

JAIL BULLETIN

NUMBER 34

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The Jail Bulletin is a monthly feature of the Crime Commission Update. The Bulletin may be used as a supplement to your jail in-service training program if officers study the material and complete the attached "open book" quiz. The Bulletin and quiz may be reproduced for use by your staff. We welcome any jail training materials you would like to contribute to the Bulletin.

STRESS MANAGEMENT - PART IV

PROBLEM SOLVING:

The best way to remove or relieve stress is to solve the problem(s) that caused it. Many times, we relieve stress in an automatic function. For example, when hungry, you eat and the hunger goes away. Only when there is no food supply does hunger become a matter of real stress or a problem.

Problem solving, then, becomes a key to stress reduction. . .

1. Identify the problem. The problem could be excessive lateness, or absenteeism on the job, or feeling jittery on the job, or not getting our work done because we are tired, or being rude, critical, and abrasive toward inmates, staff, and the public, or being slovenly and unkempt in appearance, or being a poor team member that constantly snivels and spreads discontent. Each of these problems, and we first have to accept that they are problems, can be turned around if they are identified and personal change is effected.
2. Analyze the problem. Is there just one problem or are there several that are in contention? Sort the problems out and work on solutions.
3. Effect a problem solution by personal action: Here are a few suggestions that could help . . .
 - a. Don't stretch yourself too thin. You can only do so much. Say "no" diplomatically, and, by doing so, you will allow yourself to do things that you really enjoy, not something that is imposed on you by others.
 - b. Experience your feelings. Many traumatic life events are managed and stress symptoms do not appear. It is when they are mismanaged that emotional damage is done because the fear and anger are not resolved. The resolution of an event becomes reality when feelings are freely expressed.

- c. Work off stress. If you are angry or upset, try to blow off steam physically by activities such as running, playing tennis, or gardening. Even taking a walk can help. Physical activity allows you an outlet for mental stress.
- d. Learn to accept what you cannot change. If the problem is beyond your control at this time, try your best to accept it. It beats spinning your wheels and getting nowhere.
- e. Talk out the problem. Develop relationships with others so that when the problem occurs you have a support system that will give you understanding and will listen to what you say. Talking with your spouse or a trusted friend about your problems is an excellent way to solve problems.
- f. Avoid self-medication. Although there are many chemicals, including alcohol, that can mask stress symptoms, they do not help you adjust to the stress itself. Many are habit-forming, so the decision to use them should belong to your doctor. It is a form of flight reaction that can cause more stress than it solves. The ability to handle stress comes from within you, not from the outside.
- g. Get enough sleep and rest. Lack of sleep can lessen your ability to deal with stress by making you more irritable. Most people need at least seven to eight hours of sleep out of every 24. If stress repeatedly prevents you from sleeping, you should inform your doctor.
- h. Balance work and recreation. "All work and no play can make Jack/Jane a nervous wreck." Schedule time for recreation to relax your mind. Your work cannot be your play--they are separate even though work can be a pleasurable experience.
- i. Do something for others. Sometimes when you are distressed, you concentrate too much on yourself and your situation. When this happens, it is often wise to do something for someone else and get your mind off of yourself. There is an extra bonus in this technique--it helps make friends.
- j. Set realistic goals. Don't try to accomplish everything all at once. It is defeating to tackle all your tasks at once. Instead, set aside and work on the most urgent.
- k. Give in once in awhile. If you find the source of your stress is other people, try giving in instead of fighting and insisting you are always right. You may find that others will begin to give in too.

1. Know when to get professional help and do it. People, in general, pride themselves on being independent, self-reliant and able to handle just about any situation. These attitudes make it difficult to ask for help with any kind of a problem. But when a traumatic stress situation occurs and the negative effects don't go away, you must get professional help. This is not admitting defeat. It is admitting that you are an intelligent human being who knows their limits. Professional help is always done confidentially and is usually covered by health insurance plans.

HEALTHY HABITS:

Healthy habits will strengthen your body's resistance to stressor events. Health is not a product; it is a process, an on-going state of being maintained by discipline and commitment. Stress prevention requires development and maintaining healthy habits.

HABIT #1

Exercising aerobically involves activities that strengthen the heart and circulatory system by raising the pulse rate to an effective level (130-160 beats per minute for 35 year-olds and maintaining it for at least 20 minutes.) In jails, where there are high stress events, aerobic activity conditions your body to be ready for those moments of high stress. When the event occurs, your system is ready for high activity rather than being surprised by it. Vigorous exercise such as brisk walks, running, or playing racquetball or high-exertion, aerobically useful activities.

