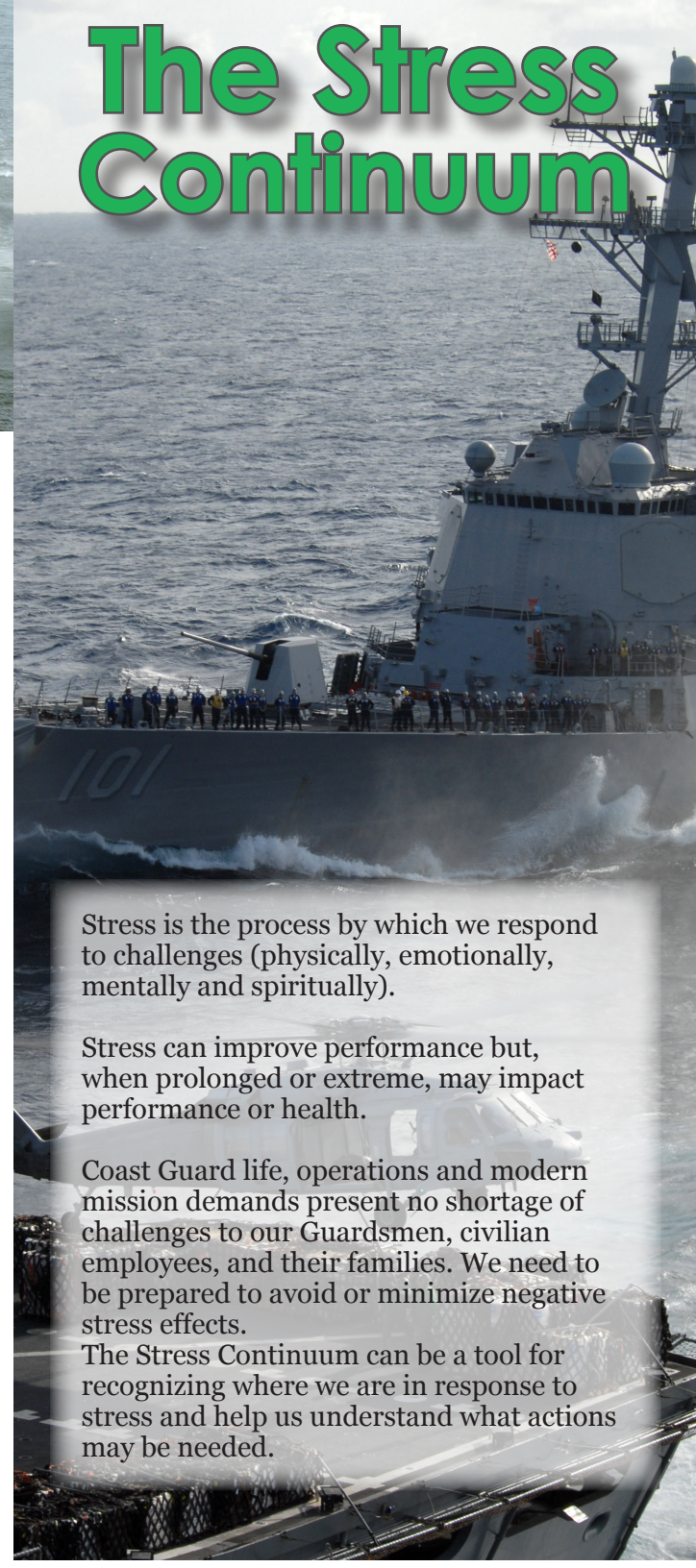


The Stress Continuum



Life Counts Live Fully

Stress is the process by which we respond to challenges (physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually).

Stress can improve performance but, when prolonged or extreme, may impact performance or health.

Coast Guard life, operations and modern mission demands present no shortage of challenges to our Guardsmen, civilian employees, and their families. We need to be prepared to avoid or minimize negative stress effects.

The Stress Continuum can be a tool for recognizing where we are in response to stress and help us understand what actions may be needed.

For more information, go to www.uscg.mil/worklife
For Coast Guard Employee Assistance Program call 800 222-0364.
Source: Maritime Combat Operational Stress Control Doctrine (MCRP 6-11/NTTP 1-15).

READY The READY zone reflects adaptive coping, effective functioning and wellness. Stress may be present but is not causing negative impact. This is the desired zone.

