

UNITED NATIONS
NATIONS UNIES

**UN STRESS
MANAGEMENT
BOOKLET**



UNITED NATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF
PEACEKEEPING
OPERATIONS

***UNITED NATIONS STRESS MANAGEMENT
BOOKLET***

United Nations Stress Management Booklet

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Draft: Flavio Del Ponte.

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801 United Nations Plaza - New York, NY 10017 - USA

Phone: (212) 963-8651 - Fax: (212) 963-9061

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FOREWORD

Many of today's peace-keepers must confront intense, traumatic and even life-threatening situations which may induce serious and prolonged levels of stress. Therefore, stress management training has become an increasingly important factor in the adequate preparation and training of United Nations peace-keepers.

This document has been created to provide a basic framework for professional stress management trainers. As such, *Part One* contains the most essential elements required for trainers dealing with stress in United Nations peace-keeping operations. As appropriate, the contents may be supplemented by other available information. When integrated with *Part Two*, "*Stress Management for United Nations Peace-keepers*", produced as an individual document for the individual peace-keeper, the following materials should provide sufficient guidance for trainers to adequately address this important topic.

Stress may occur before, during and after a peace-keeping assignment. Essentially, *Part One* focuses on these three phases, with specific emphasis on traumatic, or critical-incident, stress.

Part One is organized as follows:

- *Foreword*
- *Recommendations (Tips) for Trainers*
- *Lesson One: Pre-deployment Training*
- *Lesson Two: Potential Stress in Peace-keeping Missions*
- *Lesson Three: Special Unit Preparations for Traumatic Mission Areas*
- *Lesson Four: Post-mission Stress Management Training*

In addition, it is recommended that trainers utilize Part Two, which has been created for the individual peace-keeper, for classroom discussions and working groups.

FOREWORD

Part Two is organized as follows:

- *Introduction;*
- *Definition of Stress;*
- *Cumulative Stress;*
- *Traumatic Stress;*
- *Post-traumatic Stress Disorders;*
- *Other Severe Mental Disorders;*
- *Principles to Remember; and*
- *Self-evaluation Test.*

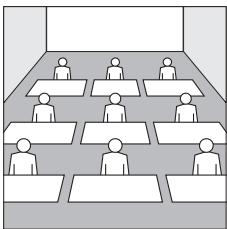
CONTENTS

Foreword iii

PART ONE **TIPS FOR TRAINERS:
STRESS MANAGEMENT FOR UNITED
NATIONS PEACE-KEEPERS** 1

Recommendations (Tips) for Trainers 3-4
Specific Qualifications 4
General Qualifications 4

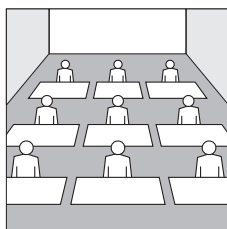
Lesson One: 5



Pre-deployment Training 5-7

- 1. Factors Contributing to Deployment Stress 5
 - a. Factors related to the individual 5
 - b. Factors related to the separation 5
 - c. Factors related to the deployment 6
- 2. Common Reactions 6
- 3. General Suggestions 6
 - a. Suggestions concerning loved ones 6
 - b. Personal suggestions for the peace-keeper ... 7

Lesson Two: 8



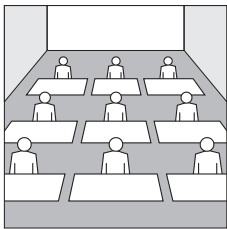
**Potential Stress in Peace-keeping
Missions** 8-11

- 1. Preparation time 8
- 2. Duration of deployment 8
- 3. Definition of the mission 9
- 4. Living conditions 9
- 5. Contact with home, family and loved ones 9
- 6. Media coverage, positive/negative news and
public support 9

CONTENTS

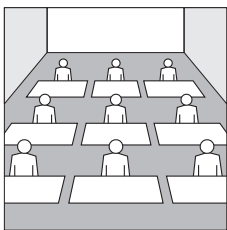
- 7. Exposure to a foreign and alien culture 9
- 8. Exposure to injustice, suffering and atrocities 10
- 9. Risk of being captured and held hostage 10
- 10. Risk of personal injury and death 11

Lesson Three: 12



- Special Unit Preparations for Traumatic Mission Areas** 12-14
- 1. Special Unit Preparations 12
- 2. Stress Immunization or Preparation for Stress Control 12
- 3. Individual Techniques for Reducing Stress 13
- Group Techniques for Reducing Stress 14

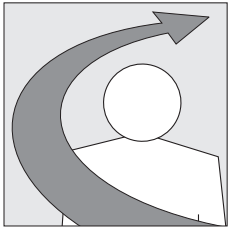
Lesson Four: 15



- Post-mission Stress Management Training** 15-16
- 1. Common Symptoms of Post-Mission Stress 15
- 2. Suggestions for Recovery and Stabilization 16

