



# Building Resiliency to Cope With Occupational Stress

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# Educational Objectives

Participants will learn stress relieving and life harmonizing practices for use at work and at home to help build resiliency for life.

This workshop will also touch on the following:

- Define Resiliency and Stress in the Correctional Environment (Correctional Stress)
- Explore Correctional Stress as an occupational risk
- Discuss choices for prevention and intervention:
  - What it means to be mindful and present
  - The Power of Meditation
  - Breathing Techniques 101
  - Practicing Gratitude



# Our journey is about to begin . . .

- Power stance
- Find a comfortable position
- Close your eyes if you can do so safely
- Take a deep breath and release it
- Tense and relax your body
- Open your jaw wide and let it relax
- Breathe mindfully (with awareness)

What you are thinking is what you are  
becoming.

– Muhammad Ali

# Can You Relate?

- Witnessing a suicide
- Father/Family member innocently shot in robbery
- Volunteer for pregnant teens impregnated by family member
- Held at knifepoint by client
- Life threatened by national hate group
- Discovering sexual abuse of an infant and siblings
- Social Worker replacing social worker shot by teen client
- Suicide of a beloved staff person, death of colleague at work
- “Buying into” code of silence to protect self/patients
- Responder to a Serious Fight, a Hostage Taking, a Death . . .
- COVID-19; Illness, loss of loved ones

# Let's Define

## **Stress**

- Pressure or tension exerted on something
- Emotional strain or tension resulting from unwanted events

## **Trauma**

- Deeply distressing or disturbing experience
- Really bad stress...that makes an impact

## **Resiliency**

- Capacity to recover quickly from difficulties
- Ability of a substance or object to spring back into shape

# Correctional/Occupational Stress

- It's what happens to us both physically and emotionally when our work regularly exposes us to traumatic and/or distressing situations.
- It is a serious occupational risk for all Centurion professionals who must control their reaction to distressing situations every day.



# What causes Trauma?

## **Direct experience**

- Victim of threats, violence
- Serious injury

## **Witnessing in person**

- Observing threats, abuse, serious injury, unnatural death

## **Learning about**

- Violent personal assault, injury, abuse of close associate

## **Repeated re-exposure**

- Repeated and extreme exposure to traumatic details

# Staff Exposure to Trauma

## **Direct**

- Witnessing use of force
- Witnessing or responding to self-injurious or suicidal behaviors
- Being threatened or assaulted

## **Vicarious**

- Hearing details of violent crimes
- Learning of patient's trauma in community and in prison
- Witnessing patient's relive trauma

# Really? How does that affect me?

“The cumulative negative transformation of one’s self or personality as a result of the attempts to adapt to the demands of the corrections workplace”

Dr. Catarina Spinaris  
Desert Waters Correctional Outreach

# What we don't acknowledge can hurt

- Bad smells
- Poor visibility
- Loud noises
- De-humanizing environments
- De-humanizing language
- Encountering a “code of silence” . . . unhealthy alliances

# Add COVID-19

- NOVEL, Uncertainty, ever-changing
- Risk of being exposed to or bringing the virus to work
- Facing mortality fears, personal and extended to loved ones
- Caring for family needs while working
- Missing human connections or needing a break from some!
- Access to the tools and equipment needed to perform your job
- Feelings of shame or guilt about not being on the frontline
- Learning new communication tools and dealing with technical difficulties
- Adapting to a different workload, workspace and/or work schedule
- Loss of known coping mechanisms, truly life changing

# Signs and Symptoms

- Behavior changes
- Aggression
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Intrusive thoughts
- Burn-out
- Hoarding
- Withdrawal
- Sexual changes
- Impaired self-care
- Numbing/flooding
- Denial
- Obsessive/Compulsive
- Nausea, headaches, etc.
- Relationship dysfunction
- Sleeplessness
- Difficulty trusting
- Panic

# Changes in your work performance

- Recurrent images, thoughts
- Inability to let go of work
- Over-protectiveness
- Harsh judgment
- Attitude of specialness
- Deliberate indifference
- Confusion, inability to get to work
- Victim blaming or victim playing
- Self-doubt, insecurity
- Withdrawal from team and colleagues

# It is a Predictable Experience...

Correctional Stress is:

- Neither a reflection of inadequacy on the part of the staff
- Nor the toxicity of the patient/client/inmate
- Best conceptualized as an occupational hazard



What exactly is a resilient healthy life?

