Critical Incident Stress Management: A Program To Address Issues of Secondary Traumatization Among Tele-registration Disaster Workers

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INTRODUCTION

- **The Critical Incident Stress Management Program is a comprehensive program designed to anticipate the emotional impact that external and internal critical incidents have upon groups and individuals within the multiple work environments of the Tele-registration site.**

- **It is a structured, peer-driven, clinician-supported process, associated with the site's Stress Management Program, whose intent it is to prepare a response to event-driven situations affecting the emotional well being of the workforce.**

- **The Program provides for both an immediate and a prolonged response to effectively minimize the emotional detriment of stressful incidents.**

- **It places the emphasis on individual peer support for immediate action, while providing specialized group/individual support for more intense events.**

- **The program includes a Stress Management overview;**

- **A Critical/threatening Call Management orientation for all employees;**

- **Annual CISM training for the CISM Program Committee and for those employees trained as Peer Partners;**

- **An overview of methodologies used to address diverse scenarios encountered by employees in all areas of the Tele-registration site;**

- **Basic information on Workplace Violence.**
- **We include this because of the potential for occurrence in any working environment and subsequent to an incident, the CISMP Team would respond to minimize the effects on the workforce.**

Program Goals

The objectives of this program are:

- **To create an awareness of the Program and the services provided therein and, to make the assistance available to all employees, at all levels throughout the site.**

- **To recruit and train employees from the various areas of the site to serve as Peer Partners and to provide adequate training for these individuals to enable them to be fully functional within the Program.**

- **To provided peer support and clinician-guided interventions and facilitated defusing/debriefings as a timely response appropriate to critical incidents.**

- **To provide referrals to the Stress Management, Employee Liaison and Employee Assistance Programs for all employees as needed.**

- **To enable employees to effectively respond to escalated and crisis situations created as a result of dealing with applicants/disaster victims-**

- **Or, in general, persons contacting the site for any reason who are distraught and/or threatening.**

CISMP TERMINOLOGY

Clarification of Terms

- **Critical Incident**
- **A critical incident is any event which has a significant amount of emotional power sufficient to overwhelm a person's or a group's ability to cope with a situation which include but are not limited to: suicide (internally/externally);**

Critical Incident. Con't

- **line of duty death; serious line of duty injury; disaster/multiple casualty incident; killing or wounding of someone; significant events involving children; dealing with relatives of known victims, prolonged incidents especially with loss; threats to the agency and/or it's personnel, and, excessive media interest in a significant event.**

- **For the purposes of the Tele-registration site we are also including events specific to our work environment. These include but are not limited to: secondary traumatization precipitated by personal contact with disaster victims experiencing many of the aforementioned events;**

- **specific stress producing pressures relative to the various departments within the site as a result of disaster activity; and,**

- **the effect of the compounding of multiple stressors or, the long term exposure to constant generalized work place stress.**

Critical Incident Stress Management
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CISM Program Committee

- **The CISMP Committee is responsible for the development and administration of the Program.**

- **It is comprised of Program Coordinators (Stress Managers) or their designated alternates, the Event Coordinator, the Tele-registration site Spokesperson, and Facilitators.**

- **The Committee, or any portion thereof, may be called upon to assess the needs of the workforce in relation to critical events and to work with management to coordinate a response to these various incidents and events.**

Internal Events

- **A turning point event within or related to the Tele-registration site work environment.**

- **Examples: *Suicide* of an *employee, workplace death or serious injury* of an *employee, the arrest* of an *employee. Also, disaster event with prolonged intensity or work hours.***

Briefing

- **A briefing is a meeting held to deliver information to a group of individuals.**

Event Briefing

- **This is a briefing designed to mitigate the psychological impact of stress producing events at the site which would primarily revolve around disaster activity.**

Intervention

- An intervention is a guided activity, which is designed to be the most rapid response to a critical incident.

- It is the first level of support designed to bring stability to an unstable or high impact situation.

- An intervention can be conducted for a single person or for a group of individuals impacted by the same event. Quite similar to a defusing.