CONTENTS

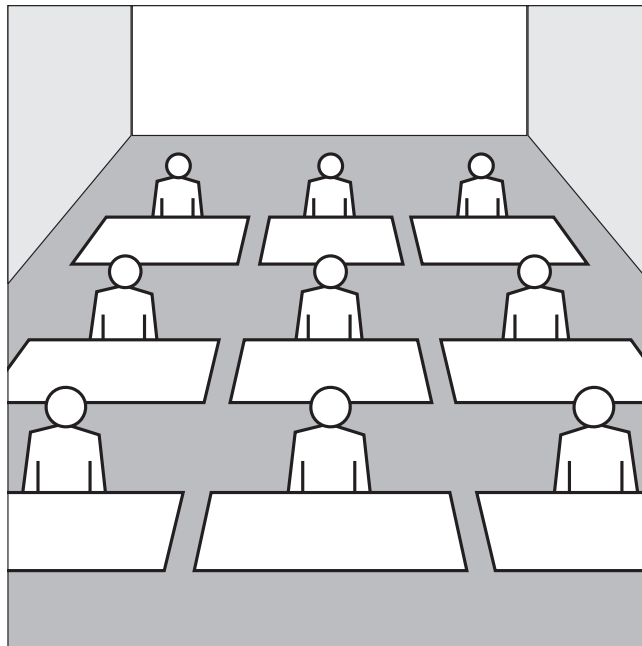
PART TWO **STRESS MANAGEMENT FOR UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPERS** 17



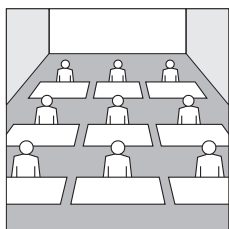
| | | |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| I. | Introduction | 19 |
| II. | Definition of Stress. | 20 |
| III. | Basic Stress | 21 |
| | How to Manage Basic Stress. | 22 |
| IV. | Cumulative Stress | 23-25 |
| | Burn-out | 24 |
| | Flame-out | 24 |
| | How to Manage Cumulative Stress | 25 |
| V. | Traumatic Stress | 26-27 |
| | Examples of Reactions to Acute Stress. | 28 |
| VI. | Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders | 29-30 |
| | How to Manage Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders | 30 |
| VII. | Other (Severe) Mental Disorders | 30 |
| VIII. | Principal Guidelines for Stress Management. | 31 |
| IX. | Self-Evaluation Test | 32 |

PART ONE

**TIPS FOR TRAINERS:
STRESS MANAGEMENT FOR UNITED
NATIONS PEACE-KEEPERS**



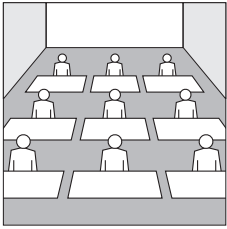
RECOMMENDATIONS (TIPS) FOR TRAINERS



As noted above, peace-keepers are frequently confronted with an inordinate amount of stressful situations that are potentially harmful if not managed properly. It is important for trainers conducting stress management training for United Nations peace-keepers to understand the variety of circumstances and experiences that produce stress in peace-keeping personnel.

The aim of this particular lesson is to encourage extraordinary discretion in dealing with stress generated in a peace-keeping operation. The utmost care must be exercised to avoid rigid generalization or the application of purely pedagogical, professional or personal concepts of what constitutes a *normal vs. abnormal* response to the unique problems that plague peace-keepers. Furthermore, counselling must never embarrass, antagonize, humiliate or be the source of additional misery to an already over-stressed peace-keeper. Trainers must present information that is accurate, appropriate, sensitive, sincere and pragmatic, for this information may be the only defense the peace-keeper has when he/she is in the field.

Stress management trainers must have culture-specific training or experience that is compatible to conditions in most peace-keeping missions. Most trainers have formal training in stress management, for example professional skills derived from social work, occupational therapy, psychology, psychiatric nursing, psychiatric medicine and the ministry. However, some may have only informal training. Regardless of the background of the stress management trainer, he/she must have - at a minimum - both specific and general qualifications and competence in the following areas:

**Specific Qualifications:**

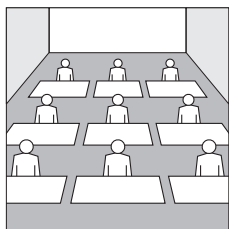
- Ability to distinguish between stress casualties and serious neuropsychiatric or organic disorders;
- Management of violent soldiers;
- Suicide prevention;
- Critical Event/Incident defusing and debriefings;
- Recognize warning signs of impending battle fatigue or misconduct stress behaviour;
- Counsel and intervene in crises at various levels;
- Know when to intervene at the unit level and when/how to request or refer soldier for Stress Management Support Team (SMST) assistance.

General Qualifications:

- Ability to conduct small unit after-action debriefings;
- Information about the normal stress responses in abnormal situations;
- Anger control and negotiation skills;
- Stress management and relaxation techniques;
- Expressing emotion and peer support;
- Use of support agencies, e.g., ICRC*;
- Substance abuse prevention and identification;
- Preparation for homecoming and reintegration briefings.

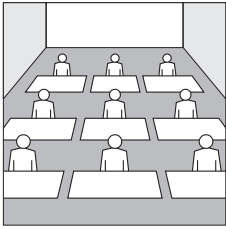
* *The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)*

LESSON ONE: PRE-DEPLOYMENT TRAINING



Pre-deployment training is important for United Nations peace-keeping personnel. *Knowing* what can be expected (the nature of the mission, length of deployment, living and working conditions, channels open for communication with loved ones, etc.) can greatly reduce the physical and emotional demands that contribute to stress, even in the pre-deployment stage. Relevant information before deployment will enable the peace-keeper to focus on realities, for example, of **separation** from loved ones, and to better cope with actual issues involved in his/her deployment to a United Nations mission.

