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# JAIL BULLETIN

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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 I

Stress is something that happens to everybody . . . both "good" and "bad" events cause it and it can be both "good" and "bad". . . It is a normal and unavoidable part of living and interacting with persons, places, and things . . . it is not reality, but how our mind perceives and gives it value or power . . . and, either we learn to manage it or it will control and destroy us.

In corrections work, we are constantly being pressured into action or into change (or, into accepting change). We must constantly deal with people's lives, their liberty, their problems, and their tragedies which many times evoke strong emotions of anger, frustration, and depression in us. Our work also has the unique, somewhat dangerous characteristic in that it often contains both stress underload and overload, shifting constantly between boredom and traumatic high-stress activity. The emotional feelings produced by these activities, if unmanaged, can affect our lifestyle and cause serious physical, emotional, and behavioral problems.

It is important to emphasize that although the term stress has come to have a negative connotation, stress actually has beneficial effects. Some level of stress is necessary in the creative process. Total absence of stress will produce apathy and boredom. People seem to require some level of outside stimulation to function at their highest level. This stimulation could be attentive supervision (external) or the desire to be a competent professional (internal). The challenge we are faced with in corrections work then is to achieve an optimum balance between stress and relaxation . . . to reduce stress to levels at which it could provide useful stimulation without endangering our health and productivity.

## Defining Stress

Stress is pressure for action or change . . . it refers to any stimulus from the environment that disrupts the body's physical, chemical, or mental functioning . . . it refers to influences on a living system which either are directly damaging or which bring about changes of such magnitude, that, if they are not reversed or compensated for, impairment and damage will result. At the same time, it must also be emphasized that stress successfully coped with can just as often have a beneficial and stimulating effect on development as stress unsuccessfully coped with may have a harmful or damaging effect. Stress must not be simply equated with that which is bad or harmful.

Stress must also be considered in a quantitative sense: how much, how abruptly, and over what span of time. For every living system there is a "limits" range defining the capacity of the system to respond successfully. Each person must know their strengths and their weaknesses so that a successful strategy for coping can be developed.

Finally, stress cannot be defined simply in terms of events (origin). Although it is easier to categorize stressors in terms of environmental factors or events, not only does some stress originate within the person rather than in the environment, but also for any individual the conditions defining stress are to be found simultaneously in the individual and in the external environment. Furthermore, as already emphasized, one rarely deals with a single stress, but rather with a series of stress situations of the person interacting with persons, places, or things. Experience allows us to identify events as likely to prove stressful for a majority of, but not for all, people.

The importance of stress as a causative factor in all types of disease has led to the development of various rating scales used for identifying stress levels and susceptibility to severe illness. The following rating scale was devised by Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe, University of Washington. Complete the following rating scale and see where you are according to the stressors in your life. Follow these instructions . . .

1. Check each event that has occurred in your life this past year.
2. Place the number from the "stress" column in the score column.
3. Place total from all scores on the line "Total Stress Score."

LIFE'S TRAUMATIC EVENTS

<u>EVENT RANK</u>	<u>STRESS</u>	<u>SCORE</u>	<u>LIFE EVENT</u>	<u>EVENT RANK</u>	<u>STRESS</u>	<u>SCORE</u>	<u>LIFE EVENT</u>
1	(100)	_____	Death of a Spouse	23	(29)	_____	Son/Daughter Leaving Home
2	(73)	_____	Divorce	24	(29)	_____	Trouble with In-Laws
3	(65)	_____	Marital Separation	25	(28)	_____	Outstanding Personal Achievement
4	(63)	_____	Death/Close Family Member	26	(26)	_____	Spouse Began or Stopped Work
5	(53)	_____	Personal Injury/Illness	27	(26)	_____	Begin or Finish School
6	(53)	_____	Jail Term	28	(25)	_____	Socially ("in/out" group)
7	(50)	_____	Marriage	29	(24)	_____	Change in Personal Habits
8	(47)	_____	Handle Hostile Irrate Situation	30	(23)	_____	Trouble with Supervisor
9	(45)	_____	Marital Reconciliation	31	(20)	_____	Change in Work Hours/Condition
10	(45)	_____	Retirement	32	(20)	_____	Change in Residence
11	(44)	_____	Change in Health in Family Member	33	(20)	_____	Working a Second Job
12	(40)	_____	Birth/Gain New Family Member	34	(19)	_____	Change in Recreation
13	(39)	_____	Sex Difficulties	35	(19)	_____	Change in Church Activities
14	(39)	_____	Having an Affair	36	(18)	_____	Change in Friends/Work Group
15	(39)	_____	Promotion, Transfer or demotion	37	(17)	_____	Mortgage/Loan Less than \$20,000
16	(38)	_____	Change in Financial State	38	(16)	_____	Change in Sleep Habits
17	(37)	_____	Death of a Close Friend	39	(15)	_____	Change in Number of Family Gatherings
18	(36)	_____	Involved in Lawsuit/Personal Action	40	(15)	_____	Change in Eating Habits
19	(35)	_____	Change in Number of Arguments with Spouse	41	(13)	_____	Major Vacation
20	(31)	_____	Mortgage over \$30,000	42	(12)	_____	Working on Holidays
21	(30)	_____	Foreclosure of Mortgage or Loan	43	(11)	_____	Minor Charges Filed Against You
22	(29)	_____	Change in Responsibilities at Work	44	(11)	_____	Verbal Abuse
						_____	Total Stress Score