Pre-Intervention

- **A meeting held by the CISM Program Coordinator (or Committee Member) to inform the Team of the basic information surrounding an incident and to work out the logistics for conducting a large-scale intervention (defusing).**

- **This would be applicable especially in instances of multiple interventions happening at the same time.**

Post Intervention

- **A meeting held for the entire Team following an intervention, defusing, or debriefing.**

- **It is a time frame to debrief the debriefed, to analyze the event and compile information to he utilized in creating the after action report.**

Debriefing

- **The debriefing is a process designed to lessen the overall impact of an event and to accelerate recovery in normal people who are having normal reactions to abnormal events.**

- **The process is a discussion and not a critique or investigation.**

Defusing

- **A defusing is a shortened version of a debriefing.**

Establishment of the Program

- **Tele-registration site Employees encounter situational events during the course of disaster work which have a stressful impact causing unusually strong emotional reactions, feelings of counter-transference and a decreased ability to cope.**

- **Our unique work environments dictate that an intentional, operational response be designed and implemented to address and manage Critical Incident Stress within the site.**

- **To address issues of secondary traumatization among tele-registration disaster workers, the Critical Incident Stress Management Program (CISMP) was developed and will be administered by the CISM Program Committee.**

Ongoing Pre-Crises Education and Training For The General Workforce

Objectives

To Inform and educate the general population at the Tele-registration site as to the intent of the Critical incident Stress Management Program (CISMP).

- To Present the information in three separate training modules.

Overview of Training Modules

- **Module 1- introduction to Stress Management This component is an introduction to Stress Management resources either within or, available through, the Tele-registration site.**

- **This will address stress in the work place, how stress can produce unproductive behavior and unwanted responses which help to identify why we do what we do in the worst of times. This module will present ways to recognize stress and strategies to manage it.**

- **Module 2- Introduction and Overview to CISMP.**

- **This component is an introduction and overview of the Critical Incident Stress Management Program.**

- **It includes a presentation detailing the need for the Program and the benefits it offers the employee. Also included in this module are the reasons behind its development. This module will help employees to know what to anticipate and the important role everyone plays in the process.**

Module 3- Work Area Specific Critical Incidents.

- **This component is an introduction to intervention techniques employees can utilize when dealing with people in crisis.**

- **The techniques will vary according to the type of situations that are foreseeable and that are specific to the different departments of the site.**

- **Guidelines for call takers will vary from those for detailed/deployed personnel who deal with victims face to face.**

- **During seasons that traditionally bring heavy activity, refresher sessions will be offered to employees in front line positions.**

New Employee Orientation:

- After the initial roll out, all new employees will receive the CISMP Overview during their orientation as new hires.

Annual Program Team Member Training

CISMP Team Members:

- **The Program Committee will seek to provide on going and refresher training to Team Members who provide Basic Peer Support.**

- **Generally speaking, this will be conducted in-house by Program Committee Members although, if an opportunity presents itself to bring in a trainer from outside, the Committee will pursue this type of activity in an effort to offer the best available training to the whole Team.**

CISMP Committee Members:

- **Annual training will be made available through conferences and seminars as funding allows.**

- **Information and techniques obtained through these trainings will be made available to the Team during the in-house trainings.**

- **Creation of the CISM Program Team**

Creation of the CISM Program Team

Criteria for Selection of Team Members

- *Voluntary Participation:* **Tele-registration site Employees desiring to hold positions on the CISMP Team will be encouraged to volunteer to participate. The only prerequisite is that the employee must have a minimum of six (6) months experience within the site.**

