





Stress First Aid and Curbside Manner

Patricia Watson, Ph.D.
National Center for PTSD

Building a Culture of Taking Care of Each Other







Texas HSC Training Film




What Is Stress First Aid (SFA)?



- A flexible framework that gives guidance on how to quickly assess and respond to stress reactions resulting from both personal and work stress
- A way to preserve well-being, prevent further harm, and promote recovery
- A practical tool to use whenever needed for yourself or your peers


Why This Model

- Evidenced informed
- SFA model makes sense and is accessible
- Addresses the gap between fitness and illness
- Provides procedures for early care of stress injuries
- Facilitates further care if needed
 - Earlier access to care
 - Creates potential links for therapy and healing
 - Provides foundation for return to duty







Factors in Recovery From Adversity and Stress

1. Promote sense of safety
2. Promote calming
3. Promote connectedness
4. Promote sense of self efficacy
5. Promote hope



Hobfall, Watson, Bell et al (2007) Psychiatry, 70 (4), 283.




Stress First Aid for Fire and Emergency Medical Services Personnel

On the Web at: www.FireHero.org





Stress First Aid Examples

- “This isn’t about fixing someone, it’s not about psychology, or, “how can I give someone the tools to fix themselves?” There is nothing really to fix; nothing’s broken. It’s more, “these are things you need to be cognizant of so that you can make changes in behavior and get back into a better track.”
- “This model helps people understand that these are all common reactions so they can be very well aware. And the seven Cs are not so clinical or diagnostic. They are more personal, interpersonal, and tactical.”




Two Faces of Stress

**Stress is
NECESSARY**



**Stress can be
TOXIC**

- Stress is essential for:
 - Strength and toughness
 - Growth and development
 - Acquire new skills
 - Meeting challenges
 - Performing difficult missions
- Stress can lead to:
 - Persistent internal distress
 - Functional impairment
 - Misconduct
 - Substance abuse
 - Mental disorders



Four Causes of Stress Injury

Intense or Prolonged Stress

Life Threat

A traumatic injury
Due to an experience of death-provoking terror, horror or helplessness

Loss

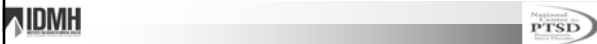
A grief injury
Due to the loss of cherished people, things or parts of oneself

Inner Conflict

A moral injury
Due to behaviors or the witnessing of behaviors that violate moral values

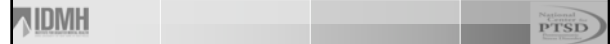
Wear & Tear

A fatigue injury
Due to the accumulation of stress from all sources over time without sufficient rest and recovery




Stress Continuum Model

READY (Green)	REACTING (Yellow)	INJURED (Orange)	ILL (Red)
<p>DEFINITION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optimal functioning Adaptive growth Wellness <p>FEATURES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At one’s best Well-trained and prepared In control Physically, mentally and spiritually fit Mission-focused Motivated Calm and steady Having fun Behaving ethically 	<p>DEFINITION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mild and transient distress or impairment Always goes away Low risk <p>CAUSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any stressor <p>FEATURES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feeling irritable, anxious or down Loss of motivation Loss of focus Difficulty sleeping Muscle tension or other physical changes Not having fun 	<p>DEFINITION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More severe and persistent distress or impairment Leaves a scar Higher risk <p>CAUSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Life threat Loss Moral injury Wear and tear <p>FEATURES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of control Panic, rage or depression No longer feeling like normal self Excessive guilt, shame or blame 	<p>DEFINITION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clinical mental disorder Unhealed stress injury causing life impairment <p>TYPES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PTSD Depression Anxiety Substance abuse <p>FEATURES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Symptoms persist and worsen over time Severe distress or social or occupational impairment




Essential SFA Skills

- Recognize a potential stress injury in a peer
- Act: If you see something, say something
 - To the distressed person
 - To a trusted source of support
- Connect peer to appropriate support



Stress First Aid Core Principles

- Recovery is promoted through strong leadership, peer support and unit cohesion
- SFA occurs wherever and whenever it is needed
- SFA is individualized care, not one-size-fits all
- SFA is an ongoing process
- SFA requires a collaborative team effort



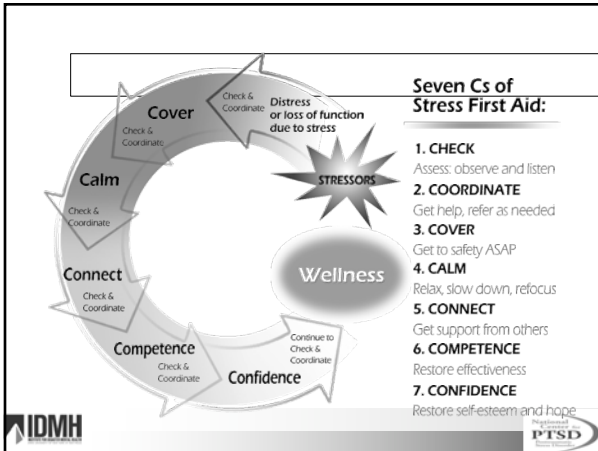
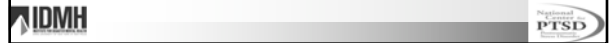
SFA IS NOT:

- An event only intervention
- A one-time only intervention
- Necessary for all stress reactions
- A replacement for medical or behavioral health interventions
- A replacement for prevention efforts

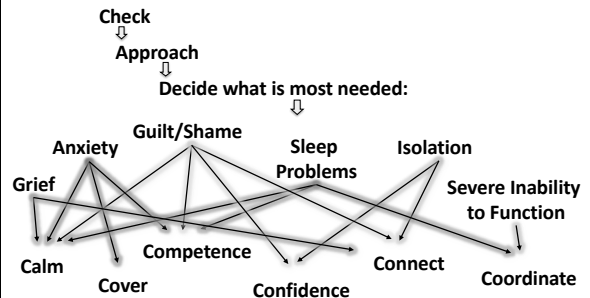


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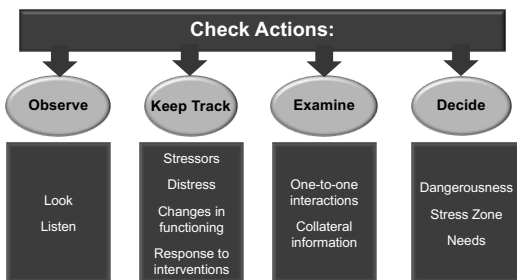
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How Can You Use SFA?



