Local Emergency Planning Committee November 2026 Quarterly Meeting

Building Resilience: A Critical Incident Stress Management Toolkit

Agenda

- Introduction & Welcoming Remarks/OEM Updates
- Hazardous Materials Spill Report
- Guest Speaker Presentation
- Q&A
- Adjourn

Hazardous Materials Quarterly Spill Report

Battalion Chief John Zour
Special Operations Division
Howard County Department of Fire & Rescue Services

Introduction- John Zour

- 25 years with Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services (HCDFRS)
- Battalion Chief, Special Operations
- Rescue Specialist, Maryland Task Force 1 (MDTF1)
- Rescue Technician, Maryland Helicopter Aquatic Response Team (MD HART)
- Certified Safety Professional (CSP)
- Certified Fire Protection Specialist (CFPS)



2026 Spill Data (Jan – Present)

- 10 incidents
- 432 gallons spilled
- 400 gallons pumped off
- 1 tank drilled
- 62 bags sorbent
- 6 booms used
- 358 hydrocarbon pads used

Quarter 3 Incidents







Spill Report Questions



Guest Presentation

Victor Welzant, Psy. D.

Chief Clinical Officer and past member of the Board of Directors

International Critical Incident Stress Foundation

Building Resilience: A Critical Incident Stress Management Toolkit

Victor Welzant, Psy.D
Chief Clinical Officer, ICISF



The International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc.

HELPING SAVE THE HEROES

Introduction

- Overview of Stress and Resilience
- Building psychological resilience for ourselves and our community
- Resilience Tools and Mindset
- Discussion

Stress- 1

Our mind / body response to events that seem overly threatening, aversive, or uncontrollable



