



# STRESS REACTIONS AND COPING MECHANISMS – HONOR GUARD

Presented by the Military & Family Life Counselors

# OBJECTIVES

- Define stress and stress reactions
- Better understand how we try to cope with stress
- Help you become aware of available resources if you or your family member is experiencing difficulty



# SOURCES OF STRESS

- Types of stress in our work?
- Types of stress in our personal life?
- Even the strongest **WARRIORS** are subject to stress!
- Over exposure to death and dying is stressful.



# STRESSORS FOR HONOR GUARD

- Scheduling
- Funeral Directors
- Grieving Family Members
- Striving for Perfection
- Other



# IMPACT ON FAMILY

## Accelerated Stress Behaviors are seen by Spouse/Children as:

- Rejection
- Not caring
- Scary
- Self focused



# IMPACT ON FAMILY

CONTINUED

- Stressed spouses may easily misunderstand each other
- Previous relationship problems with:

**intimacy**

**commitment**

**money management**

**...can be exaggerated!**



# CHILDREN

- Children will often blame themselves for the parent's stress behaviors
- Will be frightened by parents' fighting



# SINGLES...

## ...are at additional risk for problems in handling stress:

- Often far away from family support
- May use alcohol to handle stress
- Rely on buddies for emotional support who may also be highly stressed





**Traumatic, stressful  
experiences can become  
overwhelming if denied  
and/or not dealt with**



# STRESS REACTIONS

## The traumatic event is persistently re-experienced in one or more ways:

- Recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the traumatic experience
- Recurrent distressing dreams of this trauma
- Having flash back episodes as if one is reliving the traumatic experience
- Intense upset when exposed to sounds, sights, smells and images that resemble parts of the traumatic experience



# STRESS REACTIONS

- Efforts to avoid thoughts, feelings, or conversations about the trauma
- Efforts to avoid activities, places, or people that arouse recollections of the trauma
- Inability to recall important aspects of the trauma
- ‘Emotional numbing’ or detachment/ estrangement from others
- Unable to have loving feelings
- Do not expect to have a career, marriage, children or normal life span



# STRESS REACTION BEHAVIORS

- Difficulty falling asleep
- Irritability or outbursts of anger
- Difficulty concentrating
- Hyper-vigilance
- Exaggerated startle response



# “NORMAL” COPING BEHAVIORS

Earlier ‘normal’ coping behaviors can become permanent responses towards life, family and others

- Self protective anger can **lead to** violence to self or others
- Hyper-vigilance can **lead to** chronic worry and anxiety
- Protective withdrawal can **lead to** problems with emotional intimacy
- Temporary use of alcohol, sex, gambling and/or drugs as a way to cope can lead to chronic use



# REMEMBER

For most service members, chronic stress reaction symptoms subside with the passage of time, support from family, friends, colleagues and spiritual community.

If the symptoms do not subside, hope and help are available.



# HOPE

- Today, we have the knowledge to help military personnel avoid chronic stress reaction
- You need to be honest in your own self-assessment
- If your stress is out of control or you feel like you are losing control, it is time to get help!



# WHEN TO SEEK HELP

- Stress reactions impair your daily functioning in your personal and/or work life
- You feel you might be a danger to yourself or others
- Drug and/or alcohol abuse persist





# DON'T BE AFRAID TO SEEK HELP

- It takes courage to ask for help
- Seeking help is a sign of strength
- Gaining control of chronic stress reactions helps you and your family, and enhances the performance of your job



# SUMMARY

- Chronic stress reactions affect the service member, family and job performance
- It is important to be aware of chronic stress reaction symptoms
- Support from family, friends, colleagues and spiritual community
- Don't be afraid to seek help if symptoms persist





**QUESTIONS?**



# RESOURCES

- Military Family Support Services
- Chaplain and Local Clergy
- Military OneSource (800) 342-9647
- TRICARE [www.Tricare.mil](http://www.Tricare.mil)
- Behavioral Health Services





**THANK YOU**