*and how can we get it!*



# What do we mean by healthy life balance?

Equal balance between work and personal activities ? **X**

Life is and should be more fluid than that.

Is it the same for everyone ? ... **X**

Varies from individual to individual, and varies over time...

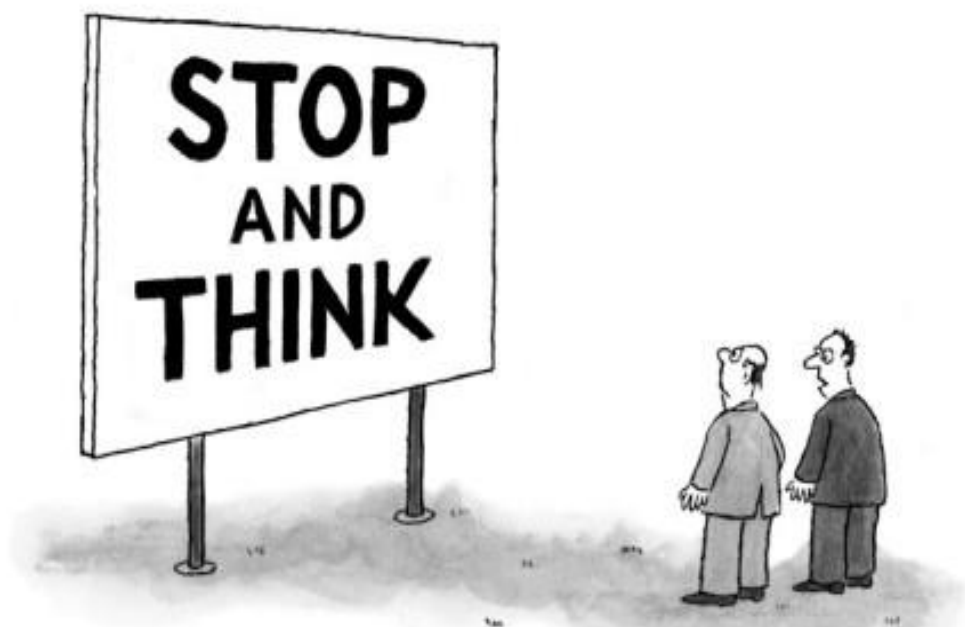
on a daily basis as well as over different phases of life

There is no perfect, one-size fits all solution.

**The best work-life balance is different for each of us  
because we all have different priorities and different  
desires.**

**Are you a human being???**  
(mindful)

**Or are you a human doing?**  
(mindless)



*"It sort of makes you stop and think, doesn't it."*

C.S. GROSS  
COLLECTION

# Doing Your Life is . . .

- Checking things off a list
- Going to meetings
- Preparing dinner
- Driving to work
- Helping with homework
- Writing Corrective Action Plans
- Mindlessly exercising
- Reacting
- Ruminating about “everything”

# Being in Your Life is . . .

- Connecting with your values
- Setting intentions with a plan
- Focusing on priorities
- Noticing the beauty in the mundane
- Consciously responding
- Breathing deeply
- Saying “no” and saying “yes”
- Being kind and grateful
- Tuning in to yourself (being aware of emotions)

Resilience is built by  
finding the perfect spot for  
you between the doing  
and the being.



# Resilient people choose to be . . .

Resilience is built by choosing the perfect spot for you  
between the doing and the being.