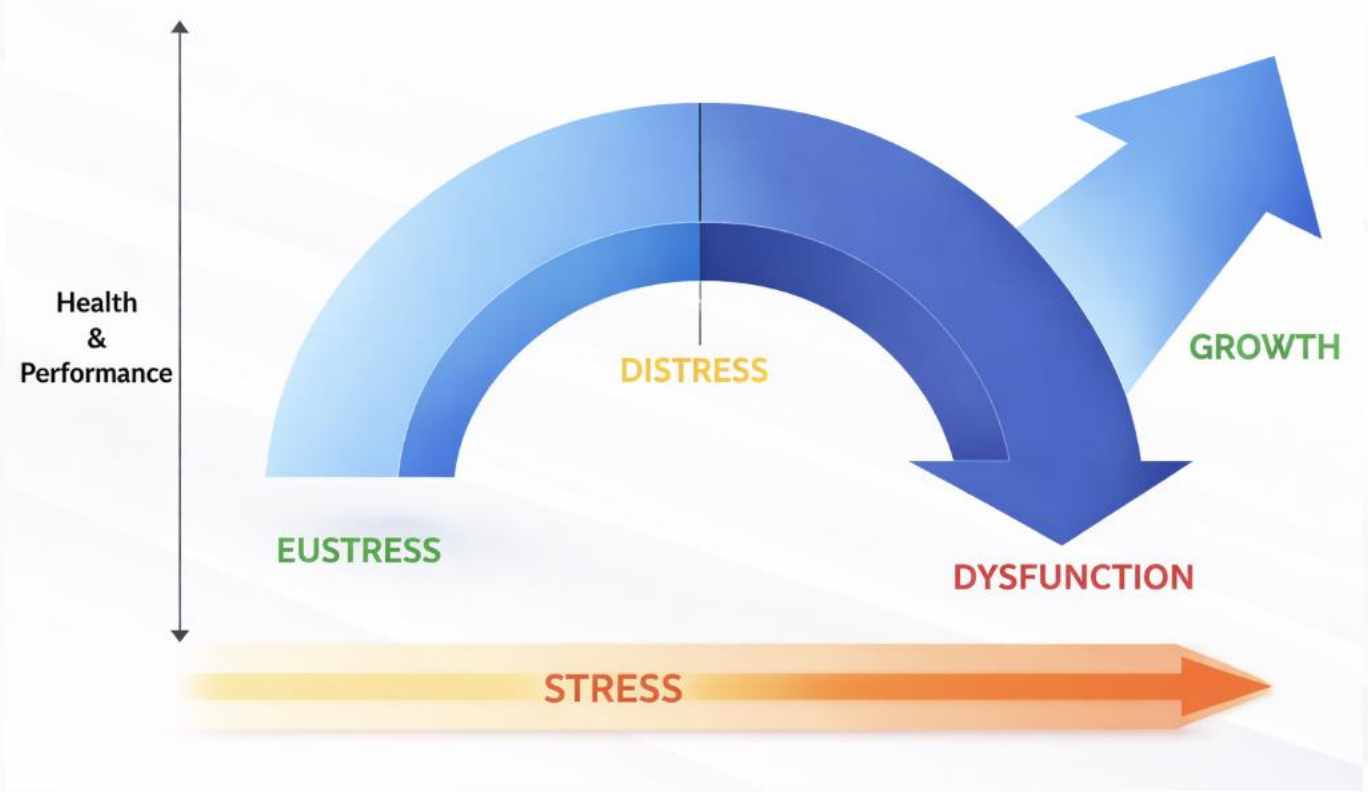
Stress- 2

- Based on our PERCEPTION and Interpretation of events
- Both REAL and IMAGINED events can trigger a physical and emotional stress response!