Compassion Fatigue: Secondary Trauma

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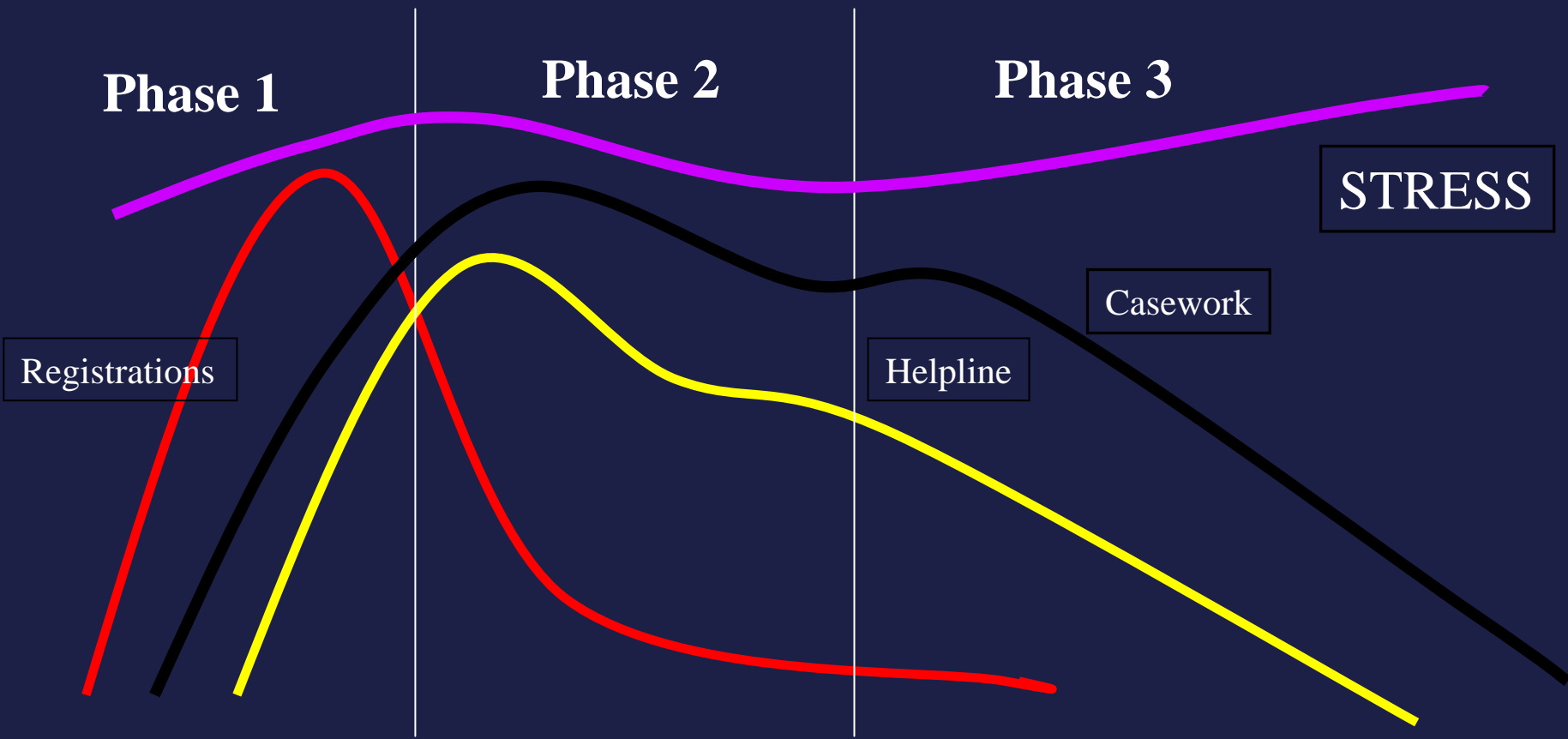
Phase I - Sources of Stress for Disaster Workers

- Response/Reaction Mode (Adrenaline rush)
- Uncertainty of disaster scale
- Conflict in Communication
- Disaster Workers deployed, and
- Call Centers gear up to take applications/registrations for disaster service
- Long work hours, week-ends, holidays

High Stress Levels at Disaster Site(s) and Call Centers

- Similar to 911 Dispatch Workers
- Real People in Real Crisis
- Suicidal Threats or Ideation
- "The Victim/Survivor is in my head"

Phase II - Disaster Recovery Activities

- Services at Disaster site(s) are operationalized

- Registrations and helpline calls increase

- "Casework" and service referrals intensifies

- Long hours – 10-14-hour day-
  6 day work week

- Multiple disaster events

Phase II – Sources of Stress for Disaster Workers – Response & Recovery

- Federal, State, Local Governments
- Conflict in Planning and Decision Making
- Conflicting guidance
  - -Internal
  - -External
- Technical Issues

Phase III- Stress Related Disaster Recovery Activities

- Decline in all work

- Return home from deployment or "Releases" Pending from Call Centers

- "Rumor Mill" - "Who, What, When. Where and How"

Disaster Survivors In Crisis and the Relationship to Secondary Traumatization

- The Disaster Worker reacts to, and may internalize the plight of Applicants in crisis, and
- Is vicariously impacted by their emotional state in a very specific and personal way
- Applicants in crisis bring their grief to the disaster worker- Critical Incidents

  -Loss

  -Shock and Disbelief

  -Denial

  -Anger

"Critical Incidents"
A Definition

- Tragedies, deaths, serious injuries, hostage situations, and threatening situations
- People who respond to emergencies encounter highly stressful events
- The responders to these events may experience significant stress reactions

Secondary Traumatization
A Definition

- Any situation faced by HSSs that causes them to experience unusual strong emotional reactions and feelings of countertransference, which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function in their prescribed professional role.