1. Factors Contributing to Deployment Stress
 - a. *Factors Related to the Individual:*
 - Personal health;
 - Personal coping abilities;
 - Previous deployment and experience;
 - Attitude toward the assignment;
 - Confidence in self and in the unit;
 - Sense of security in family relationships.
 - b. *Factors Related to the Separation:*
 - Available preparation time;
 - Previous family separation experience;
 - Attitude of family toward the assignment;
 - Important family events during separation;
 - Confidence in support available to the family.



c. *Factors Related to the Deployment:*

- Nature of the mission, particularly if ambiguous;
- Length of the mission, especially if uncertain;
- Ease/difficulty of communication (mail, phone);
- Geographical location (terrain, weather);
- Living and working conditions;
- Confidence in unit training and leadership.

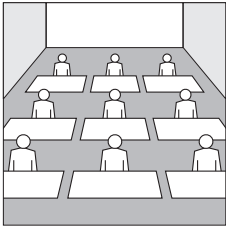
2. Common Reactions

- Anticipation of loss, loneliness;
- Fluctuations in energy level and mood;
- Fantasizing;
- Feelings of sadness, anger, excitement, restlessness, anxiety, tension, frustration, resentment, depression, fear.

3. General Suggestions

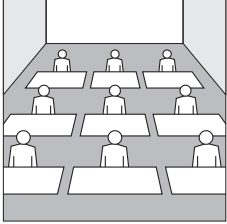
a. *Suggestions Concerning Loved Ones:*

- Accept your excitement about the assignment as natural, without expecting your family to share your feelings;
- Encourage family members to share their feelings;
- Reassure your partner of your love and commitment;
- Involve whole family in preparations for separation;
- Choose favorite photos to take with you;



- Complete packing preparation early to allow last day and evening to be reserved for the family.
- b. *Personal Suggestions for the Peace-keeper:*
 - Allow full range of emotional expression;
 - Share honestly all you can about the deployment;
 - Visualize deployment as a challenging opportunity for growth;
 - Remember that deployment is not forever.

**LESSON TWO:
POTENTIAL STRESS IN PEACE-KEEPING MISSIONS**



This lesson is prepared as an exercise to stimulate discussion about the potential sources of stress in a peace-keeping mission. Candid dialogue about likely inconveniences, frustrations, reactions, dangers, etc. provides an opportunity to mentally and emotionally prepare the peace-keeper for adverse circumstances. It is important for peace-keeping personnel to be able to “voice” confusing or negative thoughts and feelings about difficult situations that may produce additional stress during a mission assignment.

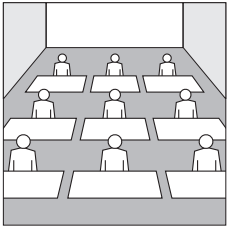
Commitment to the objectives of the United Nations and the mission’s mandate, as well as “discipline, unit pride and professionalism”, may not be enough to assure that peace-keeping personnel will be able to cope with the stress generated by circumstances in the field. Trainers may use the following list of topics to initiate discussions with peace-keeping personnel about situations which necessitate additional training in stress management. The topics may be selected for lectures and/or group discussion. The trainers should attempt to conclude each discussion on an optimistic note, if possible.

1. *Preparation time:*

Peak stress is increased when all preparations and goodbyes are squeezed into an ultra-short period of time.

2. *Duration of deployment:*

In order to make personal and family adjustments, it is extremely important to know how long their deployment will last. However, the longer the separation, the more potential there will be for



- stressful reactions and more difficult adjustment period for the family.
3. *Definition of the mission:*

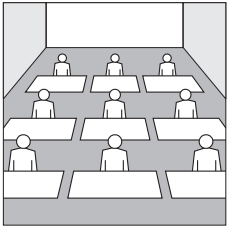
Clearly defined missions are less stressful than poorly stated missions with a fluctuating focus. Personnel should be briefed on what to expect in the mission.
 4. *Living conditions:*

Well-trained peace-keepers can adapt to very Spartan and uncomfortable conditions if they understand why the hardships are necessary and if they feel that the hardships are fairly shared.
 5. *Contact with home, family and loved ones:*

Positive contact with one's family, friends and national culture can be a great stress reducer. Letters, telephone calls (where feasible) and local newspapers and magazines from home can all provide welcome psycho-social support to the peace-keeper.
 6. *Media coverage, positive/negative news and public support:*

Complex and difficult missions may become even more stressful when media support and national support from one's own land is missing or is somehow misrepresented in the press or on television.
 7. *Exposure to a foreign and alien culture:*

The more involved the peace-keeper is with the population in the local mission area, the greater will be the potential for stress associated with a foreign culture. Briefings, using video tapes and movies



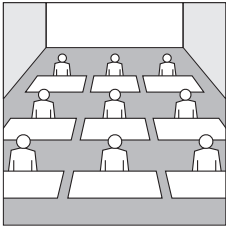
showing the host nation at its best, can increase understanding of the national people and their culture.

8. *Exposure to injustice, suffering and atrocities:*

Some missions, particularly those with overt conflict and those involving disaster relief, have a very high potential for exposure to mass death, injury, suffering and bereavement of the survivors. Peace-keeping soldiers may be exposed to extreme atrocities from which they are prohibited to intervene. Special training may reduce, or eliminate distress caused by these situations, e.g., disaster training. Discussion before deployment using video tapes to illustrate the type of atrocities which might occur can help to protect peace-keepers psychologically.