Check



Orange Zone Indicators

To recognize those who need help, look for:

1. Recent Stressor Events
2. Distress
3. Changes in Functioning



Check: Why is it Needed?

- Those injured by stress may be the last to recognize it
- Stigma can be an obstacle to asking for help
- Stress zones and needs change over time
- Risks from stress injuries may last a long time



Check: Indicators of Severe Stress Reactions I

- Not feeling in control of one's body, emotions or thinking
- Significant and persistent negative changes in behavior / habits
- Frequently unable to fall or stay asleep
- Numb, removed from all feelings
- Becoming uncharacteristically more isolated from others
- Excessive inner turmoil
- Wanting to avoid any reminders or triggers related to stress
- Significant anxiety about reminders or places related to an incident



Check: Indicators of Severe Stress Reactions II

- Becoming obsessive about information or factors related to an incident
- Waking up from recurrent or vivid nightmares
- Feeling persistent, intense guilt or shame
- Feeling unusually remorseless
- Experiencing attacks of panic, anger or rage
- Loss of memory or the ability to think rationally
- Inability to enjoy usually pleasurable activities
- Loss of grounding in previously held moral values



Self-Awareness Stress Indicators

- Fatigue
- Having a hard time focusing
- Being short on the fuse
- Not exercising
- Not doing the things you like
- Watching more television
- Nervous habits that others might point out, like whistling
- Calling home more often



Check Strategies: Others

- Offer basic resources like food water, warmth, etc.
- Find the right way to check on someone without annoying them (i.e., writing/texting versus calling).
- Check in on anniversaries
- Begin with a casual two way communication to get someone talking. Use active listening and look for words, non-verbal signs, and cues as to how they are doing.



Check Tool: "OSCAR" Communication

Observe: Actively observe behaviors; look for patterns

State observations: State your observations of the behaviors; just the facts without interpretations or judgments

Clarify Role: State why you are concerned about the behavior to validate why you are addressing the issue



Ask why: Seek clarification; try to understand the other person's perception of the behaviors

Respond: Clarify concern if indicated; discuss desired behaviors and state options in behavioral terms





Check Examples: Self

- “I have made a **very conscious effort** to keep tabs on myself. The big stress indicators for me are fatigue, having a hard time focusing, being short on the fuse, not exercising, and not doing the things I like, but instead staying in and watching television.”
- “One guy pointed out that I would whistle Christmas carols. Finally my supervisor said, “every time you do that bad things happen.” I wasn’t paying attention to it. Sure enough, that was one of my **stress indicators**.”
- “I usually don’t call home much, but when stressed, I catch myself **calling home**. That is the sign that I’m stressed. I need a touchstone, to make sure everything is normal at home, that the rest of the world is still spinning, which means I’m okay.”



Check Example: Others

- “I use **Check with employees regularly** – they don’t even know I’m doing it. If I’m looking at someone in orange or red I will pursue a line of questioning if there is two way communication, and try and get down to what’s going on. Its active listening. I would never come in to someone after a stressful incident or event and say “hey man, how’re you doing?” If I’m asking a rhetorical question, why ask it? I will instead start a line of communication, get them talking, and **look for words, non-verbal signs, and cues** as to how they are doing.”



Check Examples: Others

- “The groundwork or the **foundation** that you lay at the human level is going to make a difference when it’s time to have a hard discussion or conversation that’s way below the surface. Having something else to engage people on a personal level outside of the profession is hugely important. Caring about your people beyond the task and duty is one of the key top rated leader characteristics in research studies.”
- “The way we operate is that **we’re pretty close**. We work together, we live in the same town in the winter, and we see each other from time to time in the winter. If I’m not showing up for hockey, they know something’s going on, because I love hockey.”



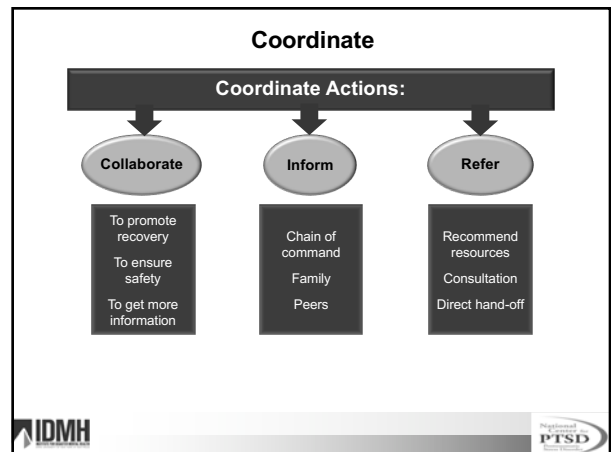
Check Examples: Others

- “I talk to younger leaders who might have a better connection to the **younger generation** and empower them to work with those guys, because I know there’s definitely that gap between generations. If you’ve had enough normal conversations with people, it’s less likely it is to raise threat that it’s about disciplinary action.”
- “One of the key points of check is **knowing your people**, and spending a lot of time with them, both professionally and personally. Then you can recognize those subtle changes. What I’ve done is to start a conversation about anything except what I think might be bugging them, and then I actively listen. And once again I’m talking the floodgates open, and it goes well.”

Check Examples: Others

- “As a leader, I can tell you all the deaths that have occurred on my engine. I have overall responsibility for all firefighters in my district, so I make sure I have **face-to-face time with each one of them at some point**. That’s how the conversations going to start with me. It’s not going to be about their performance on that call. It’ll be about whether they went fly fishing that weekend. That’s probably the most successful way to check. They don’t feel like you’re intruding on their life. But they also know that I start the season out with observation. They’re all served notice. You really have to pay attention to your people, and I want them to pay attention to me. I’m at the top of the food chain so who’s going to tell me that I’m not acting right. I want that oversight.”

Coordinate Strategies

- Coordinate only if needed
- Try to find the most acceptable way to refer someone to EAP or other support, rather than telling them to talk to someone
- Be aware of local and national resources:
 - Peer support teams
 - Local counselors
 - Other teams who have been through similar situations



Coordinate Examples

- "I have had luck **coordinating with local mental health** professionals in the community who are willing to provide free services or low-cost services to firefighters."
- "I have worked with the wildland firefighter **foundation**. Their bylaws in the past have not allowed them to deal with mental health issues, but that is changing. They may be able to help expedite some of the help that is needed."
- "I would recommend **testing the system** prior to a problem. Start dialing numbers, and find out if everyone in the chain knows what to do. We can test the strategy, and come up with our work arounds and alternative plans before there is the immediate need for help."