Cumulative Effect of Stress

- Manifestations of physical illness
- Greater Absenteeism
- Poor Motivation
- Lower Productivity
- Difficult Concentration
- Negative Attitude
- Fatigue

SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

- Mood swings
- Loss of temper
- Tiredness
- Change in appetite
- Difficulty sleeping
- Negativity
- Self-criticism
- Repetitious

- Forgetfulness
- Easy tearfulness
- Tension
- Headaches, nausea
- Difficulty Concentrating
- Self-doubt or guilt
- Change in sexual energy

STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

- Tips for controlling stress on the job – Group Assessment

- Exercise stress breaks- Group demonstration –"8 minutes"

- Tips for Managing Stress

- Relaxation techniques – Breathing Exercises
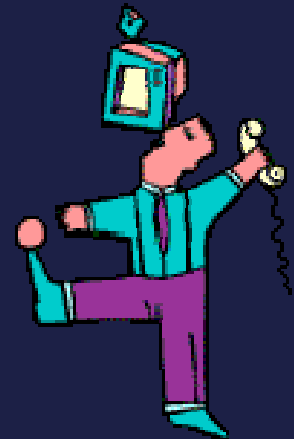
POSITIVE COPERS

- Diversions
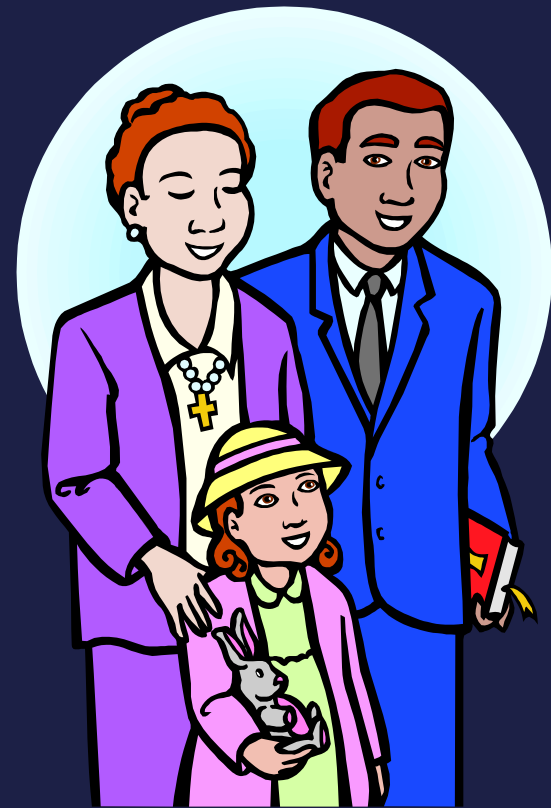- Family
- Interpersonal
- Mental
- Physical
- Spiritual

DIVERSIONS
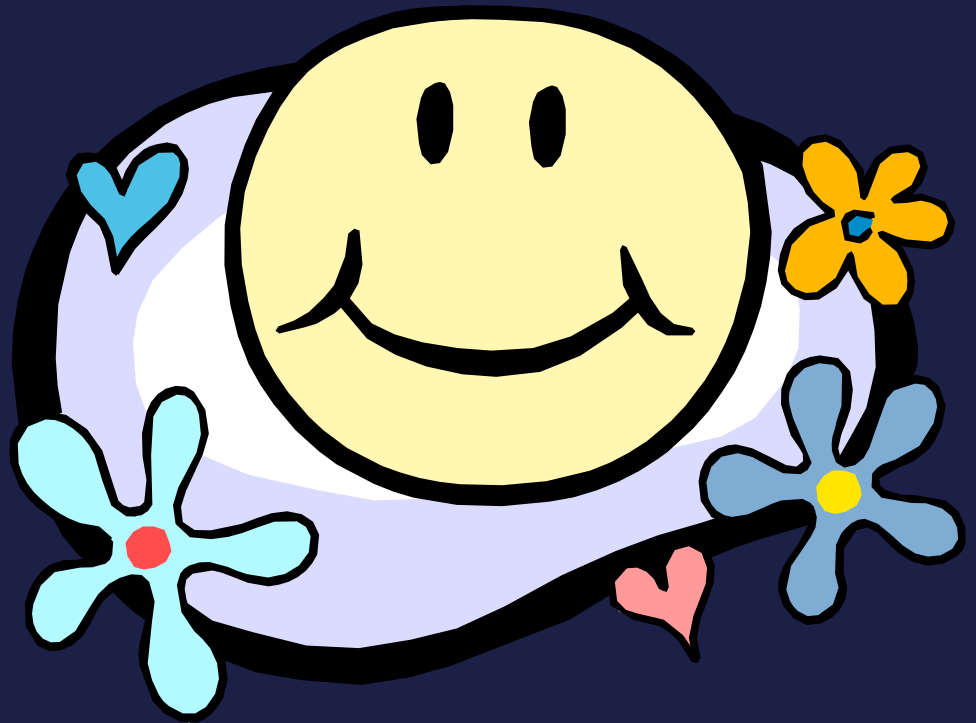
- Getaways
- Hobbies
- Learning music
- Play
- Work

