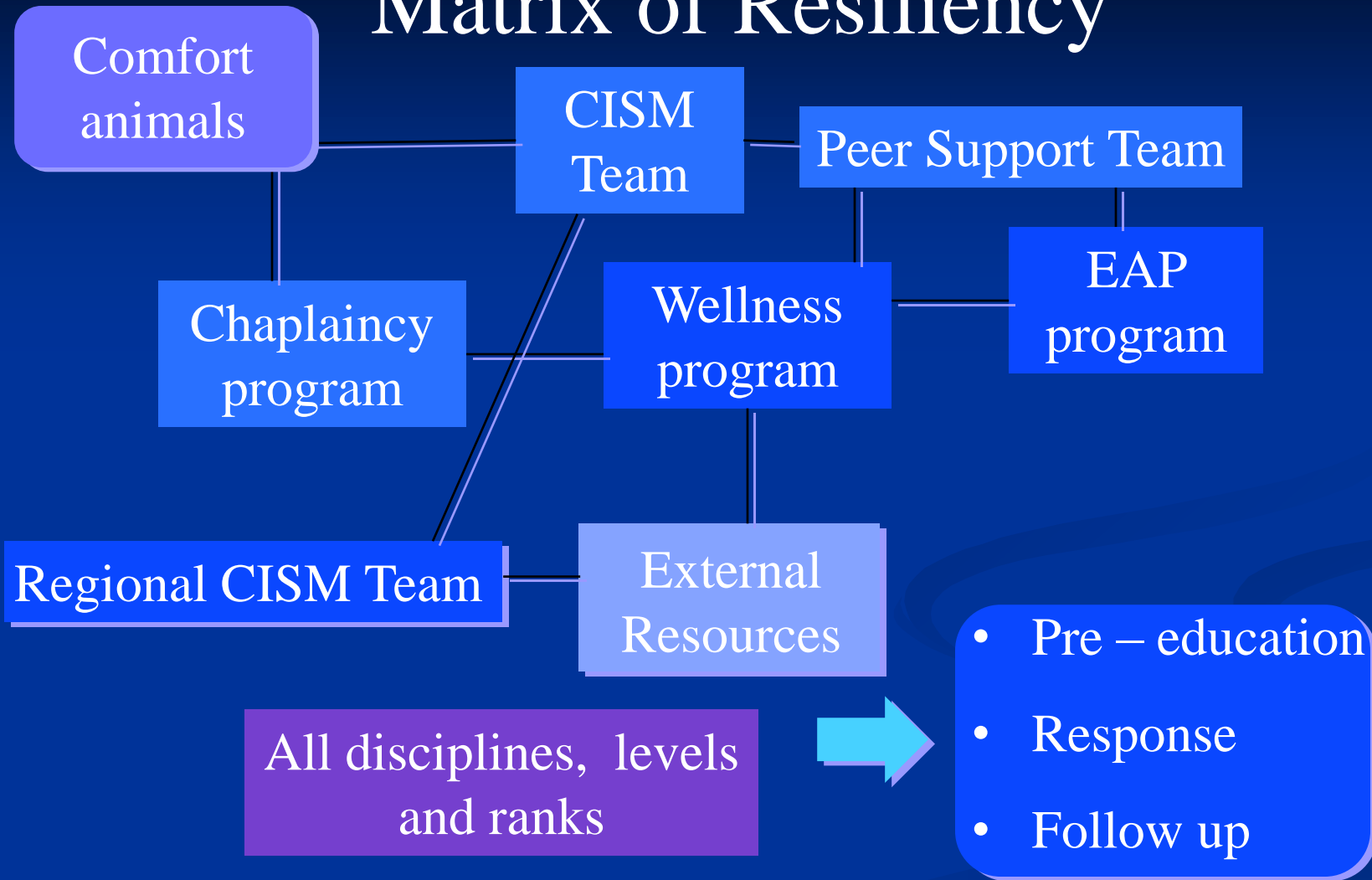
CISM Groundrules

- Confidentiality
- No critique of operations or personnel
- Automatic attendance/ No mandatory participation
- No rank or hierarchy
- Only involved personnel*
- Puts puzzle pieces of the incident together
- Normalizes stress reactions and gives tools for coping

CISM Interventions

- Pre incident education
- Demobilization
- Defusing
- (Debriefing) Response
- Follow up
- Landmine
- Debrief Debriefers

