Resilience & Wellbeing

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Military Social Work?

- 37 military and 145.7 civilian social work positions
- Located on 19 military bases across Canada and in Germany (various regulatory bodies)
- Work in a multi-disciplinary health care environment to provide services to more than 75K personnel
- Prevention, education, advocacy, support, referral, screening, counselling, treatment, assessments
- Support deployed operations
Mental Health Clinic

Psychosocial Services
- individual, couple, and family counselling
- operational readiness assessments
- addictions awareness
- no referral necessary

General Mental Health Program
- assessment
- education
- psychotherapy
- follow-up

Operational Trauma and Stress Support Centre (OTSSC)
- Mental Health Services + Psychosocial Services
- Psychosocial Services
- Mental Health Services delivered by Primary Care Clinicians

Operational Trauma and Stress Support Centres
- team specializing in operational stress injury assessment and treatment
- regional role
- outreach education
My role

• Governance of social work practice in DND/CAF
• Policy and guidance, professional-technical oversight
• Professional practice standards, reviews
• Training, professional development of social workers
• Managing career development of 37 uniformed social workers (recruiting, training, postings, promotions)
• Mental health education & training in CAF: development and delivery of 500+ events per year delivered to 15K military personnel
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<td>Daughter appt</td>
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<td>Train to Montreal</td>
<td>Teach in Ottawa</td>
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<td>In the office in Ottawa</td>
<td>Meet with RCMP and MHCC</td>
<td>In the office in Ottawa</td>
<td>In the office in Ottawa</td>
<td>Teach in Ottawa</td>
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**May 2016**
Take a moment to consider why you decided to join the social work profession:

- What are your true motives for wanting to be a social worker or social service worker?
- Why are you willing to endure the pain/stress/hassles? Why is it worth it?
- What reasons justify the sacrifices you make in order to do this job?
Performance Drivers

Two key forces drive humans to achieve excellence and make meaningful contributions:

1. Finding meaning and pursuing something you love or find meaningful
2. Feeling accepted, valued, and respected as we are engaged in meaningful pursuit
Demands

- **Organizational**: factors that impact the entire organization, routine stressors that anyone can anticipate in their day to day employment, regardless of occupation
- **Occupational**: factors related specifically to employment as a social worker/social service worker, regardless of setting
- **Operational**: factors specifically related to where you work and what you do in your current role
- **Personal**: factors that include those individual and family issues that occur outside of our work life
What are some of your demands?

- Workplace conflict; colleagues, supervisor
- Keeping up with changes, technology, policies
- Time pressures, deadlines, paperwork
- Having to perform beyond experience, abilities, comfort level
- Lack of sufficient resources, unmanageable schedules
- Relationship changes; marriage, separation, new child
- Transitions; new job, new location
- Loss of or separation from family or friends
- Isolation in small communities
- Changes in health status
- Work/life balance issues
Stress is a reaction to pressure, not a part of the pressure itself.

We experience stress as a result of a comparison in our brain between perceived demands and perceived resources.

Significant implications for our ability to manage stress.
Stress & Performance

\[ \uparrow \text{stress} = \uparrow \text{likelihood of choosing a risky alternative} \]

\[ \uparrow \text{stress} = \downarrow \text{tolerance for ambiguity} \]

\[ \uparrow \text{stress} = \uparrow \text{tendency to make hasty choice} \]

\[ \uparrow \text{stress} = \downarrow \text{productive thoughts} \]

\[ \uparrow \text{stress} = \uparrow \text{in distracting thoughts} \]

\[ \uparrow \text{stress} = \uparrow \text{distortion in perception} \]
DO YOU KNOW WHY YOUR DOG IS HAPPIER THAN YOU?