FAMILY

- Balancing
- Conflict resolution
- Esteem-building
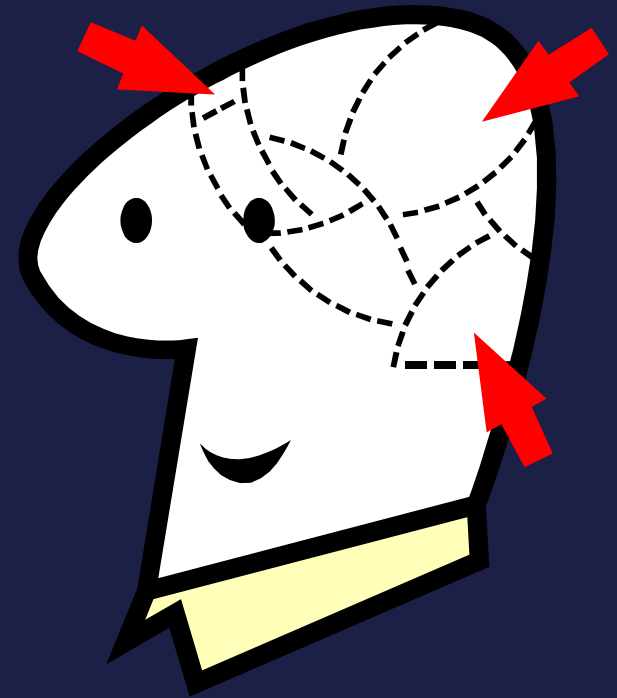- Flexibility
- Networking
- Togetherness

INTERPERSONAL

- Affirmation
- Assertiveness
- Prioritize
- Express Ideas
- Linking
- Limits

MENTAL

- Imagination
- Life planning/ organizing
- Problem-solving
- Re-labeling
- Time management

PHYSICAL

- Bio-feedback
- Exercise
- Nourishment
- Relaxation
- Self-care
- Stretching

SPIRITUAL

- Commitment
- Faith
- Prayer
- Surrender
- Valuing
- Worship

Tips for Managing Stress "Self Awareness"

- **Get to Know Yourself**

Acknowledge your likes & dislikes, strengths & weaknesses. Where would you like to go with your life?

What are your values & ideals?

How does your body tell you when you are stressed or tired?
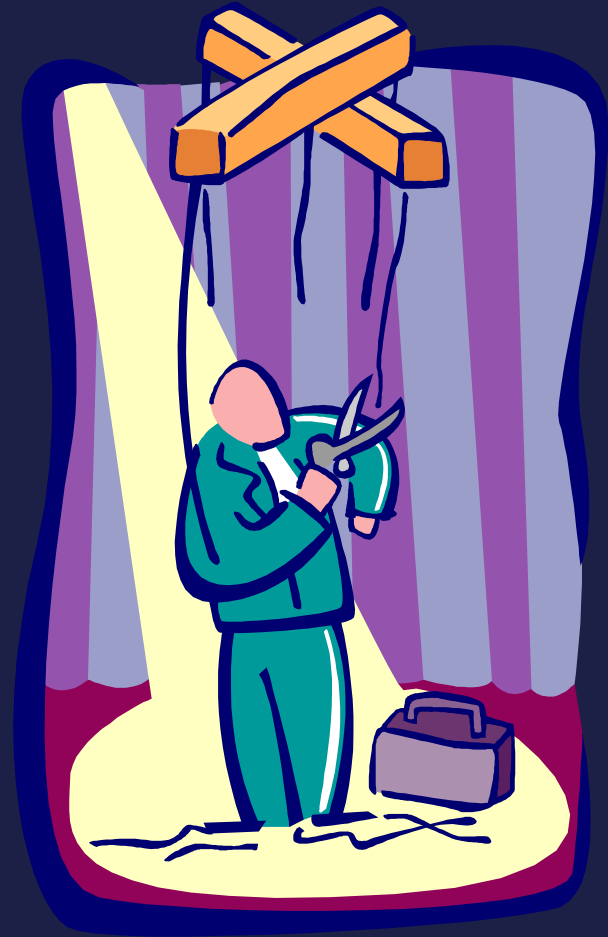
Behavior changes when stressed?