Overview of Disaster Stress

Stress Response



Stress Reactions

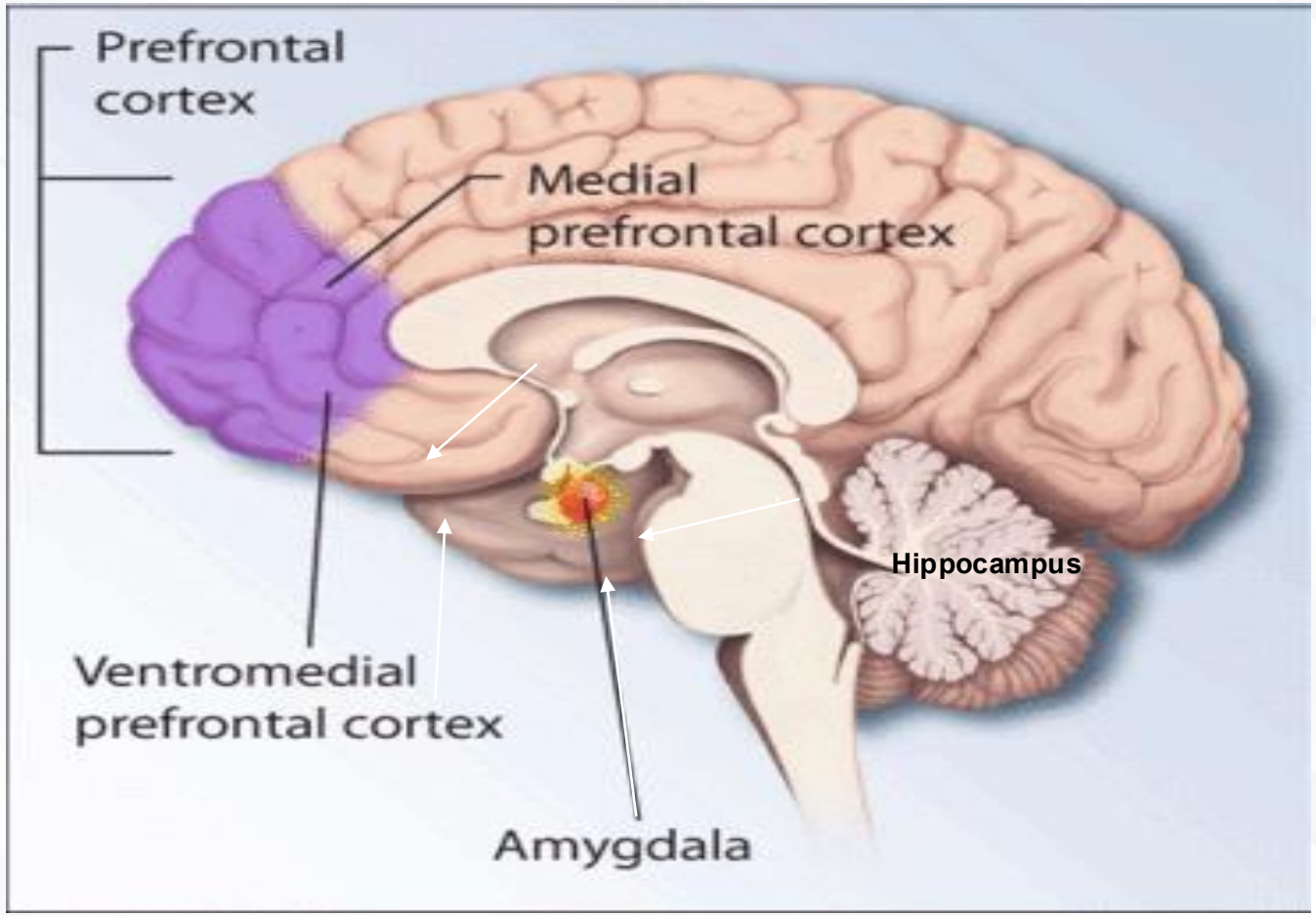
- Physical
- Emotional
- Cognitive
- Behavioral
- Belief System Challenges