9. *Risk of being captured and held hostage:*

The strictest Rules of Engagement (ROE) of a peace-keeping mission may prohibit using weapons except for self-defense, or in the case of an unarmed mission, not at all. This means that generally peace-keepers must rely solely on common sense, diplomacy and moral authority symbolized by their blue helmets and white vehicles. However, this does not ensure that they will not be taken hostage, killed by mines or gunfire and artillery shelling, etc. Events in recent operations have verified the reality of these occurrences. These scenarios, particularly potential hostage situations, must be addressed intensively and pragmatically by the trainer and thoroughly discussed by the peace-keeper in order to prepare him/her for practical responses and behaviour in these situations. Without prior training, the degree of stress experienced by peace-keepers who are

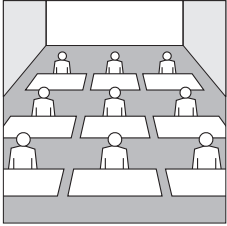


confronted with these kinds of crises may become debilitating.

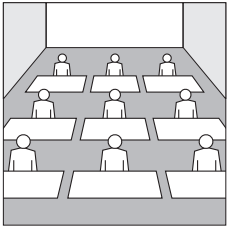
10. *Risk of personal injury and death:*

Casualties from hostile action will increase the potential for *battle (conflict) fatigue*. If casualties occur under highly frustrating and/or ambiguous conditions, it may also stimulate *misconduct stress behaviour*, where peace-keepers begin to view the host nation as inferior, or its nationals less than human. This kind of behaviour could lead to disregard of security orders and behaviours dictated by simple common sense, which ultimately may expose the peace-keeper and his colleagues to unnecessary fatalities. Leaders must watch for signs of racial or ethnic stereotyping and conduct during action debriefings after every difficult action.

**LESSON THREE: SPECIAL UNIT PREPARATIONS FOR
TRAUMATIC MISSION AREAS**



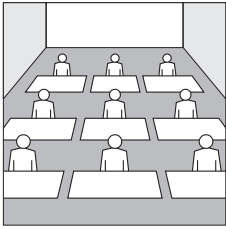
1. This lesson contains topics which should be required for special unit preparations prior to deployment to highly traumatic mission areas, in order to reduce or prevent serious distress to United Nations peace-keeping personnel. Although there is a degree of stress involved in every peace-keeping operation, some missions are in highly volatile areas where the potential for exposure to traumatic incidents is very high. For example, a situation may involve the following scenarios:
 - Substantial possibilities of exposure to atrocities, horrible suffering and death (especially of innocent women and children);
 - Potentially (and unpredictably) dangerous and life-threatening situations;
 - Stress related to the use of weapons;
 - Immersion in a potentially hostile foreign culture;
 - Strict Rules of Engagement (which prohibit the use of weapons).
2. Training topics for *stress protection or stress control*, based on the mission situation, may include several of the following:
 - Immunization by viewing and discussing video scenes of traumatic events in the area of operation (or previous similar situations); and briefings by refugees or United Nations observers returned from the area;



- Background to the historical, cultural, political, ethnic and religious roots and current issues relating to the conflict;
 - Training in negotiating techniques for disputes in the context of the local culture;
 - A range of applications of the Rules of Engagement;
 - Conducting searches of local people and houses; driving convoys assertively and safely through crowded, potentially hostile areas; avoiding violence at roadblocks;
 - Proficiency training in crew-served weapons or perimeter defense observer teams;
 - Assisting refugees and survivors of atrocity;
 - Interacting positively with other coalition allies and with Non-Government Organizations in relief efforts; and Other mission-specific tasks, as needed.
3. In addition to the above training, peace-keepers should be given individual and group strategies for coping in difficult missions. These may be simple techniques to bring about a measure of temporary relief and endurance in traumatic situations or advice about how to build personal and social infrastructures to strengthen the ability to resist the effects of trauma. These strategies will contribute to group cohesiveness, reduce feelings of isolation and reinforce the reality that others are experiencing the same kinds of emotions, reactions, fears, etc.

Individual Techniques for Reducing Stress:

- Breathing, muscle relaxation and meditation skills;
- Self-talk techniques: self-motivation;

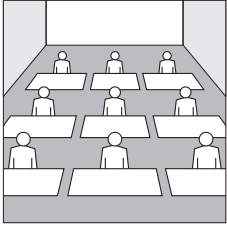


- Positive imaging techniques;
- Drawing upon spiritual, moral or ethical resources;
- Distancing and reassessment;
- Constructive ventilation of emotions.

Group Techniques for Reducing Stress:

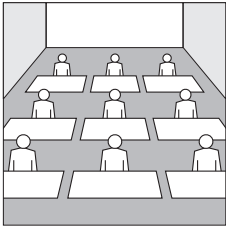
- Peer-sharing and feedback;
- Building social networks and unit cohesion;
- Encouragement and use of humour;
- Anger control and negotiation skills
(*role-playing scenarios*);
- Meaningful physical activities and recreation.

