



# THE STRESS CONTINUUM

Early Intervention is Our Best Prevention



# LEARNING OBJECTIVES



- **DEFINE** stress and stressors and **COMPARE** the differences
- **IDENTIFY** and **DISCUSS** stressors within the military
- **EXPLAIN** the stress response and **DISCUSS** how it effects the mind & body
- **DISCUSS** how stress is good and necessary for optimal performance
- **DISCUSS** and **DESCRIBE** the difference between helpful stress and unhelpful stress
- **DEFINE** and **DESCRIBE** resilience
- **EXPLAIN** the resilience continuum and **IDENTIFY** the importance of being resilient
- **IDENTIFY** and **DISCUSS** stress resilience skills and **EXPLAIN** the benefits of building your resilience

# UNDERSTANDING STRESS



## Stress

- A state of mental or emotional strain, or tension resulting from demanding circumstances
- Associated with an individual's perception of their ability to handle the adverse or demanding circumstances
- Can have a positive & negative affect on your mind, body, spirit & social domains

## Stressors

- Any event, experience, or environmental conditions that causes stress in an individual
- These events or experiences are perceived as threats or challenges to individuals and can be physical or psychological

# STRESS IS ESSENTIAL FOR:



- Optimal performance
- Strength & toughness
- Growth & development
- Developing new skills
- Meeting challenges
- Performing difficult missions

# MILITARY DEMANDS



## Meeting the demands of the Coast Guard

- Maintaining a forward presence (deployments, austere environments)
- Increased work demands with decreased staff
- Leader/management styles
- Career concerns
- Environmental conditions (climate, noise(s), & smells)
- Certifications, qualifications, & inspections
- Family adjustment, separations, & PCSing
- Ethical situations between doing “what is right” versus “following the rules”

# THE AUTOMATIC (AUTONOMIC) NERVOUS SYSTEM



## The Body's Automatic Response to Stress

**Fight, Flight, or Freeze**  
(Sympathetic)

↑ Blood Pressure ↑ Heart Rate  
↑ Inflammation  
↑ Blood Sugar  
↓ Digestion  
↑ Brain Alertness

**Rest & Digest**  
(Parasympathetic)

↓ Blood Pressure ↓ Heart Rate  
↓ Inflammation  
↓ Blood Sugar  
↑ Digestion  
↓ Brain Alertness

# STRESS CONTINUUM



## Ready

- Good to go Well-trained
- Fit and focused
- Cohesive units
- Ready families

Unit Leader  
Responsibility

## Reacting

- Optimal Functioning:
- Distress can & should go away but if not managed:
- Irritable, quick temper, angry, anxious
- Diminished self-control
- Poor focus
- Poor sleep Fatigue

Individual, Peer, Family  
Responsibility

## Injured

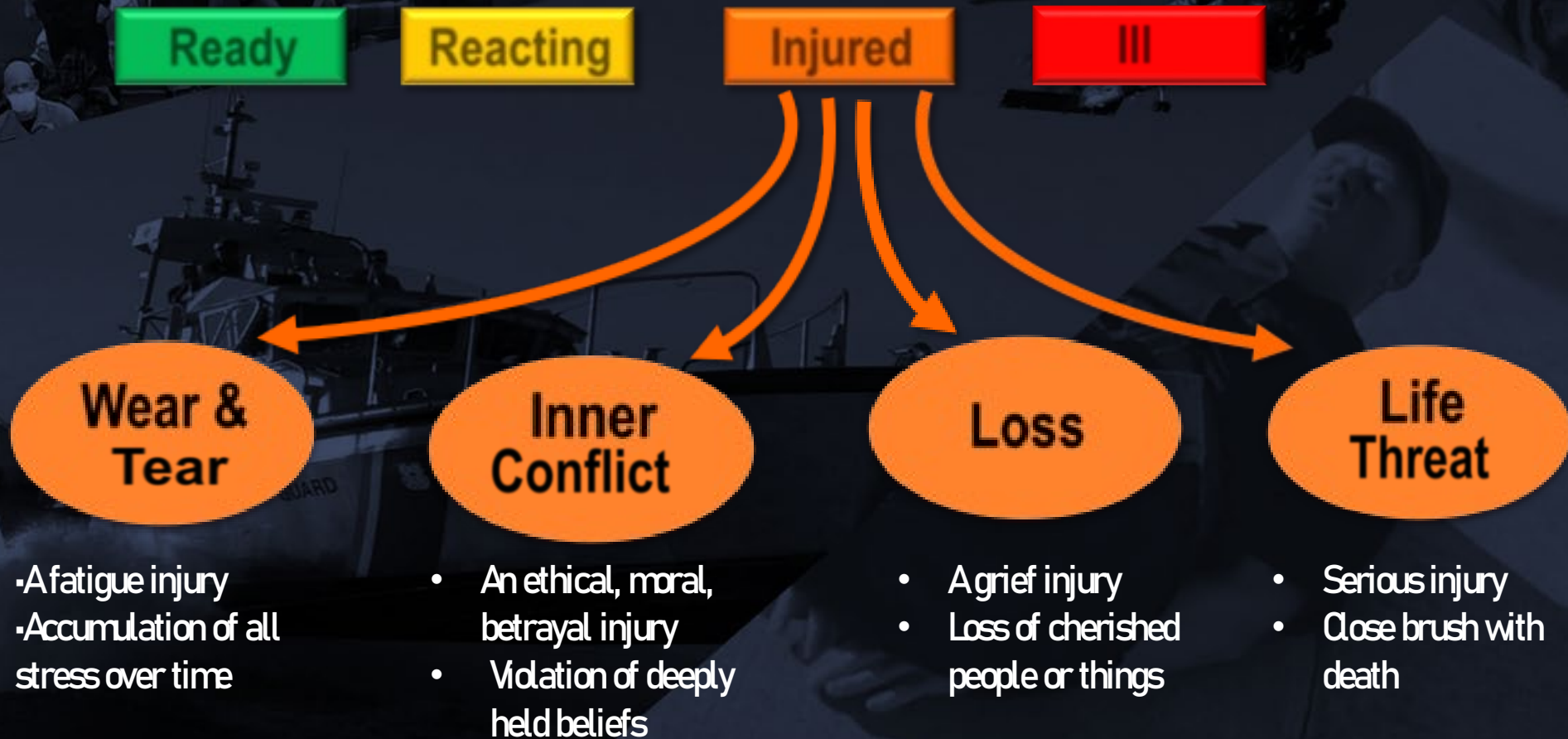
- More severe or persistent distress or impairment due to: Wear & Tear, Inner Conflict, Loss, Life Threat
- Rage, Panic, Can't sleep, Nightmares
- Shame, Guilt, Loss of values and beliefs