"Improve Your Assertiveness"

- Take Control of Your Life

Look at your lifestyle & see what you need to change to become more true to yourself.

Are there obstacles, how to overcome them? Need to be more assertive?

"Time Management"

- **Manage Your commitments**

Tackle one task at a time-don't try to do too much at once or be a perfectionist. Do essential tasks & prioritize others, delegate. Make a commitment to your health.

Avoid Depression

- **Maintain Adequate Leisure to Recharge Your energy**

Indulge in pleasures. Preserve personal time for self. Have fun, don't be too competitive.
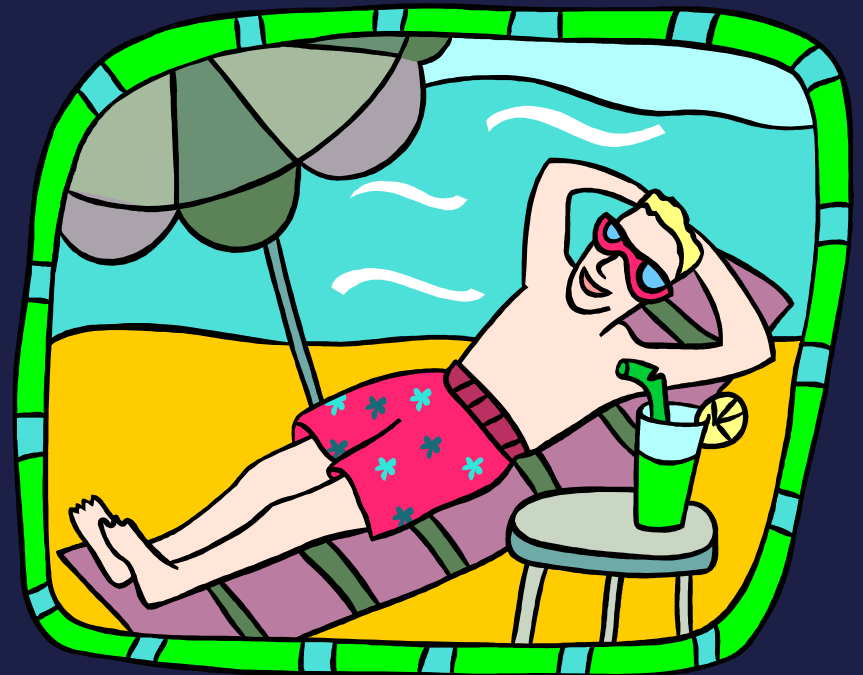
"Relax"