**LESSON FOUR:
POST-MISSION STRESS MANAGEMENT TRAINING**



This Lesson provides guidelines for post-mission stress management training, and may be used in conjunction with other Lessons, particularly after deployment in a highly traumatic mission area. A peace-keeper may not be prepared for the possibility that once he/she has gone home, he/she *may* suffer repercussions, or delayed after-effects, particularly if he/she coped successfully during the actual crisis. Although not everyone will experience post-deployment stress, peace-keepers should be *aware that it is possible*, what the signs of such stress are, and how to cope with it when it occurs. Typical reactions described here may be similar to those encountered during the mission or may be different and entirely unexpected:

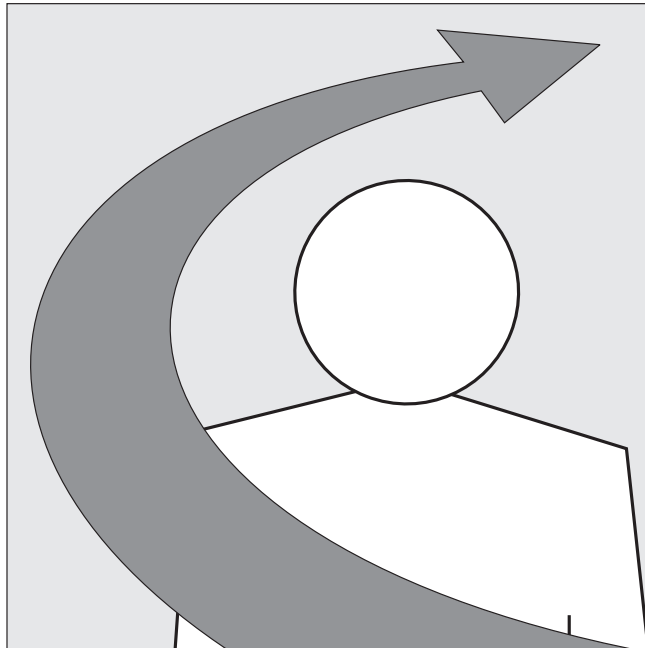
1. *Common symptoms of post-mission stress:*
 - Sleep disturbances;
 - Restlessness;
 - Anxiety;
 - Re-experiencing events;
 - Feelings of emptiness;
 - Irritability;
 - Emotional emptiness;
 - Self-reproach, feelings of guilt;
 - Aggressiveness, hatred;
 - Problems concentrating;
 - Physical complaints.



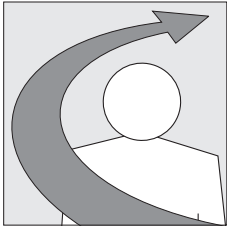
2. *Suggestions for recovery and stabilization:*
 - a. **Understand that post-traumatic reactions are normal.**
 - b. **Be patient.** It takes time to adjust both physically and mentally.
 - c. **Communicate your experiences.** Talk about your experience, but keep in mind that others may not share the same interest in your mission experience, or lose interest sooner than expected.
 - d. **Make time for recovery.** Following stressful experiences, it is natural to require more than usual rest and sleep. This is important for proper recovery, and may be more difficult because you have been away from family and loved ones who will also need time and attention now that you are finally home. Recognize that you may need more time alone than usual to process your experiences and impressions, as well as for the adaptation to daily life at home.
 - e. **Seek help, if necessary.** Although it is natural to experience post-traumatic stress, peace-keeping personnel should know when it is necessary to seek help in the recovery process. If the above reactions last longer than thirty days or become more intense, it may be advisable to seek assistance from a trained professional.

PART TWO

**STRESS MANAGEMENT
FOR UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPERS**



I. INTRODUCTION

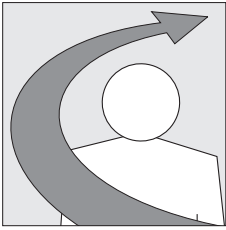


United Nations peace-keepers in some current missions will likely be exposed to hostile, dangerous and war-like circumstances. For example, they may personally experience life-threatening situations and sudden, unexpected disasters; witness severely wounded people, death and every imaginable atrocity; and come into intimate contact with innocent civilians who are suffering as a consequence of conflict.

These traumatic experiences, combined with the pressure of continual, arduous and momentous responsibilities of a peace-keeper and the repercussions of being away from home - in a foreign culture - may result in a level of stress that is difficult to understand or control.

Generally, peace-keepers are able to resist both the short and long-term effects of stress. However, if their natural defenses are weakened by sudden or continuing violence, the result may be various levels of stress disorders. Therefore, it is important for peace-keeping personnel to recognize the signs of stress and to be able to cope with the effects of traumatic situations.

*The **purpose** of this document is to provide general knowledge to United Nations personnel concerning potential stressful situations that may occur in a peace-keeping operation; to inform them of both normal and abnormal reactions to these experiences and to give some general guidelines for successfully coping with various levels of stress. The information in this document may also be used by trainers for lectures on stress management.*



As this booklet is reviewed, each reader should keep in mind the following statements:

- Stress is inherent to survival;
- Stress is necessary for human development and growth;
- Stress is initially positive, but too much is unhealthy;
- Stress is addictive;
- Stress is manageable.

II. DEFINITION OF STRESS

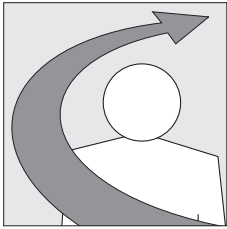
Stress is the physical and psychological process of reacting to and coping with events or situations that place extraordinary pressure upon a human being. Such events are usually sudden and often involve physical or emotional loss, such as witnessing casualties or destruction from combat or disasters or the serious injury or death of a relative, friend or co-worker.

Stress is a *normal* reaction to an *abnormal* situation and serves primarily the function of self-preservation (protection) in a threatening situation, enabling one to: concentrate full attention on a particular threat; mobilize maximum physical energy; and prepare for action in order to respond to the threat.