## III

- Stress injuries that don't heal without help
- Symptoms persist, get worse or initially get better then return worse

Caregiver  
Responsibility

# FOUR SOURCES OF STRESS INJURY

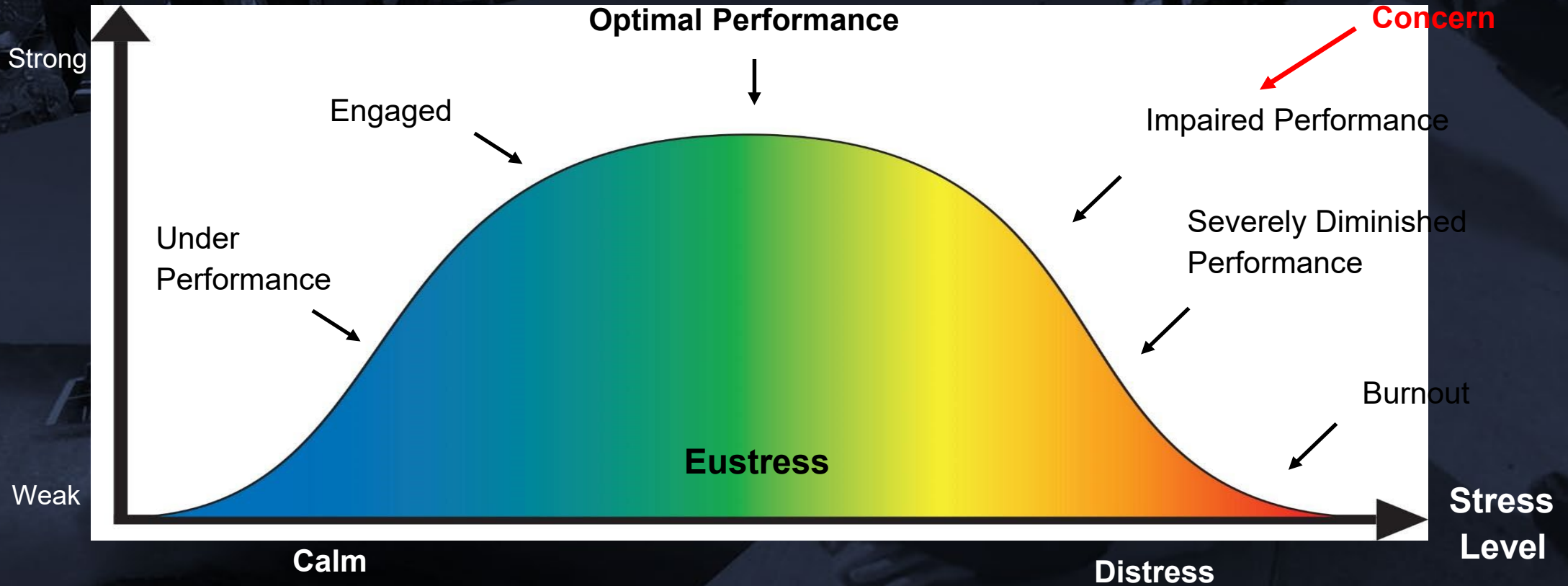




# SUCCESS REQUIRES STRESS



Performance



Point of Concern

Weak

Calm

Distress

Stress Level

# CONSEQUENCES OF CHRONIC STRESS



<b>Mind</b> (Cognitively, Emotionally)	<b>Body</b> (Physically)	<b>Spirit</b> (Spirituality, Religiousness)	<b>Social</b> (Relationships, Social Engagement)
Memory loss	Crying	Loss of direction	Disconnected
Lack of interest	Excess smoking	Loss of meaning & purpose	Emptiness
Trouble thinking clearly	Overuse of alcohol	Doubt	Unforgiving
Distrust	Low energy	Change in values	Isolation
Racing thoughts	Headaches	Change in religious beliefs or spirituality	Lashing out
Loneliness/Anger	Indigestion		Lack of intimacy
Loss of motivation	Stomach aches		
Nervousness & anxiousness	Sleep difficulties		