Stress and Cognitive Performance



Decision-making in the Brain



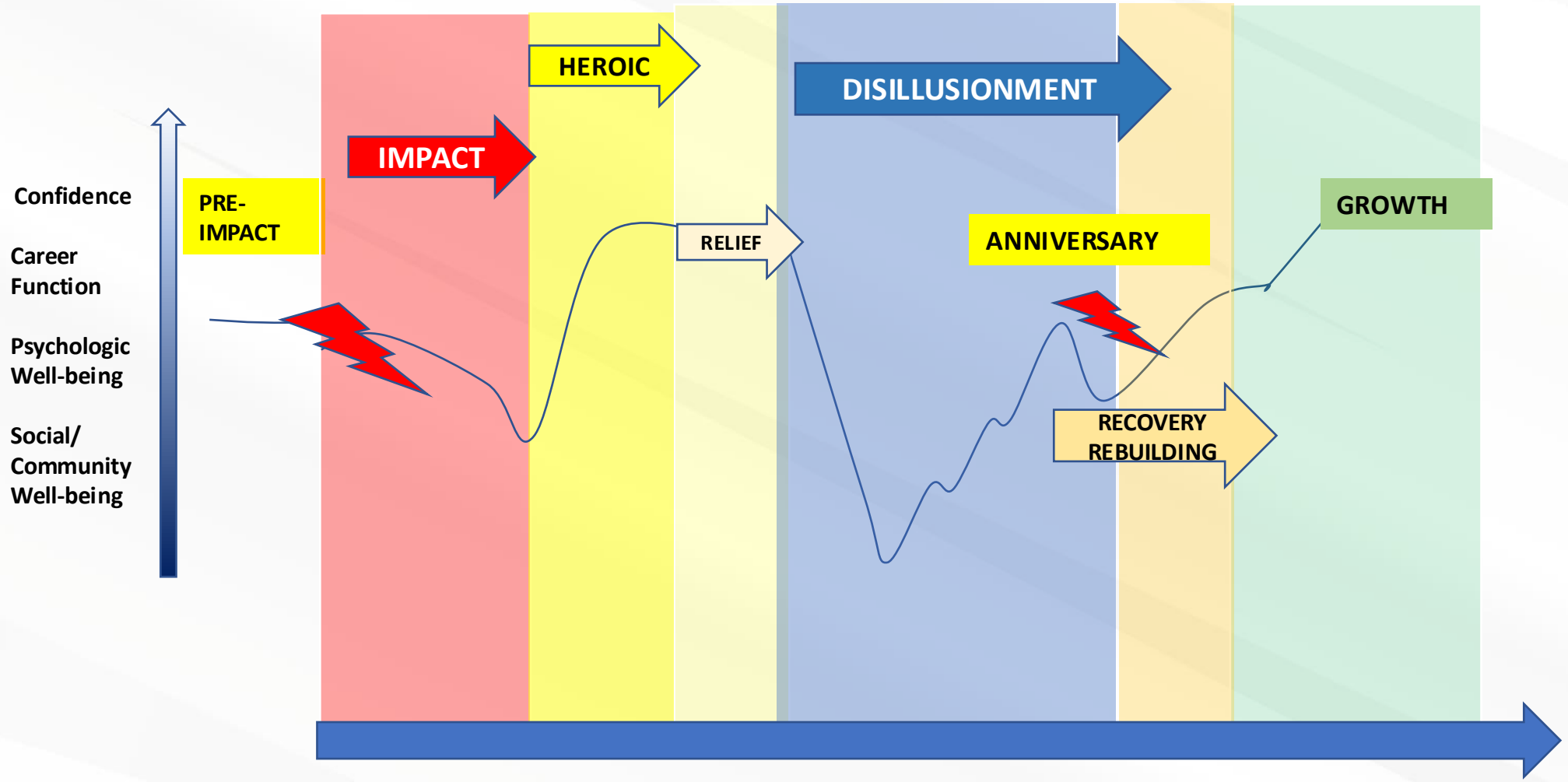
Critical Incident Stress

The stress caused by an incident that overwhelms our ability to cope…temporarily.

What are the signs?

8 PHASES OF ADVERSITY

(G. S. Everly, Jr., 2022. Adapted from D. Myers)



GS Everly, Jr. 2020, 2022, Adapted from Myers & Zunin, 1990

Resilience



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HELPING SAVE THE HEROES

THE RESILIENCE CONTINUUM OF CARE
The Johns Hopkins' Model:
RESISTANCE, RESILIENCE, RECOVERY



Most **CISM models** operate in the **Resilience** phase

Strategies for Resilience



The Foundations



Physical Fitness

Nutrition

Sleep / Rest

Mindset

Support

Key Resilience Factors (Southwick and Charney)

- Former Prisoners of War
- Special Forces Instructors
- Resilient Civilians following severe trauma

Resilience Factor: Physical Fitness

- Improves physical health
- Reduces anxiety and depression
- Enhances cognitive functioning
- HPA axis dampening under stress
  - Lower cortisol production, less brain exposure to cortisol and less hippocampal neuron damage
- Neurogenesis via increased production of neurotrophic factors (BDNF)



Resilience Factor: Realistic Optimism



- Future oriented attitude
- Hopefulness
- Pay attention to the negative, but don’t let it define your reality
- Focus on strengths

Optimism and Resilience

Negative Emotions can help us survive danger (e.g. fight or flight arousal)

Positive emotions reduce excessive arousal and broaden our focus

Positive emotions allow for re-appraisal, positive coping, and finding meaning

Optimists are effective problem solvers…why?