Resilient people purposely choose to place their attention  
on what can be done

**Meaningful daily achievement and enjoyment  
even during tough times**

# Believe in your super powers!

You are in full control of what you think, say and do to yourself and to others.

- *“If I continue to think as I have always thought, I will continue to act as I have always acted. If I continue to act as I have always acted, I will continue to get what I have always gotten.”*

*Marilyn Ferguson/ Albert Ellis*

- Changing the thought . . . changes the behavior and leads to a new consequence
- Beliefs drive thoughts. Thoughts drive actions. Actions drive change.
- Change takes commitment and consistent practice to see results.

We can be sure that the  
greatest hope for  
maintaining equilibrium in  
the face of any situation  
rests within ourselves.

—Francis J. Braceland



# How do I start?

## **Get very in touch with your values**

Everything you do starts with your core beliefs

## **Set intentions with a implementation plan**

Believing is not a wish. You must want it and believe in it. I am statements.

## **Listen to your gut**

You do know if you are on the right path to meet your desires.

## **Put yourself first, selflessly**

You must take care of all of you. Be compassionate with yourself.

## **Be aware. Be present. Be flexible. Be Proactive. Be forgiving.**

Be a human being. Everything changes. Nothing is permanent.

# What is Mindfulness?

“Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way;  
on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.”

Jon Kabat-Zinn

1979 Founder of MBSR (Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction)

**“Mindfulness is a state of being...”** Mindfulness is not a specific activity. It's a quality of the mind.

**“...where you maintain nonjudgmental...”** Cultivating a sense of objectivity in life. We don't automatically judge everything that happens. Instead, we accept life for what it is.

**“...awareness...”** Awareness of your own thoughts, the physical sensations in your body, and what's occurring in the world around us.

**“...in the present moment.”** The brain is hardwired to think about the past and the future. It's a survival instinct. Instead, mindfulness has us focus on the here and now. Life is lived in the present moment.

Almost  
everything  
will work  
again if you  
unplug it for  
a few  
minutes...  
including you.

- Anne Lamott

Daily Quotes

# Unconscious drivers

- The unconscious mind is the keeper of our experiences, concepts, insights, and perceptions long after our conscious mind has forgotten them.
- It is the ruler of our conscious self and impacts our feelings, behaviors, habits, beliefs and shape our frame of mind.
- The brain's complex neurological functions are responsible for negative and positive emotions: anger, happiness, tranquility, grief, shock, fear, etc.
- Our mind's interpretations form the kind of behavior we display. It influences our positive thinking or limiting beliefs. Our truth becomes what we believe, regardless of the facts.
- Emotional contagion . . . the suffering of others is not separate from our own.
- We replay our negative thoughts over and over and believe them.
- We justify our actions as acceptable reactions.
- Behaviors change by training our conscious mind to work with our unconscious by being aware.



# Benefits . . . Mindfulness positively impacts:

## **Brain function**

- Increased connectivity in brain regions related to staying focused.
- Gray matter density in brain regions involved in learning and memory and emotion.
- Enhanced sensory processing, consistent attentional focus.

## **Overall emotional state**

- Reduced stress / increased self-compassion / improved quality of life.
- Increased tolerance of / decreased perception of pain.
- Increased positive emotions.

## **Improvement of physical health**

- Reduced risk for mortality and stroke in heart disease patients, lower blood pressure.
- Increased mitochondrial performance (energy production, consumption, and resiliency) for stronger immune system and stress resistance.

# Mindfulness Practices

Every moment gives us an opportunity to be mindful.

Its weight lifting for our mind. It is simple, not easy. It takes practice and effort.

These opportunities generally align in 4 categories:

- **Stillness practices**
- **Movement practices**
- **Creative practices**
- **Everyday life practices**

# Mindfulness Practices

## **Stillness practices**

Meditation, breath-work, deep listening

build greater overall awareness of your thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations.