# 4 DOMAINS OF RESILIENCE



**Mind:** How you think and what you think about. *What types of thoughts and feelings do you experience in response to stress?*

**Mind**

**Body**

**Body:** Your physical health. *Do you get regular exercise, eat nutritious foods, get enough sleep, and take care of injuries and illnesses?*

**Social:** Your connections with other people. *Do you feel like you have social connections that you can turn to for support?*

**Social**

**Spirit**

**Spirit:** Your values (what is important to you) and sense of purpose. *How well are you able to find meaning in stressful experiences?*

# STRESS RESILIENCE SKILLS



- **Mindfulness:**
  - Using the mind & body to work together to help you achieve optimal performance under stress
  - Optimize your rest and recovery
  - Recognizing stress before it become a problem
- **Valued Living:**
  - Living a life consistent with your personal values can help you become more resilient to stress
- **Flexible Thinking:**
  - Can help you ACT instead of REACT
  - Awareness of your thoughts, feeling, & behaviors
  - Optimism, control & acceptance
- **Healthy Behaviors:**
  - Getting enough sleep
  - Eating nutritious foods
  - Staying physically fit & taking care of injuries & illnesses
- **Problem Solving:**
  - Building healthy coping skills, recognizing problems and breaking them down to identify potential solutions can make problems less overwhelming & reduce stress

# BUILDING YOUR RESILIENCE



Mindfulness, values-based decision-making, flexible thinking, healthy behaviors & effective problem solving, when *practiced daily* and *regularly*, these skills can help you:

✓ Focus and perform under pressure	✓ Promote healthy relationships
✓ Maintain adequate control over emotions	✓ Support mature and responsible behavior
✓ Use good judgement	✓ Cope with stress
✓ Increase confidence	✓ Solve problems
✓ Overcome setbacks	✓ Make good decisions

# ALREADY STRESSED AND SEEING CRISIS?



- Remember to Ask, Care, and Escort (ACE)
- Being “in someone business” always takes precedence over the potential of losing someone.
- You serve as a support, not as a Therapist, Chaplain, etc.
- Any Yes! Must be taken seriously.
- We all have a responsibility to protect ourselves and our fellow members.

# ASK



- If a person appears to be going through a stressful moment, ask:
  - How are you doing?
  - How can I support you better?
- If there is a greater concern, ask:
  - Have you wished you were dead or wished you could go to sleep and not wake up? Have you actually had any thoughts of killing yourself?
  - If yes, ask: Have you been thinking about how you might do this?
  - Have you had these thoughts and had some intention of acting on them?
  - Have you started to work out or worked out the details of how to kill yourself? Do you intend to carry out this plan?

# CARE



- Practicing care for yourself and others is essential to maintaining force readiness and optimal health. Some ways to show you care are:
  - Checking in
    - With others about how you are doing
    - On others to see how they are doing coping
  - Social activities
  - Physical activities
  - Spiritual activities



# ESCORT



- If the answer to any of the questions is yes, please escort your fellow service member to someone trained to support them through crisis (i.e., Medical Staff, Behavioral Health Provider, Chaplain).
- Do not leave the person alone!!!

# QUESTIONS & Resources



- CG SUPRT: Call 1-855-CG-SUPRT (247-8778) [www.cgsuprt.com](http://www.cgsuprt.com).
- Work-Life Employee Assistance Program Coordinators (EAPCs) are also available to assist. Their contact information can be found at: [https://cg.portal.uscg.mil/units/hswlsc/worklife\\_division/Shared%20Documents/EAP/USCG%20HSWL%20EAPC%20Contact.pdf](https://cg.portal.uscg.mil/units/hswlsc/worklife_division/Shared%20Documents/EAP/USCG%20HSWL%20EAPC%20Contact.pdf).
- Chaplains are another valuable resource. Their contact information can be found at: <http://www.uscg.mil/chaplain/locations/> or by calling 1-855-USCG-CHC (872-4242).
- If you would rather chat or text, a confidential chat is available (<http://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net> ). The Veterans Crisis Line is available at (800) 273-8255 and Press 1, or text 838255.
- The Coast Guard has a limited team of Regional Behavioral Health Providers (RBHPs). You, your units, as well as Coast Guard leadership, have access to enhanced prevention, intervention, and postvention behavioral health support. To make an appointment with your RBHP, please contact your unit medical officer for a referral or email [BehavioralHealth@uscg.mil](mailto:BehavioralHealth@uscg.mil).