- **Take Time For Relaxation**

Slow down, avoid sustained pressure. Make time for activities, retreat to a state of total mental & physical rest for a few minutes, daily.
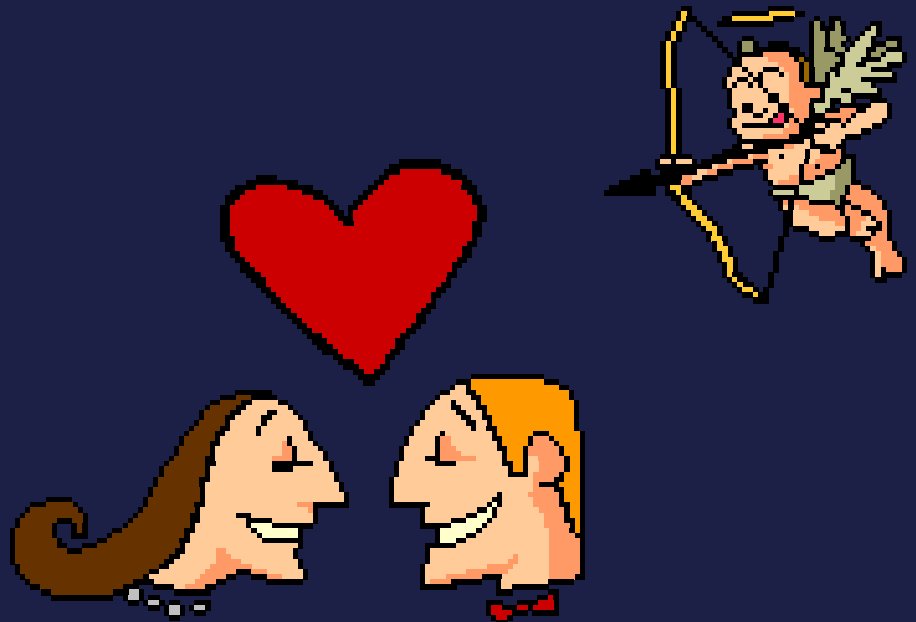
Caution re. Alcohol & Nicotine.

"Value Your Relationships"

- **Develop Your Relationships**

Recognize love & friendliness. Reciprocate with honesty & openness. Cultivate friendships & good communication. Talk about concerns.

"Reduce Anger"

- **Control Anger & Aggression**

Learn assertiveness skills, communicate needs, develop awareness re. body language. Debate appropriately & constructively, compromise without loosing direction. Don't waste time on people who don't listen, are disrespectful or seek conflict.
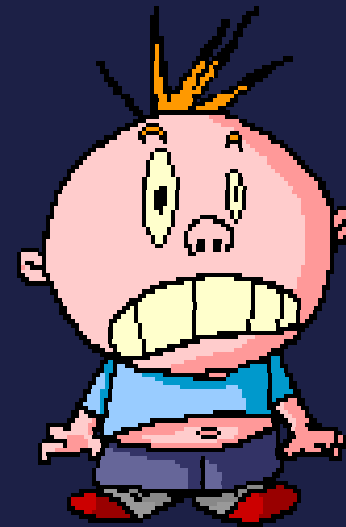
"Develop Your Skills"

- **Continue to Enhance Knowledge & Skills**

Identify &Participate in professional educational courses.
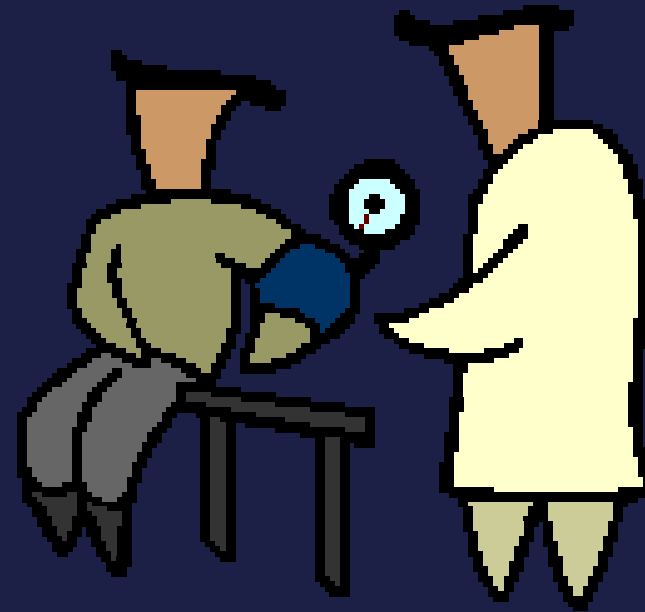
Improves performance, self-esteem & popularity.

Could you benefit from professional development?

"Keep Fit"

- Build up exercise gradually & check with physician-don't over do.

Physical activity releases muscle tension, improves circulation reduces blood pressure, improves confidence, well-being de-fuses anger, social benefits also.

"Watch Your diet"

- **Some Cautions**

Caffeine aggravates stress reactions.

Sugar & fats reduce ability to cope with stress.

