

Free Papers: Global Sharing: Psychosocial Effects of Emergencies

Research for Critical Incident Stress-Induced PTSD and Regular Job-Stress-Related Psychological Condition of Firefighters

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Introduction: Professional firefighters often are exposed to traumatic stress as a result of helping other people in emergency situations. The high prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other psychiatric impairments in firefighters indicates that they often fail to cope with primary or secondary stress in their daily work. However, no reports have described the relationship between incident-stress-induced PTSD and job-stress-related psychological situations.

Methods: To estimate the prevalence of PTSD and job stress, administration of the IES-R questionnaire, the Japan Job Stress Brief Questionnaire, and the Maslach Burnout Inventory were used.

Results: All 157 subjects belonged to X fire station, which is comparatively small scale and located in the countryside of Japan. The study was conducted in August 2002. The sample included all the personnel of X fire station. The subjects were classified into one of four groups: (1) PTSD+ & Job stress+; (2) PTSD+ & Job stress-; (3) PTSD- & Job stress+; and (4) PTSD- & Job stress-. According to the Burnout Scale, the PTSD+ groups showed the burnout syndrome. In the PTSD- group, the job stress score was associated with the Burnout Scale score. But in the PTSD+ groups, there was no relationship between job stress and burnout. The same tendencies were identified in some stress reactions: impatience, fatigue, anxiety, depression, and physical complaints.

Conclusion: The PTSD+ group was specific for job stress. Without PTSD, they will not become burned if their job stress decreases. But, those with PTSD might easily become burned out even if their job stress does decrease.

Keywords: firefighters; Japan Job Stress Brief Questionnaire; Maslach Burnout Inventory; posttraumatic stress disorder; PTSD

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Treating Consequences of High Arousal in Disaster Victims and Workers

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Recent research has highlighted the importance of high neuropsychological arousal engendered by the extreme threat of traumatic events. This inevitably narrows the span of attention, focuses the perspective, and censors unimportant stimuli to result in incomplete, fragmented, and usually distorted memories. While adaptive for the emergency, this does not provide the understanding needed for recovery, and often sets up the causes of stress based on the distortions and misunderstandings. The more clearly typical distortions of high arousal are understood, the more rapid-

ly they can be remedied. This presentation provides an outline of the psychological consequences of states of high arousal, and uses video material of a simulated traumatic event and the subsequent debriefing to demonstrate these distortions and the technique of identifying and rectifying them as a basis for recovery. This forms the framework for describing simple techniques for the resolution of early post-traumatic experiences.

Keywords: arousal; consequences; distortion; emergency; events; memories; recovery; trauma

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Strategies to Diminish Psycho-Social Stress Impact

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An objective of the health environment is to inform on the psychological consequences that distressing events have on those damaged. Training and information on these facts can avoid or reduce the impact, diminish vulnerability and possible damages, contribute to reduce the risk for disease, and lead to a better recovery. Disaster can be an opportunity that puts to proof, ego resistance and plasticity. To deal with the crisis is to solve the chaotic instance or at least to facilitate necessary help.

Development: Over the last four years, training in Psychological Aids has reached approximately 600 people. Of these trained personnel, on the apparent level, they showed a great interest to be qualified with the objective of helping others, but, in general, they had a great interest in solving personal affairs. They joined with the desire to learn strategies to handle stress with the one of the objectives —finding the place of their own containment. Regarding the knowledge on the pathophysiology of stress and its impact on heart diseases and other processes, as well as the pathophysiology sustenance at this historical time, a palliative, preventive, and informative contribution has been provided.

Conclusion: A search for outstanding information before an event that is perceived as threatening, is an effective mechanism for stress confrontation. Courses on First Psychological Aids under traumatic situations in which the information on the organic impact of stress also is given, have proven to be on one hand, a search for one's own psychological containment, and a tool that allows identifying clinical signs that take the affected to early medical consultancy. And, on the other hand, they are effective tools that can be used to confront potential high stress-generating or traumatic events for the individual, institutional, and social faces. Eighty percent of the people who attended the course applied what they received, thus fulfilling its objectives.

Keywords: aid; consequences; containment; disaster; emergency; preparation; psychology; stress; training; threat

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