

TAKING CARE OF OUR OWN: Cumulative & Traumatic Stress



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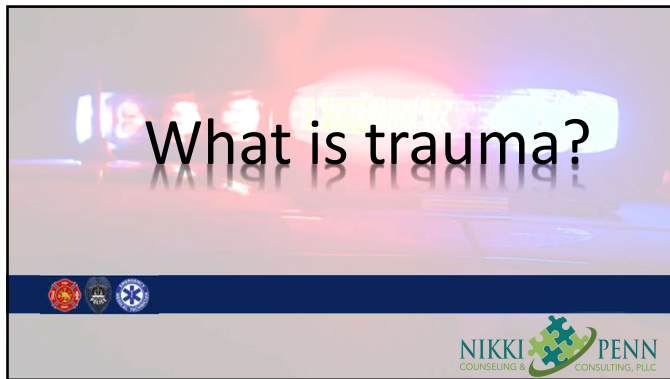


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We're okay, until we're not

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Delayed Stress Responses

We're okay, until we're not

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Our Warning Signals

- Difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much
- Isolating from others
- Irritability
- Having low or no energy
- Difficulty concentrating
- Thoughts or memories you can't get out of your head
- Experiencing a change in sex drive
- Unexplained aches or pains
- Having nightmares
- Feeling helpless or hopeless
- Drinking more than you should
- Engaging in reckless behaviors
- Using drugs
- Having anxiety or panic attacks

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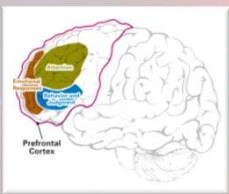
Our Warning Signals

- Breathing difficulty
- Grinding of teeth
- Profuse sweating
- Pounding heart
- Diarrhea or intestinal upsets
- Headaches
- Twitching
- Suicidal Thoughts
- Guilt
- Agitation
- Suspicion and paranoia
- Pacing and restlessness
- Fatigue
- Emotional outbursts
- More confused or forgetful than normal
- Personality changes



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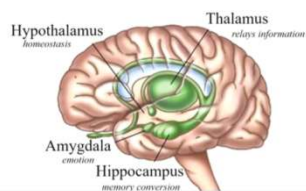
Two Paths



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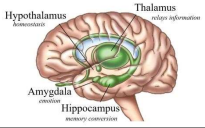
Epinephrine
Glucose
HPA Axis
Cortisol

The Limbic System



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The Limbic System




Hypothalamus
seat of emotions

Thalamus
relay station

Amygdala
seat of fear

Hippocampus
seat of memory



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What puts a first responder at risk for developing a stress disorder?

- ☐ Having no control over the volume of calls
- ☐ Having a partner who is injured or killed in the line of duty
- ☐ Being in a situation where one feels helpless in the face of overwhelming demands, such as a prolonged, failed, rescue
- ☐ Having a partner, or a partner killed or seriously injured in the line of duty
- ☐ The suicide of a partner being at serious risk oneself as in losing the war or running out of air in a working fire
- ☐ Witnessing horrifying things, such as what responders to 9/11 saw
- ☐ Experiencing the death of a child or a friend
- ☐ Responding to a call for a victim who is known to the responder
- ☐ Working without the support of administration
- ☐ Having administration question one's actions in an investigation

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Mental Health Awareness - A First Responder Tribute
[\(facebook.com\)](https://www.facebook.com/)

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RED FLAGS of Suicide


PRECIPITATING EVENTS:
(Exposure to death, pain, grief, loss)
Bad Call
Loss of partner or loved one
Divorce
Loss of job
Medical Diagnosis
Losing sense of purpose

COUPLED WITH:
demanding schedules,
lack of support, lack of sleep, etc.

WORDS:

- "All of my problems will end soon."
- "No one can do anything to help me now."
- "Now I know what they were going through."
- "I just can't take it anymore."
- "I am a burden to everyone."
- "I can't do anything right."
- "I just can't think straight anymore."
- "Things feel so hopeless."





RED FLAGS of Suicide

ACTIONS:




- Giving away possessions
- Withdrawal (family, friends, school, work)
- Loss of interest in sports and leisure
- Misuse of alcohol, drugs
- Impulsive/reckless behavior
- Self-mutilation
- Extreme behavior changes
- Looking for ways to suicide
- Calling in sick a lot or poor work performance

PHYSICAL CHANGES:

- Lack of interest in appearance
- Change/loss in sex interest
- Disturbed sleep
- Change/loss of appetite, weight
- Physical health complaints

FEELINGS:

- Angry
- Guilty
- Sad
- Worthless
- Lonely
- Desperate
- Helpless
- Hopeless









870-793-0071
npenn@nikkipenn.com

Negative Beliefs that Develop

1. My family, my partner, or I am not safe
2. I have no control.
3. I am not good enough, or it's my fault.

It's not weakness.
It's a stress
reaction.
IT'S OK TO SAY
YOU ARE NOT OK.

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Strategies to Help with Stress & Resilience

Peer Group	Hobbies	Sleep
Pets	Exercise	Put work away
Humor	Meditation	Breathing
Spend time with friends or family	Spiritual Enrichment	Progressive Relaxation
	Talk to others	Imagery

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Strategies to Help with Stress & Resilience

- Breathing
- Mindful Minute
- Heart Variability Rate Training
- Divergence
- Toe Scrunch
- Container
- Progressive Relaxation
- Imagery

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