Coordinate Examples

- "We have a **contact list** with information, and options, so you have names of people you could contact easily."
- "We have an **invited an EAP representative** to come to our "you will not stand alone" class: The person will come with some options for us. They will come armed with that. Invite them in, and hopefully they will take a seat at the table and give us an idea of what resources we can bring to bear. Sometimes there's no resolution, but there can be understanding."



Cover



Cover: Fire/EMS Example



Examples of Need for Cover

- A firefighter in an immediate life-threat situation is not thinking clearly or making good decisions
- A firefighter has frozen or panicked in a life-threat situation
- A firefighter feels guilty when he reports to work because his family is anxious and has serious concerns about his safety following a line-of-duty death of a co-worker
- A firefighter has threatened others
- An EMT has expressed serious thoughts of suicide



Cover Strategies: Self

- **Find those people, places, or actions** that feels safe to you and call on them when you need to feel more safe.
- When you feel unsafe, **distact yourself** by focusing on something near you or your own breath or thought (i.e., counting).
- **Realize that no one is perfect** and everyone is going to have strengths and vulnerabilities – be aware of your own.



Cover Examples: Self

- “Cover is intangible. I don’t know how you know how to make yourself safe, other than just knowing that a person or place seems like they can offer it. The safe type of person on the job is **someone who makes eye contact**. I feel something when I look at someone, that connection. It’s either there or it’s not.”
- “We find our safety with our **family and friends** back home. When I was in a pickle, I don’t usually call home much, but I caught myself calling home. And now it’s easier with cell phones and Facebook.”



Cover Strategies: Others

- **Slowly implement SFA actions** into any organization so it is normal well in advance of anything happening.
- Make it a matter of **policy** to get people to cover as soon as possible after a difficult fire (i.e., a hotel, or out of the fire camp, or back to family).
- Depending on what a person is doing and how they are responding, **adjust communication** with that person to be more abrupt or directive if it’s necessary to keep them safe.
- Educate firefighters about the **physiological response** to horror or life threat, to minimize the shock of their own potential stress responses.
- After line of duty deaths, assign a trusted **family liaison** who is also given support for the work they do.



Cover Examples: Others

- “One way Cover is achieved is by **showing vulnerability yourself** and by knowing your employees. SFA needs to start well in advance of anything going on. You slowly implement it into any organization so it is normal. We talk, drop our guards, and show our vulnerability. It has to begin well in advance of anything happening.”
- “In a facilitated learning analysis (FLA) that was very contentious, with 65 to 70 people in the room, we wore our oldest muddy jeans (the accepted uniform) and only one person took notes for us, on sticky pads so everyone could read them. We just wanted to know if there was **anything to learn from the situation**, but it took 7-8 hours, with yelling back and forth. We had to go through and entire evolution of communication in order for everyone to feel safe to speak. Had I worked with all those individuals prior to this, the FLA would have taken 1-2 hours. Fortunately, at the end the guys were high fiving and everyone was good.”



Cover Example: Others

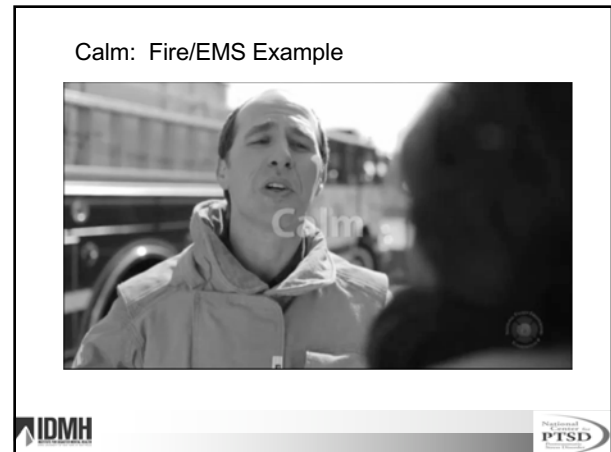
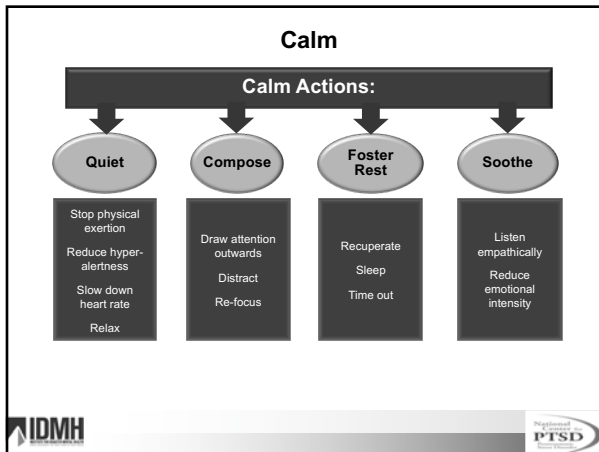
- “Maybe you don’t need to have the exact AAR questions, but you do have **quick questions**. It’s how you talk about it. I asked every day, “How did things go today? Anything we need to discuss? OK, let’s go eat.” The question needs to be asked. But it’s all about how you execute it. If you’re not having that open dialogue every shift, or every transition period, whatever it is, something is going to get missed. When something bad does happen or something big does something, if your structure already has that open dialogue in place, then you plug in the crew members, and it makes it a lot more feasible for them to communicate comfortably back-and-forth.”



Cover Examples: Others

- “If a person has high-risk behavior, you will probably address that person individually to **get a pulse check** of what’s going on: “I’m hearing that you’re driving like this are not doing thing safely.” Hopefully you’re going to draw out with **active listening** what is at the root of problems with the crew.”
- “There is a **use of force continuum** in communications. So depending on a person’s nonverbal behavior, on what they are actually doing and how they are responding, you adjust your communicate with that person. There is a time and place for me to be more abrupt and directive, if there is danger, or if it is a re-occurring thing. Also in terms of efficiency, sometimes you need to be abrupt.”





Examples of Need for Calm

- A firefighter is pacing and wringing her hands while on duty in the firehouse. She just heard that her son, an Army Sergeant deployed in Afghanistan, has been seriously injured.
- An EMT responding to a multiple vehicle crash is talking too fast and not reacting appropriately to commands or questions.
- A medic punches his locker and is yelling and kicking things. He has just returned from a call in which an infant had serious injuries after being shaken by a parent.
- Alcohol is the only thing a crew member feels he can turn to, to calm himself.

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Calm Strategies: Self

- Engage in regular **physical activity**.
- Spend **time with family and close friends**, and let them know what is calming for you ahead of time so they can better support you when needed.
- **Take a break** from stressful situations for a short time.
- Realize that there are **cycles of adrenaline** that may make you prone to depression at times, and build in rewarding activities to get energized during down cycles.