Don't skip meals, eat fruits, vegetables, whole grains & foods high in protein. **Drink lots of Water – Avoid excessive alcohol.**

WRAP-UP

- 10 Commandments for Managing Stress
- Treasure Chest Fantasy

Ten Commandments for Managing Stress – First

- **Thou Shalt Organize Thyself.**

Take better control of the way that you are spending your time and energy, so that you can handle stress more effectively.
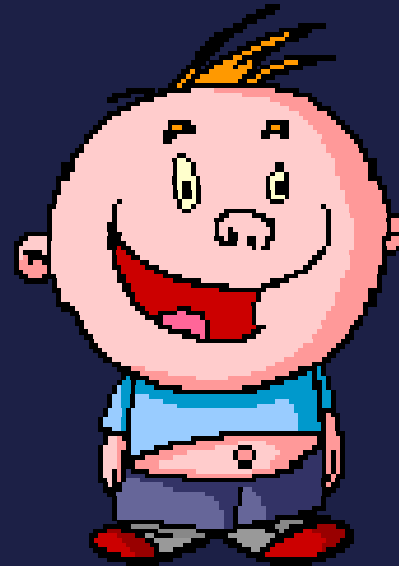
Second Commandment

- **Thou Shalt Control Thy Environment by controlling <u>Who</u> and <u>what </u>is surrounding you.**

In this way, you can either get rid of the stress or get support for yourself.

Third Commandment

- **Thou Shalt Love Thyself by giving yourself positive feedback.**

You are a unique individual who is doing the best that you can.

Fourth Commandment

- Thou Shalt Reward Thyself by Planning & Integrating Leisure Activities into your life.

  It really helps to have something to look forward to.

Fifth Commandment

- **Thou Shalt exercise thy body since your <u>health</u> and <u>productivity</u> depends ability to bring oxygen and food to it's cells.**

Therefore, exercise your heart and lungs regularly, a minimum of 3 days per week for 15-30 minutes. This includes such activities as walking, jogging, cycling, swimming, aerobics, etc.

Sixth Commandment

- **Thou Shalt Relax Thyself by taking your mind off stress & concentrating on breathing and positive thoughts.**

Dreaming counts, along with meditation, progressive relaxation, exercise, listening to music, communicating with friends & loved ones, etc.

Seventh Commandment

- **Thou Shalt Rest Thyself as Regularly as Possible.**

Sleep 7-8 hours a night. Take work breaks, there is only so much your mind can absorb at one time. It needs time to process and integrate information. Take a 10 minute break every hour. Rest your eyes as well as your mind.
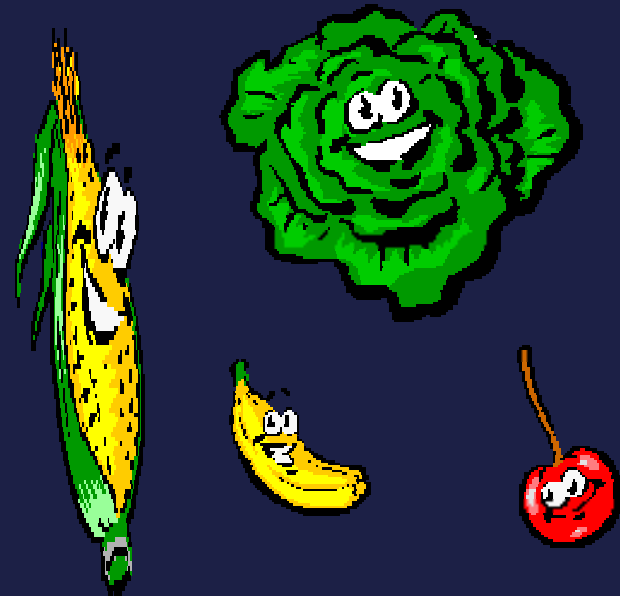
Eighth Commandment

● **Thou Shalt be Aware of Thyself.**

Be aware of distress signals such as insomnia, headaches, anxiety, upset stomach, lack of concentration, excessive tiredness, etc.. Remember, these can be signs of potentially more serious disorders (ulcers, hypertension, heart disease).

Ninth Commandment

- **Thou Shalt Feed thyself/Thou Shalt Not poison Thy Body**

  Eat a balanced diet.

Avoid high calorie foods that are high in fats & sugar. Don't depend on drugs &/or alcohol. Caffeine will keep you awake but also makes it harder to concentrate. A 20" walk offers an option

Tenth Commandment

- **Enjoy Thyself**

    It has been shown that happier people tend to live longer, have less physical problem & are more productive. Look for the humor in life. You are very special & deserve the best treatment from yourself.