Dav & rosie
Building Mental Resilience: Skills

The Big 4 +

- Goal Setting
- Visualization
- Self Talk
- Tactical Breathing
- *Focus and Attention Control*
1. Focus on your performance objectives through **goal setting**
2. Manage stress through **breathing**
3. Create and use experiences in your mind through **visualization**
4. Use your awareness of your beliefs and their consequences through **self talk**
5. Concentrate on the task at hand and minimize irrelevant distractions through **attention control**
SMART Goal Setting

Goal setting gives the frontal lobes information to help control the amygdala – helps quiet the fear/panic alarm

SMART Goal Setting technique:

- S Specific
- M Measurable
- A Attainable
- R Relevant
- T Time-bound

Close focused goal setting:

- W What’s
- I Important
- N Now
Self Talk

We talk to ourselves at a rate of 300 to 1000 words per minute.

Self-talk plays a key role in our reactions to situations: your internal dialogue and beliefs affect your performance.
Self Talk

Replace the negative self talk with more positive, and/or instructive self talk

Ask yourself:

What is the evidence?
What are the odds?
Am I using extreme words? (always, never, no one, nothing, everything)
What would a friend say?

Just because you think it does not make it true.
Key Beliefs that affect self-talk

- Realistic expectations about work environment
- Confidence in leadership
- Confidence in value/meaningfulness of role
- Positive realistic appraisals of abilities
- Knowledge about the commonness and transitory nature of most acute stress reactions

Be careful how you are talking to yourself because you are listening.

~Lisa M. Hayes
Visualization

Conditions mind into expecting/anticipating what is going to happen and preparing itself for the task to come

Use positive images to:
• Follow a desired course of action
• Pursue specific targets or goals
• Prepare yourself to act and react
• Make corrections, regain control
• Enhance confidence & remain positive
Basics of Visualization Training

**VIVIDNESS**
- Use all of your senses
- Create or recreate as closely as possible to the actual experience
- Include emotions and thoughts, movement
- Walk through each step in your mind

**CONTROL**
- Know detailed steps of task, rehearse contingencies
- Manipulate your images
- Make them do what you want them to do
- See yourself succeeding
- Imagine how you will feel when you succeed
Arousal Control: Breathing

• Breathing is both voluntary and involuntary: it happens without us having to think about it, but we can also influence it deliberately
• We have the ability to slow down our stress response by slowing our breathing
• Relaxes central nervous system, calms the body and mind, slows heart rate, decreases blood pressure
Diaphragmatic Breathing

• Breathe from the diaphragm; Slow cadence - smooth, continuous cycle of breathing
• Control respiration by forcing the lungs to expand to their fullest capacity – bringing in more oxygen to the system
• Full exhalations – expel all of the air as you slowly breathe out through the mouth
• Rule of 4’s: inhale….2….3….4….exhale….2….3….4….
What is Recovery?

- Optimal performance includes recovery
- Key in psychological endurance and preventing chronic stress
- Active recovery is an intentional self-initiated goal oriented activity aimed at regaining one’s level of working capacity
The Mental Health Continuum

- Healthy or ill
- Mental health can shift day to day
- Everyone falls along this continuum
- Everyone can categorize their mental health along a continuum
The Mental Health Continuum

- Not a diagnostic tool
- Reflect on your mental health and level of stress
- Identify actions to optimize your mental health
- Guide to help identify distress in your peers
The Mental Health Continuum Model

- **Healthy**
  - Balanced mood, minor mood fluctuations
  - Calm, cooperative, empathetic
  - Takes things in stride
  - Consistent performance

- **Reacting**
  - Nervousness, sadness
  - Irritability, displaced sarcasm
  - Overwhelmed
  - Procrastination, forgetfulness, decreased efficiency

- **Injured**
  - Anxiety, pervasive sadness
  - Negative attitude, declining empathy, anger
  - Feeling hopeless or worthless
  - Declining clinical performance, presenteeism