# Mindfulness Practices

## **Movement practices:**

- Yoga
- Tai Chi
- Qigong

Build proprioception, greater physical awareness while providing benefits of strength, flexibility and cardio.

# Mindfulness Practices

## **Creative practices:**

- Writing/journaling and other forms of art that build awareness of your thoughts, emotions, values, and ideas.
- Gratitude practice.
- Loving kindness practice.

# Mindfulness Practices

## Everyday life practices:

eating

gardening

bathing

exercising

walking

sports

driving

puzzles

working

games

knitting

talking

brushing hair or teeth

sex

# Practicing gratitude

- Gratitude is noticing and appreciating all the wonders in life.
- Gratitude practice trains us to notice wonders and express our gratitude.
- Science has proven that when we make time to practice gratitude, we experience more positive emotions, feel more connected, sleep better, express more kindness and compassion, and improve immune systems.
- Focusing on what we are grateful for instead of the negative happenings all around us takes practice and commitment but leads to positive change.

# How to practice gratitude

- Gratitude journals or jars
- Expressing gratitude at meals
- Gratitude meditations
- Morning gratitude intentions
- Evening gratitude review
- Commit to notice kind gestures
- Gratitude hunting
- Thank you notes
- Gratitude calls
- Keep gratitude fresh and simple



# The Power of The Breath

If you are looking for ONE thing to include into your daily stress routine, make it breath work . . .Vagus Nerve stimulation!

- Deep breathing exercises
- Breath focused meditation
- 4-7-8 breathing
- Breath of Fire: Cleansing Breath
- Alternate Nostril Breathing
- Breath of 4's (Box Breathing)

# The power of meditation

- Meditation is paying deliberate attention to help the mind build awareness of thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations.
- The mind is habitually in a constant state of processing which takes us away from the present moment. Habits can be redirected.
- Referred to as the “monkey mind”, a natural state of constant thought jumping that is unproductive and keeps us entangled in the past or future.
- These states can be the source of great sadness and worry.
- Meditation pulls us out of these unconscious thought patterns by giving the monkey mind a specific task, like focusing on the breath.
- Have you tried to train a monkey? A puppy? Your puppy mind needs training.
- Awareness leads to improvements in many aspects of life, including focus, decision-making, patience, and stress-reduction.

# Meditation 101

- Sit comfortably in a chair or on a cushion or mat in an upright and relaxed position.
- Set an intention to commit to a number of minutes. Start small.
- Close your eyes or softly focus them. Recognize you are alive and aware by noticing how you feel.
- Notice how you are breathing. Take a few controlled breaths and then allow your breath to just breathe. Play follow the leader with your breath.
- Focus on the sensations of your breath. Know you are breathing in and know you are breathing out.

# Meditation 101

- Your puppy mind will want to run or play and will wander off, and you'll probably follow it and wander off. Eventually, you notice you are lost.
- Your puppy mind has led you astray. Once you realize you are lost in thought, notice it, accept it as normal puppy behavior and bring it back to safety by returning your attention back to your breath.
- Keep coming back to your focus of attention for whatever time you have set for this meditation exercise.
- Every time you catch your puppy mind wandering off and you are able to bring it back to the safety of your breath, you have completed one repetition of the exercise.



**Take care of your body. It's  
the only place you have to  
live.**

Jim Rohn

# What is yoga?

- Yoga is an integrated physical and mental practice of exercise.
- Yoga focuses on linking the breath with controlled movement through a series of body postures, called asanas.
- Yoga poses can be static or part of a flowing series.
- Yoga has many different styles but all forms provide an assimilated mind-body connection that is considered to be meditation in motion.
- Developing physical awareness does not always come naturally but this awareness nurtures a better sense of connection and self-understanding.