REACTING When a significant challenge, or stressor, occurs, everyone will react to some extent and enter the REACTING zone. While reacting, we will see mild stress and reduced functioning that go away whenever the event is over or we get used to the new challenge.

INJURED Sometimes, when the stress is extreme or prolonged including situations when we experience loss, trauma, wear and tear, or inner conflict, the impact is more severe and may lead to a stress injury - the INJURED zone. These stress injuries generally heal with help or support from others.

ILL Stress injury symptoms that persist or get worse can progress to an actual illness such as depressive disorders, anxiety disorders, PTSD, or other medical conditions indicative of the ILL zone. These require treatment to speed healing and prevent disability.

This brochure includes a guide that lists common indicators for each zone. This is not a checklist. It is not meant for diagnosing and is not comprehensive.

Rather, it gives some signs to help recognize when and to what extent the stress process is taking its toll.

READY

REACTING

INJURED

ILL

ACTIONS - Individuals and Families

READY

REACTING

INJURED

ILL

READY

REACTING

INJURED

ILL

Indicators - Individual

- Good sleep habits
- Good fitness habits
- Healthy eating
- Sense of humor
- Positive attitude
- Productive and focused
- Socially connected
- Calm and confident
- Effective communication
- Moderation and balance
- Able to relax
- Sense of purpose
- Feel on top of things

- Impatient or irritable
- Worried
- Trouble sleeping
- Appetite change
- Apathetic
- Withdrawing socially
- Cutting corners
- Reduced concentration
- Increased use of alcohol
- Increased use of tobacco
- Muscle tension and fatigue
- Excessive escape mechanisms (TV/Internet/gambling, etc.)

- Can't fall or stay asleep
- Weight changes
- Persistent, vivid nightmares
- Intense emotions
- Loss of interest in activities
- Social isolation
- Loss of moral bearing
- Suicidal or homicidal ideas*
- Confusion or disorientation
- Episodes of rage or panic
- Numbness
- Loss of control
- Substance abuse

- Symptoms persist for more than 60 days, get worse, or get better but then come back worse
- Persistent trouble functioning

- Maintain physical fitness/healthy eating
 - Get adequate rest
 - Improve knowledge and skills
 - Strive to train hard
 - Use alcohol in moderation, if at all
 - Practice core values
 - Build strong relationships
 - Resolve conflicts effectively
- Includes all actions above and ...

- Be self aware
- Rest, eat and stay hydrated
- Talk with shipmate and/or family
- Scale back from excesses
- Practice relaxation
- Stress first aid

- Includes all actions above and ...
- Talk to leaders
 - Seek guidance (chaplains, work-life, medical professionals)

- Includes all actions above and ...
- Seek treatment
 - Follow treatment plan
 - Build social support
 - Set goals to get green

Indicators - Family

- Children well-adjusted and secure
- Regular routines
- Good communication
- Clean/organized home

- Children acting out, insecure
- Dropping routines
- Difficult communication
- Increased clutter and disorder
- Reduced intimacy

- Significant behavior issues
- Feeling of chaos
- Constant fighting
- Silence/no communication
- Loss of intimacy
- Verbal or physical abuse

- Symptoms persist for more than 60 days, get worse, or get better but then come back worse
- Persistent trouble functioning

ACTIONS - Leaders

- Provide tough, realistic training
- Build unit cohesion
- Foster high morale and positive command climate
- Deglamorize alcohol and tobacco use

- Includes all actions above and ...
- Help Sailors maintain work-life balance
 - Ensure adequate time for crew rest
 - Encourage communication
 - Conduct after action reviews
 - Stress first aid

- Includes all actions above and ...
- Refer for early intervention
 - Mitigate

- Includes all actions above and ...
- Refer to evaluation and treatment
 - Communicate and coordinate with providers
 - Reintegrate into unit

Indicators - Command/Unit

- High morale
- Strong cohesion
- Good order and discipline
- Deglamorization of substances
- Attention to detail
- Clear sense of mission

- Falling morale
- Split groups
- Deferred maintenance
- Minor discipline problems
- Increased alcohol incidents
- Falling attention to detail

- Low morale
- Divided camps
- Equipment out of service
- Significant discipline issues
- Significant alcohol incidents
- Multiple drug incidents
- Vigilante missions

- Not mission capable
- Symptoms persist for more than 60 days, get worse, or get better but then come back worse
- Persistent trouble functioning

*Individuals with serious suicidal or homicidal thoughts require immediate assistance