Leisurely walking, bowling, or playing softball lack enough sustained, high exertion to be aerobically useful but are, nonetheless, relaxing. Vigorous exercise offers the benefits of releasing stress, building stress prevention strength, and by producing high levels of endorphins, the body's own morphine-like substance, which enables you to cope/handle stress more efficiently and effectively.

HABIT #2

Relaxation and rest provide the energy to solve problems, live with others, and stay healthy. It is essential that we plan some time each day to relax physically, mentally, and emotionally. Also, it is important that we relax in ways that we enjoy whether it be reading a book, going for a drive, involvement in social games, visiting with a friend, etc.

Adequate rest can be encouraged by preparing your sleeping environment for the least amount of intrusion (no telephone, black-out shade, etc.,) going to bed at an earlier time, and avoiding caffeine before bedtime.

HABIT #3

Another healthy habit is eating foods that are nutritionally sound. By reducing the intake of sugar, salt, caffeine, and nicotine, your body will function at a higher level and for a longer period of time. Other elements of good nutrition are . . .

- Snacking on fruit rather than candy bars
- Drink fruit juice instead of soft drinks
- Stop smoking (running is one of the best ways to lose weight and stop smoking)
- Eat more poultry and fish

HABIT #4

Develop healthy interpersonal relationships. Actually this is the simplest and least expensive habit to become involved with and could have the biggest payoff. The habit begins with the development of a positive attitude--an attitude that is friendly. . .that is courteous. . .that is adaptable. . .that is patient. . . that is sociable. . .that acknowledges others around you. With this attitude showing, others will become friendly, courteous, adaptable, patient, and sociable . . .and, once this happens, loyalty, trust, and respect will grow and form healthy interpersonal relationships which will in turn form support systems. These support systems (people) will be resources to turn to when you need someone to listen. . .when you are at your wit's end. . .and help you to put order in your life again. There is an urgency in developing this habit though, for a resource (people) is something you have before you need it (them).

SUMMARY:

Stress is defined as pressure for action or change--stress can be caused by both major life events and minor daily hassles. Traumatic events, such as a death in the family, are easy to recognize and one is expected to need help at that time. It is the minor day-to-day irritations and frustrations that are just as difficult to handle that give us the greatest problems because we allow them to build up.

Stress usually has a negative connotation in that it relates to problems or pressure. But stress is also felt in response to positive life events such as promotions or moving to a new apartment or house.

Stress is usually felt when a person feels pressure to change or to take some sort of action to deal with a problem or circumstance. When the stressor event is mismanaged, the stress increases.

When the stress event is mismanaged, the stress can cause body changes, affect feelings and behavior, and cause great overall distress. The physical symptoms range from headaches, muscle tension, and stomach problems to the labeled "stress diseases" which are ulcers, bowel problems, back problems, and high blood pressure.

How we handle stress is very much how we perceive the event since the event is inherently neutral and has no value other than what we give to it. We say, "It upsets me," when what is really happening is "I upset me," since we give the event emotional intensity and power and upset ourselves. We must analyze the event by "self-talk" and bring the problem to a successful resolution.

In jail work, there is constant pressure for action or change. We must constantly deal with people (inmates) who are highly stressed themselves because of their problems. We have a challenge in our work and that is to achieve an optimum balance between being stressed and relaxed. . .to reduce stress to levels at which it provides useful stimulation without endangering our health and productivity.

QUIZ

Nebraska Jail Standards require that jail staff receive eighteen (18) hours of in-service training each year. The Jail Bulletin may be used to supplement in-service training if an officer studies the Bulletin, completes the quiz, and this process is documented by the jail administrator for review during annual jail inspection.

SUBJECT: STRESS MANAGEMENT - PART IV

NAME _____

DATE _____

1. The best way to relieve stress is to _____

2. What are the three steps of problem solving?

3. Stress is defined as: _____

4. What are the four healthy habits that will help you deal with stress?

CREDIT: 1/2 HOUR CREDIT FOR JAIL IN-SERVICE TRAINING REQUIREMENT.

ANSWER SHEET SHOULD BE RETAINED BY JAIL ADMINISTRATOR

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1. The best way to relieve stress is to SOLVE THE PROBLEM THAT
CAUSED IT.

2. What are the three steps of problem solving?
IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM
ANALYZE THE PROBLEM
EFFECT A PROBLEM SOLUTION BY PERSONAL ACTION

3. Stress is defined as: PRESSURE FOR ACTION OR CHANGE

4. What are the four healthy habits that will help you deal with stress?
EXERCISE
RELAXATION AND REST
GOOD NUTRITION
HEALTHY INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

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