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Calm Strategies: Others

- Make others aware of the **importance of self-calming** strategies.
- **Ask for help** to empower and distract the other person.
- If possible, **get the stressed person to look at you for a minute**, then be very specific and detailed about what you want them to do.
- Use light **humor**.
- Make every effort **not to call attention to someone's stress** in a way that might make them feel ashamed.
- **Acknowledge possible stressors** and the potential need for support in a matter of fact way ahead of difficult events, even through humor.
- If a stressed person can't make good cognitive decisions, **use the person's name and communicate exactly what is needed** in a calm, methodical voice.
- After line of duty deaths, determine next steps for each person on a **case-by-case** basis.

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Calm Examples: Self

- "To Calm myself, I like **physical activity**, exercise motion, and having my **family and close friends** is good. I have a good female friend up street. She seems to know when I need to talk. Those are the things you absolutely cherish."
- "What works for me is to **pull myself out of the situation for a bit**. I do something simple, like driving down the road, or sleeping in an area where no one else is."
- "There are things you have to do in order to bring yourself back into this bar of normalcy. You go on a giant swing from adrenaline to depression. There are things that you have to do in order to claw fight and drag yourself back to normalcy. Things like **hobbies**. "Use tas" "I use ta hunt, fish, spend time with wife." You have to turn them into "I'm going tos." I started making a **concerted effort to make work not get in the way** of spending time with my son and wife."

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Calm Examples: Others

- **“Asking for help** is a good way to calm people. Saying, “in order to get through this, I’m really going to need you to “x,y, and z.” I can’t do it by myself, if you could just help me out here that would be great.” It’s empowering. It appeals to all the parts of us that are doers, fixers, and movers.”
- **“Humor** is a very safe to Calm down with firefighters. Being self-deprecating always works, because you’re the butt of it, not anyone else, although you have to be careful because you don’t want to undermine your own leadership.”
- “There was a guy who would start picking the lint off his sweater when he was anxious. I would say, **“just look at me for a second.”** I would get him to stop doing what he was doing and focus just for that second, and say, “here’s what I need you to do,” then be very specific and detailed. It was great. He could get right back there and focus. Something needed to jog him out of his funk.”



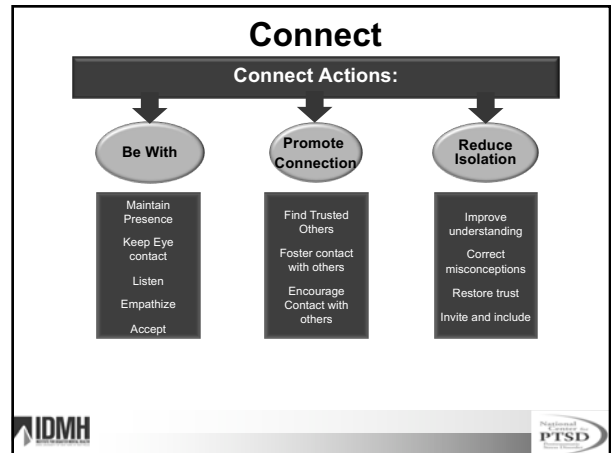
Calm Example: Others

- “After a really bad fire with a line of duty death, we **went to each crew member individually** and asked them if they wanted sick leave, or to go back to work. Then we came back together and talked with every person, gave each one every option, and then gave them whatever they needed, to support them. In the end, most of them wanted to stay together on light duty. It worked out pretty well, doing it on a case-by-case basis. They came out with what they wanted and we honored that. They are people, not machines. They’re human beings, so we treat them like that and it goes a long way. They’re all different. You can still meet the needs of the organization and meet their needs at the same time. Just treat them like your brothers and sisters. They do extraordinary things so we should act with extraordinary compassion with them.”







Calm: Fire/EMS Examples

- “After we had a couple of particularly tough calls, I brought **pistachio nuts** in for the crew. Shelling pistachios takes time and makes people slow down, so it gave us a chance to unwind and talk about what happened. Doing something supportive doesn’t have to look like a mental health intervention. In fact, the best interventions are often the least noticeable ones.”
- “After a line-of-duty death, we made sure that the **memorial activities were voluntary**, and that crew members knew what to do if memorial activities were distressing (i.e. that it was okay to bring an iPod in to listen to if testimonials were triggering them). We also decided to make the memorial a scholarship fund rather than a statue or plaque that would be a constant visual reminder of the death.”







Connect: Fire/EMS Example

Different Types of Support

1. **Instrumental support:** the provision of material aid (such as assistance with daily tasks)
2. **Informational support:** the provision of relevant information (such as advice or guidance) intended to help the individual cope with current difficulties
3. **Emotional support:** the expression of empathy, caring, reassurance and provision of opportunities for emotional expression and venting

Examples of Need for Connect

- A young firefighter freezes during his first major working fire. Although only disabled for a few seconds, he feels ashamed and withdraws from all contact with crew members.
- A warehouse roof collapses during a fire, killing four firefighters. Some department members feel that better coordination could have prevented at least a few of the deaths. Firefighters not involved in the fire avoid speaking or interacting with those who were involved. Unit cohesion drops.



Connect Strategies: Self

- **Know the value of good mentors and friends.**
- **Surround yourself with people** who are genuine, authentic, and honest.
- Make friends with **people you can be yourself with**, and talk with about what bothers you.
- Discipline yourself to have **conversations people who know you well enough** to know when something is bothering you.
- **Reprioritize your schedule** to spend more time with those who mean the most to you.



Connect Strategies I: Others

- Hold the crew accountable for **treating each other with respect**.
- If someone has retreated because of an incident, find ways to **indirectly include them in projects** and create collaborative opportunities with peers, to get them back into doing something meaningful.
- With **introverts, bring them back being connected after they recharge**, whatever that looks like for them.
- If someone is in the orange/red zone and resistant to getting support, and they trust you, **don't be afraid to be more authoritative in getting them the help** they need.
- In the middle of intensive stress, **keep people moving** get them engaged in activities that facilitate talking while you do things. For instance, while moving, have people briefly report out on successes, loose ends, and their plan for the next 24 hours.



Connect Strategies II: Others

- Depending on your role, **don't be afraid to sit and just listen** and be comfortable letting a stressed person talk. The fact that you're in the same culture carries a lot of weight and can be more helpful than talking to anyone else.
- **Keep calling, texting, and writing letters** to the families and co-workers of fallen firefighters. Regardless if they pick up the phone or not, the fact that someone remembers them on an anniversary date, or on any random day, is what is helpful.



