



# CISM

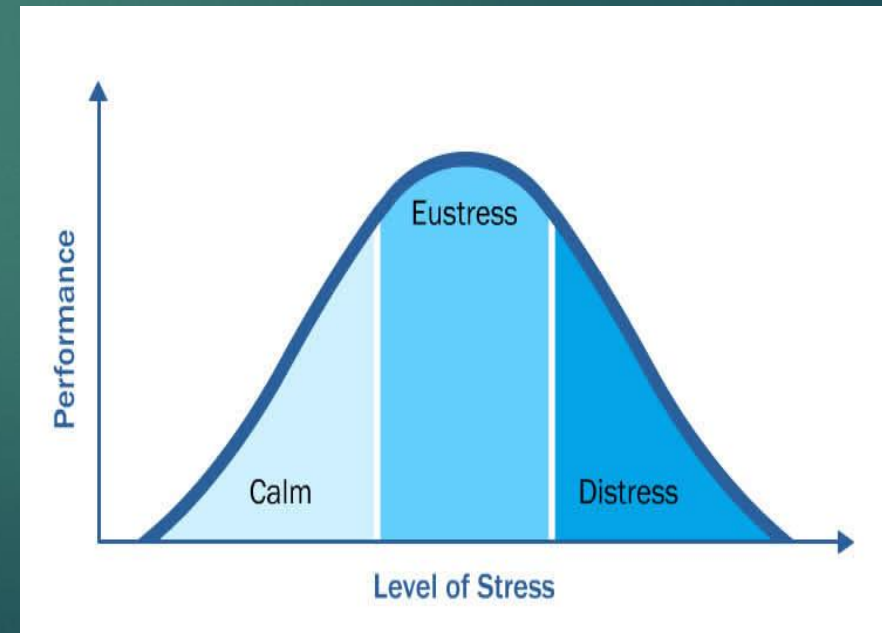
Critical Incident Stress Management

# What is “Stress?”

- ▶ Daily stress
- ▶ Chronic stress and Burnout
- ▶ Critical Incident stress - CISM

# Stress isn't *always* a bad thing

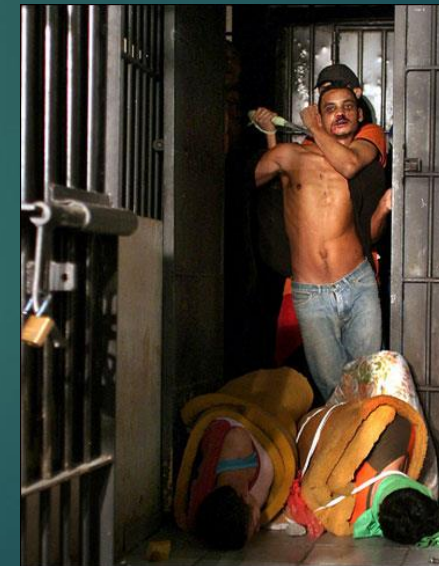
- ▶ Eustress – Good stress
  - ▶ Marriage, promotion, new baby, graduation = **changes**
  - ▶ Deadlines and challenges at work can make you productive and creative.
- ▶ Distress – Excessive/Chronic stress
  - ▶ Divorce, injury, punishment, financial/work difficulties, negative feelings = **changes**
  - ▶ Body produces Cortisol
    - ▶ Interferes with immune system
    - ▶ Problems with memory
    - ▶ Stays in bloodstream a long time
- ▶ Acute Stress – Fight or Flight
  - ▶ Dysfunction – Impairment
  - ▶ Need to reduce and control the harmful effects of this stress
- ▶ *Stress management is the key, not stress elimination*



# Traumatic Events/Critical Incidents

- ▶ Sudden and largely unexpected
- ▶ Key element is threatened survival
- ▶ Heightened sense of danger
- ▶ Often disruption of personal or social values
- ▶ Powerful emotional reactions

*What is traumatic for one person may not be for another.....*



In just seconds you can go from calm,  
to terror...

<b><i>Mental State</i></b>	<b>CALM</b>	<b>AROUSAL</b>	<b>ALARM</b>	<b>FEAR</b>	<b>TERROR</b>
<b><i>Regulating Brain Region</i></b>	NEOCORTX Cortex	<b>CORTEX</b> Limbic	<b>LIMBIC</b> Midbrain	<b>MIDBRAIN</b> Brainstem	<b>BRAINSTEM</b> Autonomic
<b><i>Thinking/ Judgment</i></b>	ABSTRACT	<b>CONCRETE</b>	EMOTIONAL	REACTIVE	REFLEXIVE

The job of CISM is to help bring you back down  
and re-ground your body and brain.



# Fight, Flight, or Freeze



- ▶ Fight – fear, becoming anger, presenting as Fight
- ▶ Flight – fear, becoming avoidance , presenting as flight
- ▶ Freeze - confusion



# Acute/Critical Incident Stress

- ▶ Normal coping is overwhelmed – this is trauma
  - ▶ Flight (avoidance) – Fight (anger) - Freeze
  - ▶ Body is hard wired to react in these ways
    - ▶ Cold sweat
    - ▶ Digestion shuts down
    - ▶ Lens in eye flattens out
    - ▶ Sense of time slowing/speeding up
    - ▶ Fine motor skills dissipate
    - ▶ Don't feel pain until later
- ▶ Most signs and symptoms disappear within a few days.
  - ▶ Trouble sleeping, memory loss, reliving the incident, emotions from anger to guilt, numbness, and others, are common reactions to the event



- ▶ 1500 biochemical reactions occur EVERY time you experience FFF stress.