(A score of 150 or less indicates a small chance of an illness within the next two years; a score of 150-300 increases the chances of becoming ill to 51 percent; and, a score of over 300 represents an 80 percent chance of developing a serious illness within two years). Now, count the amount of traumatic events and total the events. What this shows is that we have a lot of things of varying intensities that are dying for our attention. If we are going to eliminate stress, or just reduce it, we will have to accept, resolve, and manage these events.

While you are contemplating your scores, consider an inmate that you have some history on . . . that you have observed and listened to. Score this inmate and you will see the immense amount of stress placed on an individual during incarceration.

## Sources of Stress

There are three main sources of stress in organizations:

1. Individual Stress: Fear of failing an assignment; the physical and emotional strain of long, continuous hours, time demands, deadlines, and critical decision-making.
2. Interpersonal Stress: Inadequate support from superiors (feelings of being unappreciated and misunderstood); ineffective performance by superiors (feelings that the management is incompetent); inadequate, unprofessional performance by subordinates (feelings that some members of the management team are not pulling their share of the workload/co-workers who have no professional commitment.)
3. Organizational Stress: The highly competitive atmosphere of the organization; unclear job assignments; poor performance appraisal development and follow-through.

These sources of personal stress can pose serious threats to the physical and psychological well-being of staff personnel. There is also strong evidence that correctional work does involve high occupational stress due to continuously dealing with highly stressed problem people in a static (sameness, never changing) environment. Most frightening is the contributing role played by stress in crises of judgment. These include use of excessive force and individual recklessness (John Wayne Syndrome).

## Stress Carriers

One final note on sources of stress is the "stress carrier." The "stress carrier" in any organization is about the same . . . individuals who, consciously or unconsciously, can complicate even the simplest task, can make mountains out of molehills, can whine (complain), snivel (cry), and spread malcontent (rumors) and, finally, do operate as unsuccessful problem-solvers blaming all problems on everything (everybody) imaginable except themselves.

To counter or deal with the stress-carrier, you can use the following techniques . . .

1. Consider the source. Most "stress carriers" have given themselves away many times by being involved in anxiety-producing conversations or exaggerations. Simply tell them that you don't like or want their harassment.
2. Demand facts. If the person has no facts, tell them you don't care to hear it.
3. No amorphous "they". The person that always talks about "they", (they are doing this or that) and can never name who "they" are. Tell them when they have names (and facts) you will listen.

4. Demand accountability. When you observe someone who shifts responsibility, who always has excuses, or who just doesn't "pull their load," be assertive and make sure that person understands your feelings. Your "venting" will make you feel less stressful and you might, you just might, change some behavior.
  
5. Demand action. Easier said than done. Procrastination drives most people crazy and this type of "stress carrier" can drive productive people to an unproductive state of boredom through timeless waiting and "catch-22's". You must do what you can through offering solutions (to help them decide), follow-up (to let them know you care), and finally, documentation (to let them know you mean business.)

Yes, there will always be "stress carriers" around as long as we allow them to work their games on us, but . . . once they know that we know their games, their games will cease and overall organizational productivity will increase.

--Material contributed by: Jay Kucera,  
Corrections Training Officer,  
Lancaster County Corrections Department

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 I

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

1. Total absence of stress can produce \_\_\_\_\_ and  
\_\_\_\_\_.

2. List the three main sources of stress in an organization:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Some stress originates within the person instead of the environment.

\_\_\_\_\_ TRUE      \_\_\_\_\_ FALSE

4. Stress is pressure for \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.

5. Organizational stress can be caused by: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

ANSWER SHEET SHOULD BE RETAINED BY JAIL ADMINISTRATOR

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SUBJECT: STRESS MANAGEMENT - PART I

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

1. Total absence of stress can produce           APATHY           and           BOREDOM          .
  
2. List the three main sources of stress in an organization:  
          INDIVIDUAL STRESS            
          INTERPERSONAL STRESS            
          ORGANIZATIONAL STRESS
  
3. Some stress originates within the person instead of the environment.  
  XX   TRUE                  FALSE
  
4. Stress is pressure for           ACTION           or           CHANGE          .
  
5. Organizational stress can be caused by:           THE HIGHLY COMPETITIVE            
          ATMOSPHERE OF THE ORGANIZATION; UNCLEAR JOB ASSIGNMENTS;            
          POOR PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL DEVELOPMENT AND FOLLOW-THROUGH.

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