Connect Examples: Self

- **"The people I reach out to are honest.** It's about calling a spade a spade, not dancing around it. They're able to give their perspective on my problem, and show me that it might pale in comparison to another's: "You need to pick up pieces of your shattered life and move on." It serves to provide another's perspective, and foster honesty. Or they might say, "That's not normal for you." I am skeptical of self-diagnosis. I think you need to get a second opinion- a fresh perspective."
- "My wife, and kid, and I have ways that **we stay in touch** when I'm on the road or when I'm working long days. We've worked mitigations into that sense of absence. It's about **re-prioritizing**. I will choose not to go to a fire. It's not my emergency. Instead, I will take my kid camping, go fishing, and have some fun."





Connect Example: Others

- "I'm an introvert, like many firefighters. I like to fight, and then I flee. That is innate, so that is what I do. I do tend to disappear. That's just how I cope. But **for introverts, it's important to bring them back into the tribe, get them back into that connectedness after they recharge**, whatever that looks like for them. That is the key."





Connect Example: Others

- "There was a fatality and one of the crew felt overwhelmingly responsible for the incident. We rallied around him as much as he would let us. He was a solitary kind of guy before the incident, so it would be normal for his reaction to be one of retreat. A year ago, I would have let him retreat, but because I was introduced to the SFA model, I rallied an effort to help. Post-accident, I included him in discussions and projects for which I would not have in the past. They were positive projects that would benefit from his expertise, and created collaborative opportunities with peers. It gave us the opportunity to include him, take his temperature from time to time. It redirected his energy to get him back to a sense of competence, confidence and connection, to get him back into doing something that was in his wheelhouse professionally. These actions have all the appearances of being effective."



Connect Example: Others

- "I would recommend that when there is a lot of stress, leaders should keep people moving and facilitate talking while you do things. I had one leader who, instead of sitting down and having lunch, would make people walk around camp. He gets people engaged and laughing, and it's helpful for their stress levels. Or, have people each report out on successes, loose ends, and their plan for the next 24 hours. It only has to take a half hour."



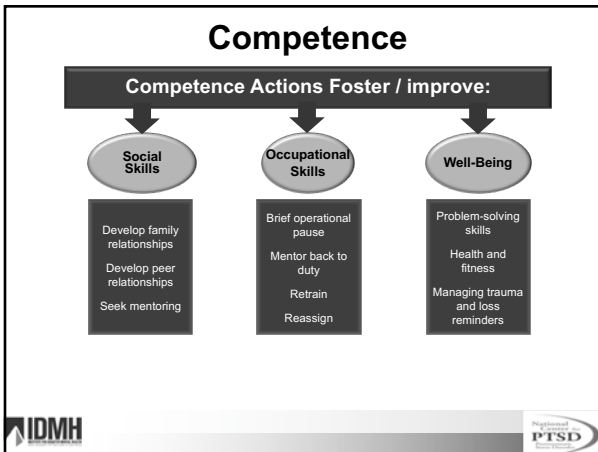
Connect Example: Others

- "Connecting means sitting and listening and being comfortable letting the other person talk, and taking on some pain so they leave feeling better. But it doesn't mean keeping that for yourself, either. Recognize that you can listen and empathize without taking it on in a harmful way. It involves learning to listen attentively, recognizing that it could hurt, and if it starts to, figuring out what to do right after.
- It helps to know that no matter what I say or what I do, there is no right way to do anything. Don't even bother with cliché words, just be with them, nod, pay attention, and just feel it, and it's okay. I know that it's okay to support others, and there are plenty of people I can reach out to after, if I need to, and I have. But I would not walk away from someone.







Connect: Fire/EMS Example

- "A firefighter was drinking all the time. He had been on the crew with the two guys who died, but it was hard to get him to talk to us. He had a kitchen remodeling project underway, so I went over and hung out in his home and helped him. While we worked on it, he opened up and I was able to get him some help."

Competence: Fire/EMS Example

Need for Competence

- Lack of Experience or Training
 - Operational challenges are new
 - Unprepared for emotional impact
- Stress creates loss of skills
 - Mental focus or clarity
 - Emotional/behavioral self-control
- Stress creates new coping challenges
 - Difficulty relaxing or getting to sleep
 - Difficulty maintaining an emotional “even keel”



Examples of Need for Competence

- A firefighter who narrowly escaped a collapse questions his skills and whether he should continue as a firefighter
- An EMS professional who developed wear-and-tear stress injury loses the ability to stay calm when dealing with co-workers.
- A firefighter who narrowly escaped dying experiences persistent anxiety which he medicates with alcohol.
- A chief who loses a firefighter becomes hesitant about sending subordinates into hazardous situations, increasing the danger to the entire department.



STOP

Rest, time to recover
Identify challenges to recovery
Don't do things that aren't working

BACK UP

Retrain/refresh skills
Mentor/problem solve
Learn new skills



MOVE FORWARD

Practice skills
Gradually increase responsibilities
Trouble shoot obstacles
Celebrate success



Competence Strategies: Self

- If you're under too much stress, **do something that is easy for you** to give you a sense of accomplishment.
- Be more disciplined in taking whatever **healthy steps** support you in dealing with stress.
- Regularly **reflect on the balance** between the satisfaction of fulfilling work duties and the personal sacrifices you are making. Be prepared to adjust behaviors and expectations if that balance changes over time.



Competence Strategies I: Others

- If someone is psyching him or herself out, because they are overthinking **give them simple systematic ways to occupy their thoughts**, like counting random numbers, or counting steps.
- **Mentor others** by figuring out how the person is going to best learn something, and potentially teach the same strategy to others.
- If someone is struggling to learn something, **find someone who matches their personality, somebody they can relate to** and communicate with, and assign that person to them.
- Start with absolute basics, and provide **stepped escalation of stress** and responsibility in a calculated manner.



Competence Strategies II: Others

- Give the stressed individual **responsibility little by little**, so that they are more and more in control, to build a past foundation so that when they are in a situation where serious mistakes **could** happen, they know that there is a high likelihood that they will be okay, and if they're not, it's not because they didn't try.
- After mistakes, **help the person become more competent**, to help with shaken confidence. Remind them that everyone is human, that all reactions are acceptable in the right context, and help them to figure out what they might do differently in the future.
- As a leader, if your crew's sense of duty and commitment lead to overworking, **make sure that they're getting rest**, and advocate for them.
- Before you have a conversation with somebody who you think needs time off, **make sure taking time off is feasible** for that individual.