Matrix of Resiliency

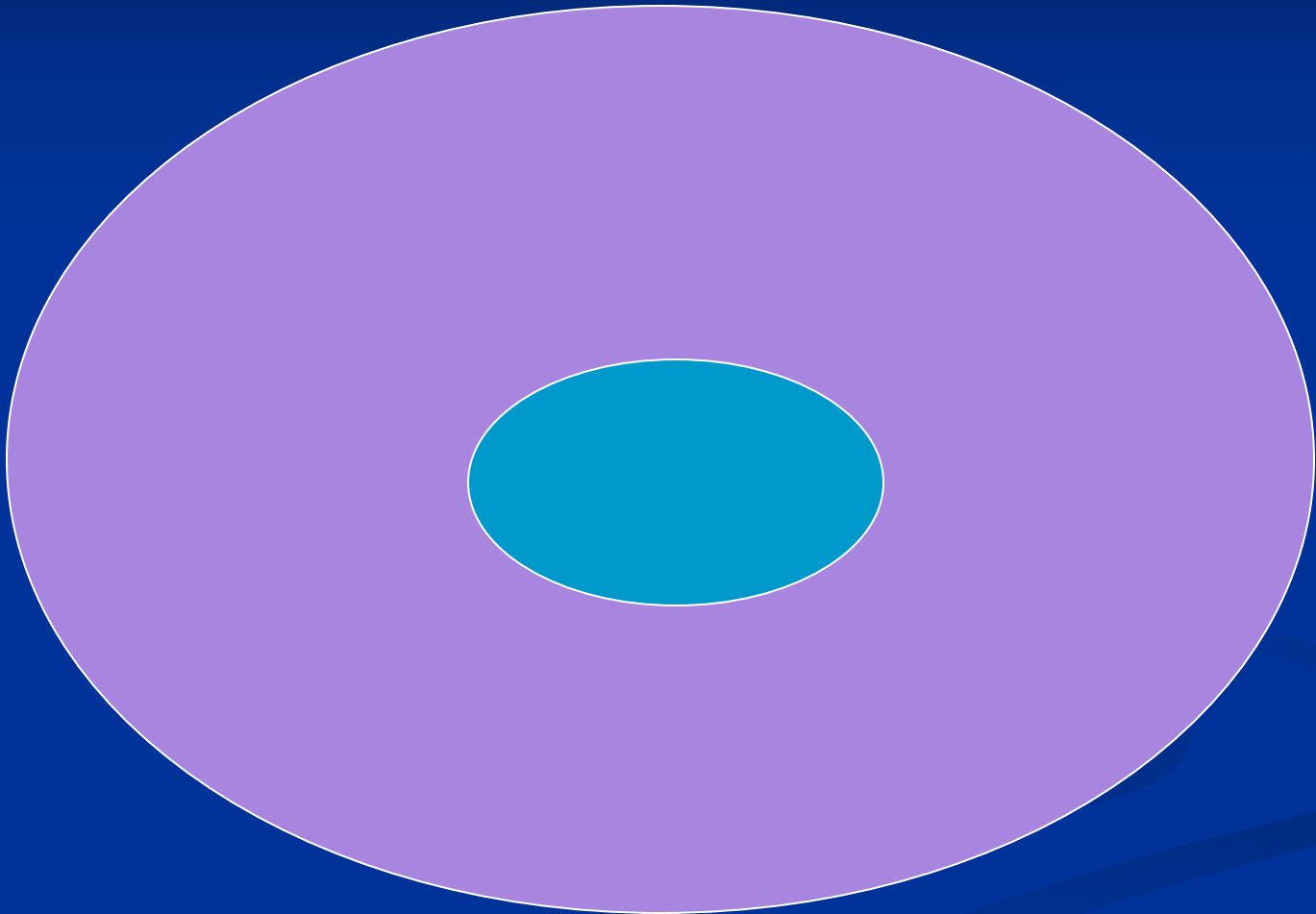


Daily Log



- My body – what does it say?
- What did I eat?
- Did I move?
- Any unfinished business?
- What did I do just for me?
- Dreams and day dreams
- Identify: what is the most powerful today and what do I need?
- Message for me in the day

Gratitude



Triage

- Breathe.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Move.
- Eat.
- Give yourself a break.
- Ground: Get in the present moment.
- Identify: what is the most difficult and what do I need to get through it right now.

Good Resource Books

The Upside of Stress

The Body Keeps the Score

The Rite of Return

Trauma Stewardship

Permission to Mourn

*Experiential Action Methods and Tools for
Healing Grief and Loss Related Trauma:
Life Death and Transformation*

Stress into Strength

Remember as you walk forward....

- ◆ Be gentle with your own process.
- ◆ Your presence makes a difference in people's lives.
- ◆ We have today. Savor what's good in your life now.
- ◆ Do something fun & life affirming for yourself in the next 24 hours.