



Coffee Break Training - Management Science Program

Stress—the Silent Killer

No. MS-2011-9 November 23, 2011

Learning Objective: The student shall be able to recognize and have an understanding of the signs and symptoms of stress and their coping mechanisms.

Signs and symptoms of stress are screaming at us, but are we listening?

Definition of stress: A physical or emotional element that causes bodily or mental tension and may be a factor in disease causation.

Do you think you're stressed? What about your coworkers? Your answer is probably, "Not me. Other people are, but I can deal with my stress."

We consider ourselves invincible and strong. Officers watch out for their crews, but who is looking out for them? As emergency service personnel we need to take a hard, honest look at ourselves and see if we have any of these signs and symptoms of stress:

- general irritability or depression;
- impulsive behavior or emotional instability;
- insomnia and restlessness; and
- drug and alcohol abuse.

If you have any of these signs and symptoms, there are many control techniques that you can try to help you resolve or cope with your stress:

- environment and mind:
 - reduce external sources of stress,
 - talk about your issues by finding a confidant,
 - have a positive attitude and find your "happy place"; and
- body:
 - exercise,
 - rest, and
 - proper diet.

Studies show that in the emergency services, heart attack, cancer, and stroke are the most common causes of death. Can the root of these illnesses be caused by stress and is stress our number one killer?



High levels of stress may result in depression, restlessness, or even substance abuse.

For archived downloads, go to:

www.usfa.fema.gov/nfa/coffee-break/