Competence Examples: Self

- “When I’m under too much stress, I revert to doing something that is easy for me. It gives me a sense of accomplishment, like tidying the garage, or shoveling snow for a widowed neighbor. It doesn’t take much thought, but it gives me a sense of accomplishment.”
- “I make mitigations for spending time with my family so that my head is in good shape, which helps me deal with stress on the fireline.”



Competence Examples: Others

- “You can mitigate a lot of issues with the right mentoring. The platinum rule of treat others the way they need to be treated, it’s the same thing with teaching. It’s not about me, it’s about how are you going to learn this and how are you going to then get confidence to teach it as well. A lot of one on one is the way to do it.”
- “Aerial training is intense, and every year we’ve had one student who just can’t get it. Every time we’ve done this, when the cadre is getting ready to ship him home, we find someone who matches their personality, somebody they can relate to and communicate with, and we assign that person to them. We build their competence and confidence by starting with absolute basics in a small one-on-one setting, then by bringing more of the cadre into the room on a sand table or a computer simulation. Slowly the whole cadre is there to observe, and then to say, “great job, you passed the simulation.” It’s a sliding continuum where we provide an escalation of stress and responsibility in a calculated manner.”



Competence Examples: Others

- “Pretty much everyone I see is burdened by work. We are out taking on more duties as our workforce shrinks and budgets shrink. I think a lot of people will offer “solutions” when they really don’t know if those solutions are possible. To say you should take a month off may be really tough for someone to do. So before you have a conversation with somebody who you think needs time off you need to make sure that the check can be cashed by that individual.”
- “I had to have conversations with people and say, “don’t come in to work on your day off. Get some rest and relaxation. Don’t come into this office.” People’s sense of duty and commitment to the crew sometimes lead to overworking. I have to make sure that they’re getting rest and that I advocate for them.”



Competence: Fire/EMS Example



Competence: Fire/EMS Example

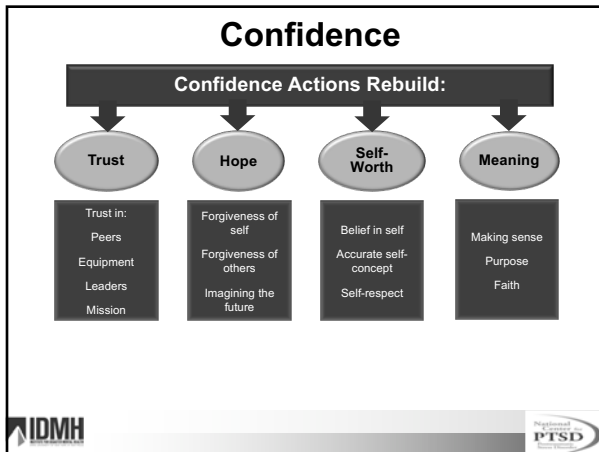
- “Our fire department had training on conflict resolution because we saw that when our young firefighters were under stress, they didn’t really know how to manage their irritability and anger. They also did not know how to communicate directly, effectively and assertively with others—they were more used to texting than talking. The training helped all of us improve the ways we handle conflict individually, and as an organization.”



After Action Review

1. **What was our mission?**
 - Had we planned for this event?
 - Were there any gaps in our planning?
2. **What went well?**
 - Did we have the resources for conducting this event?
 - Did we do all we could to make this a successful operation?
3. **What could have gone better?**
 - Did we see any unsafe behaviors?
 - Did our training prepare us?
4. **What might we have done differently?**
 - If you ran the same incident today, what would be done differently?
5. **Who needs to know?**
 - What needs to be fixed?





Confidence: Fire/EMS Example



Examples of Need for Confidence

- A firefighter whose failure to take proper precautions contributes to the injury of a fellow firefighter feels extremely guilty and becomes self-destructive.
- A paramedic who developed wear-and-tear stress reaction loses respect for his leaders and becomes angry and irritable.
- A firefighter with significant life threat stress suffers lowered functioning, loses his spiritual faith and his professional capabilities, and becomes depressed.



Confidence Strategies: Self

- Use **small triumphs** to build confidence. If you have self-doubt, read more self-help books or tactical reports.
- After particularly traumatic situations or losses, **don't push yourself to "process" the situation in any particular time frame**, but if something triggers you, give yourself time and space to think it through, integrate it, talk to someone, have emotions, find ways to make sure it doesn't cause you to get stuck in suffering, and / or make sense of it.
- When tough things happen, **establish new relationships** with mentors to guide you through.
- If you have tried to mentor someone and cannot get them up to speed, realize that not all personalities fit this job, and **sometimes you have to walk away**.
- Use the wisdom gained from hard experiences to **reconfirm your values, make changes in your life, appreciate what you value, or help others**.



Confidence Strategies: Other

- If young firefighters are struggling with confidence, **give them tasks that they can be successful at**, solicit their opinions, set them up for success, or find some way they can contribute to the crew.
- If firefighters show severe stress, **talk with them, work with them, give them relevant reading materials, and connect them to people** who have dealt with similar things. If they continue to get triggered, mentor them to consider their options, including leaving the fire service.
- If a firefighter is feeling bad about some reaction he/she had, help them counter their guilt by **normalizing their reactions**, letting them know that they made the best decision they could have made given what they knew at the time, and letting them know they are not alone in experiencing stress reactions.
- If a crew member's confidence is low, or he/she feels no sense of purpose or contribution to the team, **point out a skill they have** that does contribute to the team, or one of their other strengths.
- When stress starts to build up in the crew, **explain to the crew why you're doing what you're doing**, so they don't lose confidence in the mission or leadership.



Confidence Example: Self

- "I had to come to the realization that if I had been with the guys who died, that I would have been one of them. I trusted those guys, worked with them countless times, spent time with them both on and off the clock. To come to that realization took a long time. First started working 14 – 16 hour days, working on my house, staying totally busy. Then it started snowing. I put a log on the fire and burned my hand, and I lost it. I thought, "I just got a small burn on my hand. Imagine what my friends went through." So I had a good cry, let it out, and then I made it a personal mission to start informing young firefighters about the dangers and risks of this job, so they can come to accept them."



Confidence Example: Self

- “You can be the most skillful person in the entire world but if you don’t have faith in yourself you are doomed. You’re never going to get through it. And vice versa, you can be overconfident but not able to learn from mistakes or be more effective. You’re just going to keep circling the drain. There is a fine line between the two. The better you are at one, the better you will be on the other one. Even small triumphs can help with confidence. Trust is hard to rebuild. Confidence is that way too. If you have had a bad outcome, you will always self-doubt. You end up going to read more self-help books, or tactical reports. Then you realize that you were already good at your job. It was a lightning bolt that came out of the sky, it had nothing to do with your skills.”