Strategies for Optimism



FOCUS ATTENTION ON POSITIVES



INTENTIONALLY MONITOR YOUR THINKING



PRACTICE REFRAMING EVENTS IN A MORE POSITIVE MANNER



ACT IN WAYS THAT BUILD POSITIVE ATTITUDES

Resilience Factor: Cognitive Flexibility



- Accepting reality of a situation
- Cognitive re-appraisal (30,000 ft. view)
- Gratitude
- Re appraise failure as an opportunity to self correct
- Humor

Resilience Factor: Facing Fear



- See fear as a normal chemical process
- Avoidance of fear = Longer suffering
- Focus on the mission or a goal when afraid
- Use outward focus to counter cognitive constriction
- Breathing techniques

Resilience Factor: Moral Compass

- Decisions based on core values
- Focus on serving and altruism
- Having personal standards and living by them
- Looking to personal values in times of stress



Resilience Factor: Spirituality



- Meaningful Belief System
  - How do you "make sense" of the world?
- Physical and Psychological Benefits

Resilience Factor: Social Support

- Protects against physical and mental illness
- Isolation associated with stress, depression, and PTSD
- Team cohesion increases resilience
- Support is healing after trauma!
- How can we build this?



Support: Role Models

- Mentors help to build resilience by modeling it
- Relationships provide the experience, knowledge, and support to encourage people to challenge themselves and grow



Resilience Factor : Training



REPETITIVE SKILL PRACTICE / OVERLEARNING



STRESS INOCULATION



MENTAL REHEARSAL OF SKILLS



MODELING

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Definition



A system of support that uses a team of peer supporters mental health professionals to provide help after a traumatic incident

Originally used with Emergency Responders and has become a standard in many professions

Developed by Dr. Jeffrey Mitchell and Dr. George Everly, Jr.

CISM / Peer Support Teams



CRUCIAL RESOURCE FOR BUILDING RESILIENCE



CONFIDENTIAL



TRAINED

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)

A comprehensive system of workplace support following traumatic events



Community Resilience and Rebuilding: What have we learned?

Healing our Collective Grief is a priority

- “New Normal”?????
- Not limited to COVID losses

Clinical Implications of Grief

1. Grief is experienced all facets of a person's life
2. Grief is a continuing development. It is not static and changes with time
3. Grief is a natural, expectable reaction to all types of loss not just death.
4. Grief is greatly dependent upon one's perception of the loss. (Rando, 1993)

Disenfranchised Grief

A loss that cannot be openly acknowledged, publicly mourned or socially supported

Three types of disenfranchised grief:

1. Relationships that are not recognized or socially sanctioned
2. The loss is not recognized as significant
3. The griever is not recognized (Doka, 1989)

Traumatic Grief

- Grief that follows a significant loss that occurs in a traumatic manner…or has elements of trauma exposure associated with the loss.

Community Grieving: What have we learned?



Grief's 6th Stage: Finding Meaning (Kessler)

- Transformational perspective
- "Grief may not end...but it can change shape"
- Opportunities for the grieving individual to heal through honoring what was lost
- Healing through helping mitigate suffering through finding meaning in losses

Finding /Making Meaning



How do Communities "Make Meaning"



Community Healing and Rebuilding



Learn or Rediscover?

”People who were part of a community during the pandemic realized the importance of human connection, and those who didn’t have that kind of support realized they need it.”- **Erol Fikrig, MD (Yale New Haven Hospital)**

Rebuilding together: Connection

- Relationships are at the heart of healing
- We learned how to stay connected
- We learned how to stay together in creative ways
- We learned how to re-connect



The role of the workplace in healing and rebuilding



Schools are a hub of community rebuilding





“We Befriended Technology, and There's No Going Back”

- We have a new vocabulary “tele…”
- What have we learned about virtual connection?
- What is our new “collective normal?

Leadership and Resilience

Leaders play a key role

- How do you promote resilience?
- What behaviors support?
- What behaviors add stress?
- Monitor signs of distress and address it early



Mental Health Resources

- Community Mental Health Programs
  - Crisis Centers
  - Community Centers
  - 988
  - Stress counseling, substance abuse counseling, couples and family counseling
  - Employee Assistance Programs
  - Disaster Behavioral Health Teams
  - Volunteer Organizations
  - Federal Crisis Counseling Projects

Discussion

Thank You For Joining Us!

- Emergencymanagement@howardcountymd.gov
- 410-313-6030
- ReadyHoCo.com