Peace-keepers are exposed regularly to both minor and major incidents which can result in the build-up of stress. For the purpose of this booklet, three types of stress are described, in the order of increasing intensity:

- Basic Stress
- Cumulative Stress
- Traumatic Stress

III. BASIC STRESS

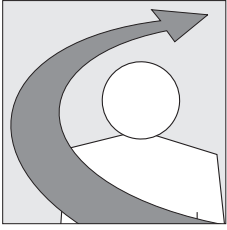


Every individual experiences basic, minor stress in daily situations that may produce tension, frustration, irritation, anger, etc. A person's vulnerability (reaction) is largely determined by one's physical and psychological strength or weakness at these times, and thus the level of stress will vary accordingly. For example, a person who is ill, has not had enough sleep, or is troubled or worried, etc., is likely to react more readily and more intensely. Personal attributes which *may* contribute to one's reaction to stress are:

- Past experiences;
- Education;
- Professional skills;
- Philosophical approach to life;
- Age;
- Level of physical fitness; and
- Personal self-esteem.

Stress consumes physical, cognitive and emotional energy. Although it is natural to suffer some degree of stress in difficult situations, in order to avoid disruption of a person's ability to function properly, both physically and mentally, stress should not be allowed to accumulate to a point where it cannot be controlled.

When an individual consents to participate in a peace-keeping mission, he/she should be aware that peace-keepers often encounter stressful situations, particularly if the mission is in a conflict zone, and know basic steps to control the effects of such stress in his/her life.

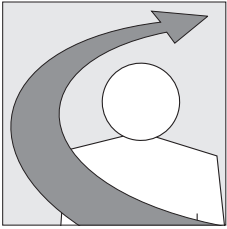


How to Manage Basic Stress

Most stress *can* be managed. Determination and self-discipline are keys to finding the source(s) of stress and coping with it before it has escalated to an uncontrollable level. As a rule stress management plans will include learning to do some old tasks differently. Initially, the effects of stress can likely be alleviated by simple, common-sense measures. Develop a management and control strategy to help avoid potential distressors. The following guidelines have been found to be effective in stress management strategy development:

- Identify sources of stress;
- Know personal limitations;
- Manage time well;
- Be assertive, but not aggressive;
- Accept creative challenges;
- Get enough sleep;
- Rest or conserve strength;
- Eat regularly;
- Control intake of alcohol, tobacco, etc.;
- Make time for relaxation and physical exercise;
- Develop satisfying friendships and relationships;
- Have a positive attitude;
- Have a sense of humour; laugh often, etc.

IV. CUMULATIVE STRESS

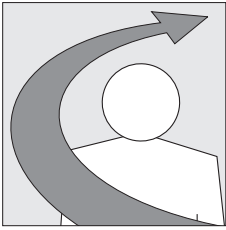


Cumulative stress is the result of strain that occurs too often (FREQUENCY), lasts too long (DURATION) and is too severe (INTENSITY). In these circumstances, distress leads to exhaustion and other manifestations so that a person is unable to cope with the amount of stress he/she is experiencing.

During a mission, peace-keepers are generally confronted with many daily frustrations, related to work in a conflict zone. They are often expected to fulfill a seemingly impossible mandate; to have circumspect conduct as representatives of the United Nations; to show impartiality in difficult situations, which may mean having to stifle reactions, emotions and activities that are natural as human beings; and to be able to negotiate unexpected and intricate situations, sometimes with very little experience, where the outcome will impact on the mission, the United Nations, and most important, the parties themselves. In spite of loyal, and sometimes heroic, efforts, the peace-keeper may sense a lack of appreciation by the victims and hostility on the part of the authorities.

He/she may be assigned to work with colleagues that are not personally or culturally compatible and that may have varying degrees of peace-keeping experience, or no experience at all. The peace-keeper may be placed in an immobile or inactive duty, such as in a *stand-by* situation, for long periods of time. And, very importantly, the peace-keeper may be exposed to singular and savage atrocities about which he/she can do nothing.

In addition, the peace-keeper may be challenged by minor, irritating strains related to unfamiliar or unpleasant situations. For example, difficulties related to housing (privacy, shortages of water, heat/cold, noise, etc.); travel (risks,



threats, tedious controls at checkpoints); food (shortages, diet, illness); unfamiliar language and culture, etc. The peace-keeper may suffer the personal stress of being away from home, friends and loved ones, and become lonely and vulnerable to the effects of permanent low-grade stress, or even to acute traumatic stress.

If cumulative stress is not cared for, it may lead to *burn-out* or *flame-out*, which may precede other very serious stress disorders.

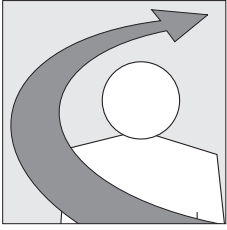
Burn-out:

Ongoing stress may result in burn-out, or professional and personal exhaustion. A person suffering from burn-out will exhibit changed attitudes concerning his/her work, colleagues and the victims he/she has witnessed. For example, a person suffering from burn-out will either avoid work or, more often, become totally immersed in it and will exclude all other aspects of life. Usually there are signs of depression, loss of self-confidence and/or self-esteem, diffused sadness, guilt and grief.