- ▶ “Normal” person goes through this Fight or Flight response 15-50 times per day



- ▶ If the stressor is gone, the Parasympathetic (PNS) kicks in to calm the body back down.

- ▶ If the stressor persists

- ▶ Blood vessels on skin surface dilate

- ▶ Sweat pores open up

- ▶ Digestive system shuts down

- ▶ Blood moves to the core of the body and to the large muscles, away from the arms and brain

- ▶ Not just for survival....this is where sexual pleasure comes from, too!!



# Parasympathetic Nervous System

- ▶ Conserves energy
- ▶ Calms the body back down, trying to return to homeostasis
- ▶ Increases bodily secretions – tears, gastric acids, mucus and saliva
- ▶ Turns off production of cortisol and other hormones.
- ▶ SNS and PNS are like two tug-of-war teams, with hormones as the strongmen. They are meant to balance each other out.
- ▶ If either one dominates the other without relief, then you will experience an on-going state of internal imbalance, known as stress.



# Acute Stress/CISM

- ▶ Can actually draw people together





# Discharging stress hormones



- ▶ Need to flush the body of toxins created
  - ▶ Over 1500 chemical reactions from one event
  - ▶ Cry, sweat, pee them out.
  - ▶ HYDRATE!!



# On-going Symptoms of Critical Incident Stress

## Behavioral

- Restlessness
- Irritability and moodiness
- Anti-social behavior
- Increased alcohol consumption

## Cognitive

- Poor concentration
- Confusion or uncertainty
- Nightmares

## Physical

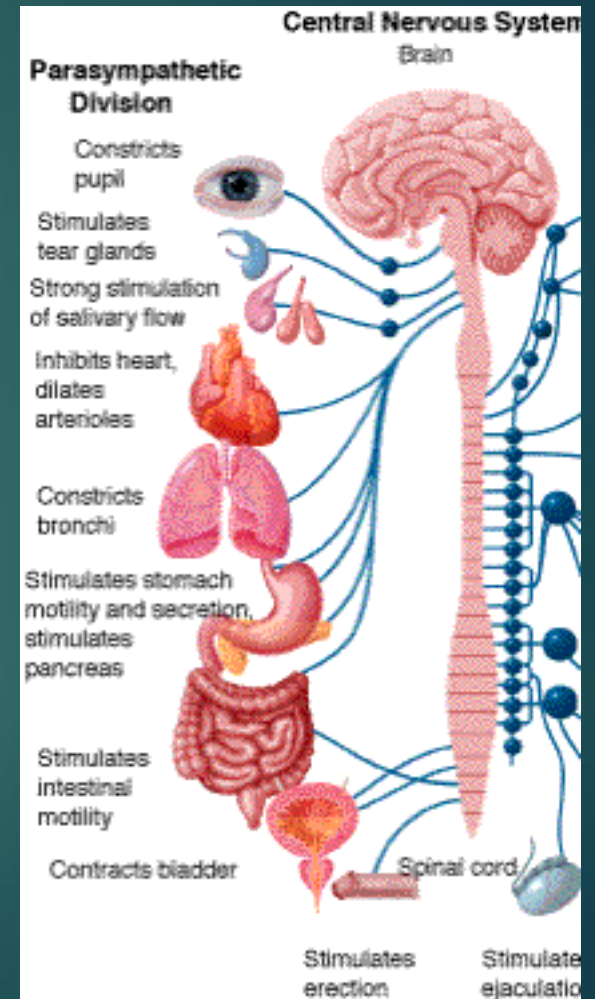
- Vomiting, Chills
- Headaches
- Disrupted sleep
- Muscle tremors
- Chest Pain

## Emotional

- Depression and Anxiety
- Intense anger
- Grief
- Guilt

# Immediately after event: Stabilize

- Breathe deeply to release endorphins which calm the body
- Restart digestion with sips of water
- Allow discharge:
  - Crying, shaking, sweating, moving
- “The worst is over, you are safe now.”
- Shifting to the Thinking Brain





# CISM goal is to Normalize

Trauma and distress are normal reactions to abnormal situations



# How CISM Helps

- ▶ Addressing stress reactions not normally discussed among work groups
- ▶ Return to normal stress baseline
- ▶ Gives closure and self-care education

# Critical Incident Stress Management

- ▶ **Short-term** psychological helping-process that focuses solely on an immediate and identifiable problem.
- ▶ **Symptom driven** - if no symptoms, no intervention. People are handling event in a resilient way
- ▶ Purpose is to enable people to **return to their daily routine** (normal level of functioning) more quickly, thus helping to prevent PTSD.
- ▶ **Work group** based.
- ▶ **NOT** therapy
- ▶ Includes:
  - ▶ Pre-incident awareness training
  - ▶ One-to-one interventions
  - ▶ Debriefings, Defusings, CMBs

