

## **Tips in Surviving Accumulating Stress & Exposure to Traumatic Stress**

First responders such as law enforcement, emergency medical personnel, and fire department staff experience situations on often a daily basis which can lead to disruption of the ability to connect with loved ones, as well as fellow responders as a result of accumulating stress. Traumatic stress injury can occur as the result of being in a life threatening situation or having attempted to provide a critical service to an individual who experiences an injury or death. The following chart describing a continuum of stress features with green being ready, and red being persistent symptoms needing immediate intervention.

Ready (Green)	Reacting (Yellow)	Injured (Orange)	Ill (Red)
<b>Definition</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Optimal Functioning</li> <li>• Adaptive Growth</li> <li>• Wellness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mild and transient distress or impairment</li> <li>• Always goes away</li> <li>• Low risk optimal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More severe and persistent stress or impairment</li> <li>• Leaves a scar</li> <li>• Higher risk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clinical mental disorder</li> <li>• Unhealed stress injury causing life impairment</li> </ul>
<b>Features</b>	<b>Features</b>	<b>Features</b>	<b>Features</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At one's best</li> <li>• Well trained and prepared</li> <li>• In control</li> <li>• Physically, mentally, spiritually fit</li> <li>• Mission focused</li> <li>• Motivated</li> <li>• Calm and steady</li> <li>• Having fun</li> <li>• Behaving ethically</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling irritable, anxious or down</li> <li>• Loss of motivation</li> <li>• Loss of focus</li> <li>• Difficulty sleeping</li> <li>• Muscle tension or other physical changes</li> <li>• Not having fun</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of control</li> <li>• Panic, rage or depression</li> <li>• No longer feeling like normal self</li> <li>• Excessive guilt, shame, or blame</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Symptoms persist and worsen over time</li> <li>• Severe distress or social or occupational impairment</li> </ul>
	<b>Causes</b>	<b>Causes</b>	<b>Types</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any stressor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life threat</li> <li>• Loss</li> <li>• Inner conflict</li> <li>• Wear and tear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PTSD</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Anxiety</li> <li>• Substance abuse</li> </ul>

The following tips may be of assistance:

**Tip #1** Process the stress with someone safe by—Identifying the Injury, Admitting the Impact, & Engaging a Response

**Tip #2** Practice self-compassion- don't ignore or judge your feelings, honor them and allow time and space for release and expression.

**Tip #3** Seek healthy nutrition (drink lots of water), exercise, & rest.

**Tip #4** Allow yourself to be connected and attached to trusted, safe individuals--reflect empathy & compassion to your fellow employee and those connected closely with you.

**Tip #5** Express gratitude to others for acts that are meaningful to you

**Tip #6** Seek out others who have had similar experiences, and been able to heal

**Tip #7** Utilize on-line, trusted support platforms such as Stress First Aid for Fire and EMS Personnel

<https://www.everyonegoeshome.com>, <https://www.fireherolearningnetwork.com>, for law enforcement; <https://bluehelp.org/>, [www.Copline.org](http://www.Copline.org).

**Tip #8** Utilize department support system & other personal, safe support resources.

**Tip #9** Use resources such as: National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255, the Crisis Text Line by texting HOME to 741741, and, local resources such as the CenterPointe Help line 402-475-6695

**Tip #10** Keep your thinking positive & remember this stress is temporary and you can heal!

### **Trusted Resources**

<https://smashingthestigma.com/> describes the importance of seeking help for all first responders

<https://www.ffbha.org/about-us/who-we-are/> firefighter behavioral health alliance