# Why Yoga?

- Yoga helps develop proprioception, the awareness of our body within your environment.
- Yoga helps us understand when the body is holding tension and how to release it.
- Yoga is also physical exercise that improves strength, flexibility, balance, respiration, bone density, concentration and coordination.
- There are 8 major styles of yoga plus variations.
- There are hundreds of asanas but about 12 common postures.
- Each style emphasizes different features, and will lead to different benefits.
- Although many yogis have their preferred type, practicing a variety of styles helps broaden the benefits and can also lead to a favorite practice.

# Styles of Yoga . . .

- Hatha yoga.
- Iyengar yoga.
- Kundalini yoga.
- Ashtanga yoga.
- Vinyasa yoga.
- Bikram yoga.
- Yin yoga.
- Restorative yoga.



# Questions to ask every day

- Am I awake?
- What am I grateful for?
- What is certain?
- How am I connecting to people?
- What can I accept and let go of today?
- What is my intention?
- What am I doing to nourish myself today?
- How am I connecting with the earth outside?
- How am I caring for my body?
- How am I being creative?
- Why is this happening for me?
- Is it True? Is it Kind? Is it Necessary?

# Healthy Coping Strategies

- Be aware of unresolved issues that may be impacting your balance
- Know you are having a normal reaction
- Communicate honestly
- Have a philosophy of relaxation
- Use humor and laugh
- Meditation
- Mindful physical exercise
- Connect with others by phone, Zoom, FaceTime or other technology
- Helpful distraction: media, reading, music, puzzles and games
- New habits need to be practiced . . . move beyond the resistance

# Not So Healthy Coping Strategies

- Unhealthy distraction: media bingeing, too much news
- Overuse of drugs and alcohol
- Aggression
- Gambling
- Denial
- Isolating
- Code of silence
- Focus on “Why me?”

# Sustain Optimism and Hope

- Cultivate positivity and kindness
- Celebrate the human spirit and fortitude
- Take pride in having an impact on the effects of this pandemic
- Believe in outcomes you can't measure
- Be Present, that's a true gift!
- This too shall pass!

You are free!

Don't lock yourself up

“Whatever career you may choose for yourself - doctor, lawyer, teacher - let me propose an avocation to be pursued along with it.

Become a dedicated fighter for civil rights.

Make it a central part of your life. It will make you a better doctor, a better lawyer, a better teacher.

**It will enrich your spirit as nothing else possibly can.**

**It will give you that rare sense of nobility that can only spring from love and selflessly helping your fellow man.**

**Make a career of humanity.**

Commit yourself to the noble struggle for human rights.

You will make a greater person of yourself, a greater nation of your country and a finer world to live in.”

Martin Luther King Jr

## Allow

There's no controlling life.

Try corralling a lightning bolt, containing a tornado.

Dam a stream and it will create a new channel.

Resist, and the tide will sweep you off your feet.

Allow, and grace will carry you to higher ground.

The only safety lies in letting it all in-- the wild and the weak;

Fear, fantasies, failures, and success.

When loss rips off the doors of the heart, or sadness veils your vision with despair, practice becomes simply bearing the truth.

In the choice to let go of your known way of being, the whole world is revealed to your new eyes.

by Danna Faulds

Text as published in *Go In and In: Poems from the Heart of Yoga* (Peaceable Kingdom Books, 2002).

# Mobile Apps

- Insight timer: <https://www.insighttimer.com/>
- Calm: <https://www.calm.com>
- Stop, Breathe, Think: <http://www.stopbreathethink.org>
- Headspace: <https://www.headspace.com/>



# Mindfulness books

- [Wherever You Go, There You Are](#) by Jon Kabat-Zinn
- [The Miracle of Mindfulness](#) by Thich Nhat Hanh
- [Radical Acceptance](#) by Tara Brach
- [Being Peace](#) by Thich Nhat Hanh

# Yoga channels

- Yoga with Adriene
- Travis Eliot
- Yoga with Tim
- Fightmaster Yoga
- Do Yoga with me
- Five parks Yoga
- Brett Larkin Yoga
- Sherry Zak Morris (chair yoga)

*Questions?*

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