



INTERNATIONAL CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS FOUNDATION, INC.

3290 Pine Orchard Lane, Suite 106, Ellicott City, MD 21042 | (410) 750-9600

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METHODS TO MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE RESILIENCE

1. Calming, Optimism, and Happiness

- Calm the heart and mind and the brain will calm as well.
- Use deep breathing. Breathe in a deep breath through your nose; hold your breath 8 seconds; breathe out all the air through pursed lips. Repeat three times, but rest in between each deep breath.
- Try tensing and relaxing muscle groups. Work from the feet toward the head. Tense a muscle group; hold tight 5 to 8 seconds; release tension.
- Substitute positive thoughts for negative ones. “I can handle this” instead of “I am doomed”.
- Maintain optimism even with the odds against you. Try to find something that is positive or an advantage.
- Choose happiness.
- Spend more time with happy people; avoid the chronically unhappy people.
- Smile more.
- Compliment others.
- Be a friend to others.

2. Manage Stress to Build Resilience

- Exercise regularly a minimum of 3 times a week and about 20 minutes at a time
- Sleep about 7 hours a night
- Brief power naps during the day can help
- Add movement to your work time. Do not sit still all the time
- Have adequate sunlight
- Eat brain healthy nutrition (vegetables, fruits, nuts, whole grain breads, proteins, etc.)
- Reduce sugar in your diet; reduce carbohydrates
- Avoid alcohol
- Avoid non-prescription drugs
- Avoid all products containing nicotine

3. Prepare for Crisis

- Train, practice for emergencies, build skills
- Learn to assess, analyze, adapt, and alter plans as necessary
- Understand that emotions will change and be intense during a crisis



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- Know that normal relationships with others can be altered while under duress. Most are restored with time.
- Be open to individual and group support after crisis. They help to maintain healthy individuals and work teams.

4. **Take Action**

- Try something
- Be flexible
- Assess, analyze, problem solve, decide, and take action
- Indecision and inaction are highly stressful
- Be prepared to take moderate risks
- Manage distressing emotions
- Alter the course of action if failure is imminent

5. **Social Support**

- Have a life outside of the job
- Develop friendships
- Respect those who earned it
- Work to gain the respect of others
- Be friendly to all
- Give public praise, but private criticisms
- Don't talk behind someone's back
- Know that gossip kills friendship
- Choose positive, motivated people to be with

6. **Self Esteem**

- Self-esteem is the midpoint between pride and shame
- All people are worth something
- Mistakes do not mean that you have no value. They just mean you are human
- Resilient people believe they can be a change agent in the lives of others

7. **Recovery- *The resolution, repair, reconstruction, restoration, and rebuilding of the human spirit, mind, and body after sustaining the damages incurred by prolonged, extreme, or overwhelming distress.***

- Recovery is about regaining control
- Recovery re-establishes resilience
- Recovery means we come to terms with the experiences that hurt us, shocked us and drained our resilience
- Recovery is reigniting the spark that lights the flame that makes life worth living



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- Be prepared to seek help. Recovery is very difficult without a support system.
- Recovery frequently takes the support and guidance of professionals
- Family, friends and Colleagues should also take a role in a person's recovery
- Recovery is part of resilience.
- Recovery means you have the resilience and the courage to reignite spark.

Beyond recovery are the lessons that we can learn from life's horrible experiences. We should learn that we could recover, even in what we consider the worst cases. All is not lost simply because we were damaged by tragedy. Occasionally, good things come out of tragic events. Recovery does not mean that we are without painful memories, wounds, and scars.