Flame-Out

In the case of a *rapid onset burnout*, particularly if the needs for periodic rest, proper food and exercise are overlooked or ignored, the so-called *flame-out* phenomenon may result. Usually this reaction to stress can be treated at once by instructing the person experiencing *flame-out* to leave the scene temporarily, until he/she has regained control/composure. Some symptoms of *flame-out* are:

- Intense fatigue, often associated with exhausting hyperactivity;
- Feelings of sadness, discouragement, depression; guilt, remorse; hopelessness;



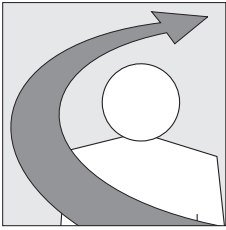
- Failure to admit to a state of psychological exhaustion, and denial of any loss of efficiency;
- Inability to objectively and accurately assess personal and professional performance;
- Physical signs of exhaustion may also be experienced, e.g. fatigue; headache; back pain; and stomach ulcer (called stress ulcer).

How To Manage Cumulative Stress

Since cumulative stress develops over time, at some point it may be difficult to recognize the signs of stress, which may become such a part of everyday life that it seems a natural state. The temptation may be to deny that anything is wrong. Thus, it is important to listen when others begin to say: *take some time off; lighten up; don't work so hard; don't be so serious; have some fun; etc.*

Long periods of stress will ultimately affect every part of a peace-keeper's life, including health. Whereas basic stress can often be alleviated by active or restful measures, cumulative stress has become a "habit" which must be broken by making a conscious effort to change the manner in which one reacts to stress and/or its source. This may necessitate changing one's lifestyle, attitude(s), philosophy and expectations; for example:

- *Take personal responsibility for stress*, only you can accurately identify the areas of stress in your life and do what is necessary to change it, or your reaction to it;
- *Accept* what cannot be changed - not every stressful situation **can** be changed;
- *Understand* the limits of high expectations and objectives (particularly, as a peace-keeper);



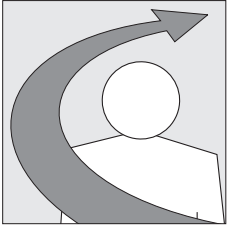
- *Avoid* overwork; learn to delegate tasks and to leave some things undone until later;
- *Be realistic* about goals - one can only accomplish so much within a limited time-frame;
- *Take care of yourself* so you can effectively take care of others;
- *Exercise self-discipline* in out-of-control situations, etc.

V. TRAUMATIC STRESS

Whereas cumulative stress increases over a period of time and at some point can be recognized and arrested, traumatic stress is the result of a single, sudden and violent assault which harms or threatens an individual or someone close to him or her, either physically or psychologically. The following are examples of trauma which may be experienced in the field:

- Being a powerless spectator of violence, murder, large-scale massacres, epidemics, disasters or famines;
- Hearing first-hand reports of ill-treatment and torture;
- Direct or indirect intimidations and threats;
- Bombing of buildings; mining of roads;
- Attacks on vehicles and convoys;
- Armed attacks and robberies;
- Witnessing large-scale material destruction.

The possibility that peace-keepers will encounter one or more of these traumatic situations in a conflict zone is very high. The trauma, sometimes defined as *critical incident stress*, is exacerbated because very often the peace-keeper is unable to assist or change the plight of helpless victims.



A peace-keeper may become completely stunned and overwhelmed after undergoing a critical, traumatic incident. The result may be *burn-out* or *flame-out*, as described above, or he/she may suffer more serious effects, such as *shell-shock*, which makes it impossible to continue in the situation.

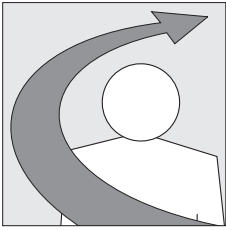
Although the range of emotional reactions to trauma is limited, such reactions may vary from one individual to another. The time it takes for these reactions to appear, and their severity, depends on the person's character and vulnerability at the time. The reaction(s) may appear immediately, or after a few hours or days: this is *acute stress disorder*. Or the reaction(s) may appear after a few months, or in rare cases, in a few years: this is *post-traumatic stress disorder* (PTSD), described later.

Examples of Reactions Indicating Acute Stress Disorders

| Physical | Cognitive | Emotional |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Nausea | Confusion | Fear, Anxiety |
| Sweating/Chills | Difficult Concentration | Anger, Irritability |
| Fatigue | Difficulty Making Decisions | Feelings of Guilt, Grief, Hopelessness |
| Hyperventilation, Dizziness | Memory Problems | Resentment |
| Increased Heart Rate (Perhaps with Chest Pain Resembling a Heart Attack), Elevated Blood Pressure | Accelerated Thought Processes | Withdrawal, Feelings of Abandonment |
| Muscle Tremors, Jumpiness | Slowing of Thought Processes | Numbness |
| Increased Substance Abuse | Rapid Speech | Depression |
| Can't Sleep/ Nightmares | | Flashbacks |

Behaviour disorders which may accompany the physical, emotional and mental reactions above may include one or more of the following:

- Hyperactivity;
- Dangerous driving;
- Overwork;
- Angry outbursts;
- Senseless arguments, etc.



It is important to realize that it is normal to experience some of these symptoms after a traumatic experience (although not *all* of these reactions will be manifested and some reactions may be delayed for a time). However, the manifestation of some of these symptoms are an indication that serious stress has been suffered, and if not dealt with, may increase in severity.