Confidence Example: Others

- “As a leader, I saw that a young firefighter was struggling to find a way to contribute to the crew, which was affecting his confidence. I made an effort to give him tasks that I knew he would be successful at, asked his opinions, set him up for success, gave him some advice, and when he said “every time I open my mouth I say something that confirms how dumb I am,” I joked with him, “you can always return to not saying anything.”



Confidence Examples: Others

- “When something seems out of place in a person’s demeanor, I will pick up on it. Maybe one day they just need a pick me up. I try to be mindful and observant as a leader in order to be there for them at times like that.”
- “If someone has bad attitude, his confidence is low, and he feels like he has no sense of purpose, or is not contributing to the team, I direct them to the team, and point out how the team is all pushing forward to a good outcome. I may say something like, “Ditch the zero, get with the heroes.” I try to help him look for something specific that he’s good at, some skill they have that really does contribute to the team, and point out his strengths, even if it’s just that they’re helpful and nice to his crewmates. Something tangible. If you notice stress reactions, maybe you can point out one of the person’s strengths.”



Confidence Example: Others

- “Sometimes it’s simple. If they don’t feel comfortable doing something at that time for some reason, but they’ve done it before and know how to do it, you just relate the person back to their skills: “you do this all the time, you’ve done it before, you know how to do it. Just take a deep breath, take a step back, let’s look at what we’re doing here and move forward.” Just have them reassess what they’re doing, take a step back for a second, and try to re-engage. But let them know you have the confidence in them to be successful: “Look I trust you or I wouldn’t have you doing this in the first place, so I know you can do it, I know you’re capable, just get back in there and do it.”



Confidence Example: Others

- “I try to return people to a fundamental notion of why they got into the job in the first place. I always remind them, “If you’re ever in conflict with someone or yourself, remember that one of the greatest ideas the country ever had was to have public spaces, and we are the stewards of public spaces. So if you ever wonder if we’re deviating from something small, remember what we’re doing on a large scale, and you’re part of that. If you’re questioning that, remember that once you leave here, you may look back on that with regret. So try a cooling of period.”



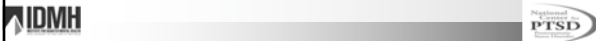
Confidence Example: Others

- “After we got back from a fire with deaths, we got flooded by calls, so I reached out to an old superintendent who had come through in a similar situation. When tough things happen, I establish new relationships: “What does this look like, help me map this out.” We’ve become semi-close considering he was a complete stranger prior to the fire. He is going to come talk to the crew about what the transition was like for his crew, how to get back in into the game. Before I kicked the gang lose for the year, I talked with this person for about an hour, and he said, “I want you to say these things to the crew, because these are the things I didn’t do. These are things you should be keeping an eye out for across the winter, and hiring people next year.” He gave me tips that have been very helpful. A ton of people reach out, there are a lot of resources out there, so I would recommend that you just call them. My guy has been a good mentor in some hard times.”



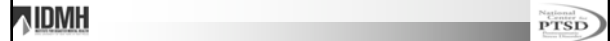
Confidence Example: Others

- “The people who can especially be helpful are the ones who have been through similar situations, but being a guide has to come in the person’s own time. If they are ready to be that mentor to someone else, it’s especially potent, because they have clout because they also went through a trial by fire. Sometimes a person in need of Confidence won’t listen to anyone else, but they will listen to the person who has been through the hardest of times. It gives you a role model to show you how to potentially go through things. And it also will shape how you can mentor others at some point.”




Confidence Example: Others

- “It doesn’t have to take five years of therapy, it could just be the right place, the right time, the right person, like a verbal slap, and if they trust you, have worked with you, it doesn’t have to take a long time to make a shift in their perspective. Every single time a person gets to know you and knows who you are, it’s money in the bank for the time that you can potentially make an influence on a person. A psychologist or family member does not have that foundational relationship to make a shift in just a few moments. It’s a big deal.”




Confidence: Fire/EMS Example

- “I give my crew members the message that you don’t take ownership of injuries or deaths unless you’ve clearly stepped over the line. Did we do everything that could be done? If so, we did our job. We don’t control who lives or dies; our job is to provide the best service possible. If not, let’s do an AAR and improve what we do the next time. We can learn something from every incident.”

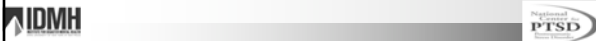


Confidence: Fire/EMS Examples

- “We had a roof collapse and a firefighter fell to his death. Ten or twelve people felt responsible, so I got them in a room for an After Action Review. The ground rules were that they had to keep it to what they saw and did at the scene (to get all the puzzle pieces together) and to keep emotion out of it. Through the discussion they were able to see that they weren’t responsible.”
- “It’s about reframing. A traumatic event is like a tattoo. It hurts and it will stay with you forever, but you learn to live with it and after a period of time it won’t hurt as much. I try to use what I’ve learned from these events to help others.”



Stress First Aid Educational Format



Essential Need	Question
Cover	• How has the incident affected your sense of safety?
Calm	• What changes have occurred regarding sleep, feelings of being on edge, or ability to keep calm?


Essential Need	Question
Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has there been an impact on how you talk with each other, work morale, or connecting with family and friends? • Is there someone you feel comfortable talking with about this? • Has anyone you know done or said something that really helped?

Essential Need	Question
Competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any concerns about being able to handle what’s going on in your life, deal with your stress reactions, or do your work? • What are some things that you have done to cope that have been helpful in the past, or have been helpful since this incident?

Essential Need	Question
Confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any change in your confidence in your ability to do your job in the same way as before the incident, in equipment, or in leadership? • Does this <i>event/incident</i> hold special meaning or connect with other experiences in any way?

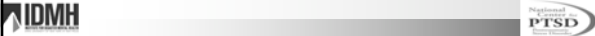
Key Point Emphasis

- SFA is collaborative, experimental, non-judgmental
- Timing and context are important
- SFA is not meant to address all ranges of issues
- Flexibility and “tiny steps” are emphasized
- Mentoring and problem solving are highlighted
- Bridge to higher care when indicated



Skill Application

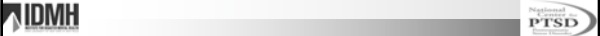
Firefighter Johnson is part of a crew that responded to a residential fire in which two children died, and was one of the members who pulled the children out of the house. He is a former Marine who has been working on this crew for about four months, and is known as a serious and focused firefighter. He also has two young children that are approximately the same age as the two that were killed. He claims that he is “fine,” but some of the other firefighters are concerned that he has become less social and seems more irritable since the fire.