- **Ill**
  - Excessive anxiety, depressed mood
  - Anger outbursts, aggression
  - Suicidal ideation
  - Unable to perform duties or concentrate, absenteeism
The Mental Health Continuum Model (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HEALTHY</th>
<th>REACTING</th>
<th>INJURED</th>
<th>ILL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Few sleep difficulties</td>
<td>Trouble sleeping; few intrusive thoughts and nightmares</td>
<td>Restless, disturbed sleep; recurrent intrusive thoughts and nightmares</td>
<td>Can’t fall asleep or stay asleep; constant fatigue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physically well, good energy level</td>
<td>Muscle tension, headaches, low energy</td>
<td>Significant physical and mental fatigue</td>
<td>Physical illnesses, exhaustion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Socially engaged</td>
<td>Decreased social engagement</td>
<td>Social avoidance or withdrawal</td>
<td>Social isolation</td>
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<td>Responsible alcohol use, no illicit substance use</td>
<td>Increased alcohol/substance use</td>
<td>Alcohol/substance abuse</td>
<td>Alcohol/substance dependence or addiction</td>
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Canadian Forces Health Services Group

Groupe des Services de santé des Forces Canadiennes
Re-examining Distress

Where would you be on the continuum?
Mental Health Continuum Model

- **Healthy**: Good mental health, normal functioning
- **Reacting**: Common, reversible distress
- **Injured**: More severe and persistent functional impairment
- **Ill**: Diagnosable mental illness, severe functional impairment

**Under-recovery**

**Burnout**
Symptoms of Burnout

- Emotional exhaustion
- Depersonalization
- Reduced sense of accomplishment
- Worthlessness, Depression, Anxiety
- Critical, defensive, aggressive, irritable
- Overreaction, very emotional, forgetful
- Unreasonably negative, unrealistic judgement, avoiding decisions, irrational
- Increased absenteeism & minor illnesses
- Neglecting personal appearance
Coping Strategies

• Most people cope successfully with 98% of their stressors
• No single strategy will be effective for all situations
• Two types of strategies:
  – Problem-focused
  – Emotion-focused

On particularly rough days, I like to remind myself that my track record for getting through bad days so far is 100%, and that's pretty good.
What can you do in the Healthy Phase?

- Identify and nurture support systems
- Focus on the task at hand
- Break problems into manageable chunks
- Foster a healthy work environment
- Set example for others
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle
- Review insurance coverage
What can you do in the Reacting Phase?

- Familiarize yourself with mental health resources
- Recognize limits and take breaks
- Say “no” to new commitments
- Identify and minimize stressors or unhealthy situations
- Try to get adequate rest, food, and exercise
What can you do in the Injured phase?

- Consider accessing mental health resources
- Prioritize: your self-care is now more important
- Identify and understand own signs of distress
- Ask for help
- Talk with someone
- Maintain social contact, don’t withdraw
What can you do in the Ill Phase?

- Access mental health resources
- Reprioritize: consider formal time off
- Seek formal medical attention
- Follow health care provider recommendations
Pulse Checks

• Checking your “pulse” is about knowing where the edge is and when we are pushing our limits.
• Monitoring stress and energy levels, and then pacing accordingly is about awareness and vigilance; knowing when to extend yourself and when to ease up.
• Watch for:
  – Impact on performance
  – Duration of reactions
  – Intensity of reactions
  – Rumination
When is it time to seek help?

Yellow-orange zone

- Negative feelings that persist over an extended period of time
- Decreased enjoyment
- Changes in performance
- Ongoing sleep problems
- Physical symptoms
- Problems negatively impact relationships in your life
Beyond the Optimal Zone: normalizing help-seeking

• The Big Four are helpful skills, but sometimes the demands placed on us outweigh our available resources.

• Just as we go to physio for overuse injuries, we may need to seek additional resources for mental health.
How to H.E.L.P.

➤ HOW are you doing?

➤ EMPATHY

➤ LISTEN without judgement

➤ PLAN next steps
Supplement training using mobile application to practice and acquire the resilience skills without the need for training personnel and, overcomes typical barriers to accessing additional in-person training (e.g. travel, time, and location).

Application offers a potentially practical and effective on-the-go aid to augment the delivery of R2MR training to trainees.
Sometimes I just want someone to hug me and say, “I know it’s hard. You’re going to be okay. Here is chocolate and 6 million dollars.”