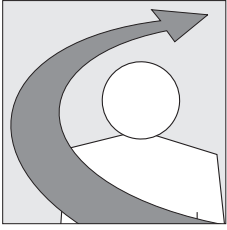
Remember: If the reactions listed above are too intense or repeated too often, they lead to exhaustion or death in animals - and to hazardous psychological disorders in human beings.

VI. POST -TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

If the above symptoms (reactions) persist for more than one month, they may lead to a more serious condition known as *Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)*. PTSD may be compared to a wound that will not heal naturally. A person experiencing PTSD should seek professional help from a specialist in psychotherapy who also has appropriate training in debriefing techniques.

An individual with PTSD may, after a period of well-being, experience a *delayed onset disorder* which generally can be recognized by several criteria:

- Persistent re-experiencing of the traumatic event;
- Avoiding association with any stimulus that is a reminder of the trauma;
- Symptoms of exaggerated alertness or caution and possibly inappropriate, or even violent, reactions to threatening situations.



How to Prevent Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

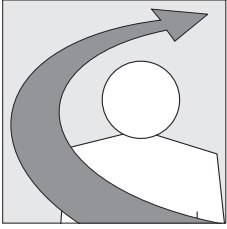
The following points are important and must be remembered:

- It is *normal* to suffer symptoms of extreme stress in the aftermath of a traumatic incident;
- Don't be critical of yourself or think that you are weak;
- Don't imagine others will think badly, or less, of you;
- Don't suffer in silence; verbalizing emotions will help to work through the experience and will help prevent more serious effects in the future;
- Ask for help, for yourself or for someone you know;
- Talk about the experience *immediately* with someone trustworthy, e.g., a nurse, medical coordinator, head of delegation, someone trained in de-briefing techniques, et al.;
- Be willing to listen to others who are in distress;
- Rest;
- Take time to recover;
- Accept a protective environment supplied by those who care.

VII. OTHER (SEVERE) MENTAL DISORDERS

Depending on a number of factors, including personal vulnerability coinciding with a traumatic or critical incident, the distress can sometimes precipitate a psychotic or neurotic crisis, psychosomatic disease or even suicide. If you, or someone you know, does not respond adequately within a reasonable period of time or demonstrates signs which indicate a serious psychiatric disorder, immediate professional assistance is required.

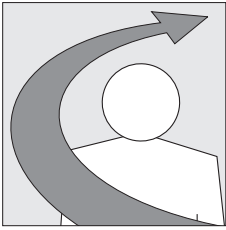
VIII. PRINCIPAL GUIDELINES FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT



This pamphlet, although not a comprehensive manual on stress management, has outlined a number of general guidelines for United Nations peace-keepers on how to handle various phases of stress. The following is a review of the key points that need to be remembered by peace-keepers experiencing stress*:

- 1) Anyone who undergoes an acute traumatic experience, or is at the scene of a disaster, undergoes change. The best scenario is that your personality will be strengthened and enhanced; the worst scenario is that you will experience stress that you cannot deal with apart from professional help.
- 2) The various emotions you feel during or after a traumatic incident, e.g., cumulative stress, traumatic stress, or a depressive reaction to a disaster, are *perfectly normal* responses to an *abnormal* event.
- 3) These emotional reactions should be understood as psychological wounds. As with all wounds, you should:
 - Identify the injury (identify what is causing the stress);
 - Give immediate first aid on the spot (talk about what you have experienced);
 - Provide treatment for yourself, without waiting for a specialist (take personal initiative to reduce the level of stress you are experiencing - using what you know about stress and your present situation);
 - Monitor the healing process (know when the level of stress has diminished);

* These guidelines are taken from the section, *Principles to Remember* (pages 24-25), found in the International Committee of the Red Cross booklet, **Coping With Stress**, published in December, 1994.



- Prevent complications (PTSD) by getting professional help, if necessary.
- 4) Patient, sympathetic *listening* is the most important type of assistance for a psychological wound. This is beneficial, even though it takes time. Two hours of listening may prevent months of problems for the victim of a traumatic experience.
 - 5) A person who has overcome a traumatic experience must learn to talk about the event and all the emotions felt at the time, with those closest to him/her, or with a trained professional.
 - 6) The best form of preparation for a traumatic event is to be aware of the emotional reactions (including stress) that may occur in a conflict zone.

Sharing, assistance, empathy and listening constitute caring, and are integral to working with other peace-keepers in a peace-keeping mission. These attributes are needed in order to cope with the stressful reactions that threaten *all* peace-keepers in the field.

IX. SELF-EVALUATION TEST

To evaluate *your present state of stress*, answer the following ten questions by placing a tick in the appropriate box and adding up the results, using assigned values.

| | Never (1) | Sometimes (2) | Often (3) |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. I have difficulty sleeping. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I feel tense, irritable and nervous. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. The smallest noise makes me jump. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I am on alert for dangers that threaten me. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I feel distant from my colleagues and avoid them. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. My work no longer interests me; I feel I have no future. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. I am very tired, physically and intellectually. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. I have attacks of giddiness, sweating, tight throat and palpitations, when reminded of a traumatic event. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. I feel over-excited, I act impulsively and I take calculated risks. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. I relive a traumatic event in my thoughts, in my dreams, or in nightmares. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Add up your total score:

Under **15** - your state of stress is in a **normal range**, as a peace-keeper.

From **15 to 25** - you are suffering **above normal stress**, and should take measures to decrease the amount of pressure you are under.

From **26 to 30** - you are under **severe stress** and should ask for help from someone close to you, or from a professional.