Skill Application

Questions:

- What kind of stress injury may be present?
- What SFA action(s) would you use?
- What is your plan for approaching the situation?
- What information would you want to know?
- Outline the exact words/sentences you would use.











Curbside Manner: Stress First Aid for the Street

On the Web at: www.FireHero.org



What is Curbside Manner: Stress First Aid for the Street?

- CM is a version of Stress First Aid modified for civilian applications
- It is used with civilians to:
 - Reduce distress and foster adaptive functioning
 - Increase peoples' feeling cared for and respected
 - Enhance compliance
- It is used more frequently than SFA, in daily work with the public
- Its goals are less broad than SFA, with a different time frame
- It primes SFA by building it into a familiar and frequent professional application

Objectives of Curbside Manner



- Make a connection in a helpful/respectful way
- Restore/support a sense of safety
- Calm and orient distressed individuals
- Connect individuals to their sources of support
- Improve the ability of those affected to address their most critical needs
- Foster a sense of hope/limit self-doubt and guilt



Curbside Manner Promotes Recovery




- Occurs wherever/whenever needed
- Not a one-size-fits-all approach
- Used in collaboration with other resources
- Should not interfere with primary duties

Curbside manner is good customer service!




Curbside Manner: SFA for the Streets Core Actions

1	Cover	 
2	Calm	
3	Connect	
4	Competence	
5	Confidence	




Curbside Manner: Components in each Core Action

Approach	Maintain an approach that conveys respect, care and compassion
Information	Get and give information in helpful ways
Direction	Direct people in a way that focuses them and reduces distress



Cover

Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convey that you are there to keep the person safe
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask about concerns Give simple, accurate information on rescue activities Reassurance of safety
Direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove person from scene Protect from unnecessary exposure to reminders, media and/or onlookers

Calm

Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain a calm presence Respect needs Reassure by authority and presence Show understanding Validate
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask questions in calming or distracting way Provide information about services Explain your actions Give reassurance
Direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address basic needs Emphasize the present, practical, possible Let the person help Direct to use simple self-calming actions Use distraction

Connect



Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make it part of your job to connect people to trusted supports
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get contact information Look for people in vicinity to connect individuals to Ask about who are most trusted supports (including pets)
Direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster reconnection with family, friends Encourage peer support with those available Solicit volunteers to provide support








Competence

Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get people connected to resources Don't leave the scene without a relationship transfer
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine people's needs, what your role is and what the exit plan is Provide verbal and written information on resources, and encourage their use
Direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get needed items Give contact information to acquire resources Make connections for specific MH and PH conditions



Confidence

Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep a neutral or positive attitude Avoid judgment
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify rumors, misunderstandings and distortions Reduce guilt about actions
Direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus the person on the present moment Put the person on task







What is the Value Added?



- Sets people up to recover from the event
- Creates strong employee/community support
- Makes you feel good about the job you do and the difference you make






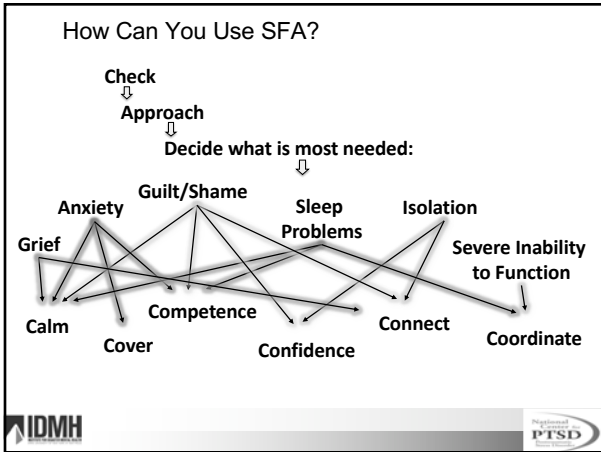
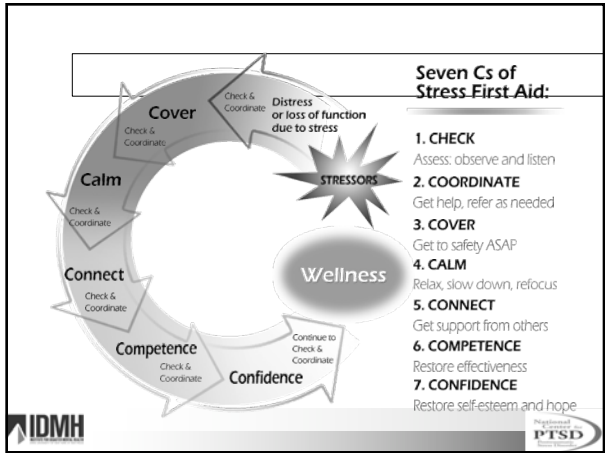
**What people remember most
is that you treated them
as if they mattered**






Wrap Up

- Why Learn SFA?
- Recognize a potential stress injury in a peer
 - Act: If you see something, say something
 - To the distressed person
 - To a trusted source of support
 - Connect peer to appropriate support
- 
- 



- Key Point Emphasis
- Tone is collaborative, experimental, non-judgmental
 - Timing and context are important
 - SFA is not meant to address all ranges of issues
 - Flexibility and “tiny steps” are emphasized
 - Mentoring and problem solving are highlighted
 - Bridge to higher care when indicated
- 
- 

Take Home Messages: Curbside Manner

- Utilize a flexible, pragmatic approach, specific to the need, context, and phase of recovery
- Treat those you serve as if they were a family member
- Get to know the CM principles well so you can apply them both to your work with civilians and towards your co-workers
- Refer to the CM Student Manual for detailed information



Skill Application: Curbside Manner

You are dispatched to a house fire. When you arrive on the scene, the mother is screaming and trying to get into the house to rescue her two children, still in the house, but is being restrained by a neighbor. The grandmother, who lives with them, is looking disoriented and distraught, while sitting on the front lawn, asking passersby if they've seen her dog. The father is at work and is not yet aware of the fire. 15-20 neighbors are in the yard, asking questions and wanting to know if they can help.



Skill Application

1. How would you approach the mother?
1. How would you approach the grandmother?
1. Which CM actions do you think would be needed?
1. How you would apply those CM actions?



SFA Resource

Pocketpeer.org



Resources

National Fallen Firefighters Foundation:
www.firehero.org

Fire Life Safety Initiative 13 website:
www.flisi13@everyonegoeshome.com

Fire Hero Learning Network website:
www.fireherolearningnetwork.com



Thank you!

Questions?

