

# **CISM Team Pre-Deployment Handout**

## **CISM Team:**

The information presented below has been put together by the Critical Incident Stress Management Team to be able to help team members handle the stressors of doing their work in the field.

## **Common Stressors:**

So what has been expressed by other CISM team members and their families about some of the stressors in getting ready for deployment?

- Fear of the unknown
- Concerns for their own families/friends during a response
- High profile for community and media/press events
- Gone from family/friends for a long time
- Unpredictable environment
- Unable to make long-term personal plans
- Missing birthdays, anniversaries, kids activities, holidays, etc.
- Unable to help with the day-to-day parenting
- Unable to help with incidences that may arise at home
- Demands of the Office (i.e. when there or not)
- Administrative burdens
- Position demands for on call 24/7
- Eating habits changes
- Uncomfortable surroundings (i.e. hotels, trailers, cots)

## **Things To Try While Deployed:**

- Within the first 24 – 48 hours implement appropriate physical exercise, alternated with relaxation (if possible)
- Structure your time; keep busy
- You're normal and having normal reactions; don't label yourself as crazy
- Talk to people; talking is the most healing medicine
- Avoid numbing the pain with overuse of drugs or alcohol
- Maintain as normal a schedule as possible
- Spend time with others
- Help your co-workers as much as possible by sharing feelings and checking out how they are doing
- Keep a journal; write your way through those sleepless hours
- Do things that feel good to you
- Realize those around you are under stress
- Don't make plan on making any major life changes

- Do make as many daily decisions as possible that will give you a feeling of control over your life, i.e. If someone asks you what you want to eat, answer him even if you're not sure
- Don't try to fight reoccurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks – they are normal and will decrease over time and become less painful
- Try to eat well-balanced and regular meals (even if you don't feel like it)

### **Communications:**

- How to communicate with their loved ones **(to be developed for site specific deployment)**
- Establish routine times for communications with your loved ones is often helpful. Of course, because you are responding to a disaster site, sometimes work interferes, sometimes there may not be phone coverage in your area, and sometimes you may be working odd hours and sleeping during normal call times. Be flexible.
- It is often helpful to keep “in the loop” of what is happening at home.
- It is OK to share about how you are doing, but be aware that you may not be able to share or discuss much about your deployment due to EPA rules. You may also want to protect your loved ones from hearing too many “war stories” until you get home.

### **Critical Incident Stress Issues:**

- You might encounter some horrific scenes, or hear distressing stories about the event.
- You may or may not want to talk about them. We have found that talking about them seems to be helpful to most people. Talking about them with colleagues who are deployed with you is often helpful.
- The CISM team is available to you during the deployment and after you are home.
- You can reach us by \_\_\_\_\_ **(to be developed for site specific deployment)**