



Stress Management and Communication skills

INTRODUCTION

Boarding Working Group, Malta, 29 January 2020



Topics to be discussed:

- 1) Stress management and resilience
- 2) How to deal with people rescued at the sea
- 3) Interagency teams and leadership in international environment

Stress

- Stress is our body's response to pressures from a situation or life events
- Stress is a normal reaction to an abnormal situation
- Stress is necessary for human development and growth
- Stress is initially positive, but too much is unhealthy

Types of stress during Frontex missions:

- 1) Daily occupational stress
- 2) International missions - traps
- 3) Acute (high) stress

Workplace/occupational stress

- Workplace stress - emotional and physical demands related to your work/duty.
- In LE - the net result of many stressors (fear of death, fear of failure, uncertainty, worry about what is happening back home, and the many physical and mental demands of duties)



Cumulative stress

- Everybody experiences basic stress in daily situations. Our bodies usually cope well with short-term pressures, but too much stress for too long can make us unwell.
- Cumulative stress is the result of stress that occurs too often, lasts too long and is too severe.
- In these circumstances, stress may lead to exhaustion and other manifestations so that a person is unable to cope with the amount of stress he/she is experiencing.

Common symptoms of long-term stress

- emotional changes: anxiety, fear, anger, frustration, apathy and sadness, emotional instability
- cognitive symptoms: memory and concentration problems, automatic answers and little depth, possibility of uncontrolled reactions, reduced ability to store and catalog information, limited skills to plan and "think ahead"
- behavioural symptoms: irritation, indecisiveness, inflexibility, withdrawal or aggression, sleep disturbance and daytime fatigue, helplessness, low energy

Common symptoms of long-term stress

- eating too much „comfort foods” full of fat and sugar and/or increasing addictions (cigarettes, alcohol) or loss of appetite
- negative changes in social relations with family, friends and co-workers, social withdrawal
- physical symptoms of long-term stress: weakness of an immune system, increasing the risk of coughs and colds, back pain, muscle pain, headache, stomach and bowel problems, increased risk of heart disease, getting better takes longer.

Law enforcement culture

- Respond in operational or survival mode
- Highly motivated
- Task oriented
- Resilient, mentally healthy
- Action oriented - quick decisions
- Practical orientation - solve problems
- Avoid and compartmentalize emotional response = in control!
- Always ready for danger
- Maintain control of chaotic situations

Sara Gilman, MS, LMFT

Stress factors in working field

- Not being able to intervene in decisions that affect one's work responsibilities
- Incomprehensible and unrealistic demand for services
- Lack of effective communication and methods of resolving conflicts between workers and management
- Lack of safety at work
- Working time too long
- Excessive time spent outside the home and family
- Compensation not in line with the level of responsibility

Law enforcement



Additional environmental stress factors for law enforcement:

- occupational "suspiciousness" and "administrative betrayal"



- decisions under the assessment of management, public opinion, prosecutor, Court, press

Sara Gilman, MS, LMFT

Stress is manageable!

We cannot eliminate stress, but we can learn to manage it to our life

How can you cope with your daily stress?



Coping strategies to increase our resilience to stress

- **Healthy work and life habits**
- **Task management**

Night shifts

- Interfere with natural sleep rhythms
- Increase risk of heart attack
- Increase risk of depression
- Change your metabolism (risk of gastrointestinal problems and of imbalance in hormone production)
- Increase risk of obesity and diabetes
- Suppress Melatonin
- Deprive your body of Vitamin D



Night shifts

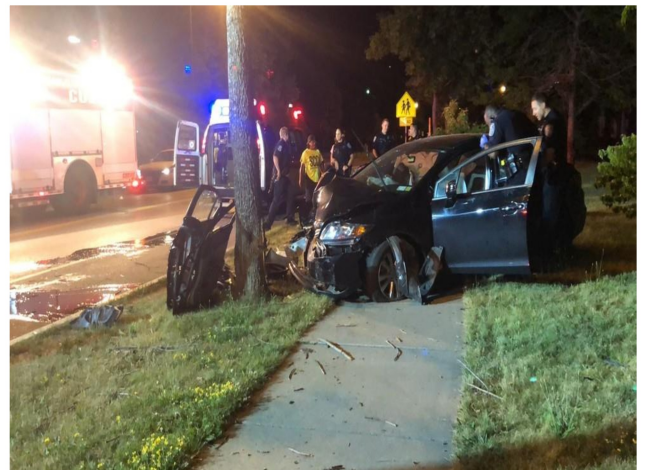
- slower reaction time, thinking, responding and problem solving
- reduced concentration and attention
- harder to focus and stay on task
- higher risk of errors
- increased risk of workplace injury
- Impaired motor skills,
- lapses in judgment
- decision making interfered
- higher stress level

People often misjudge their own sleepiness, believing that they are alert and capable of making good decisions, when in fact their judgment is impaired.

Microsleep

People who are very sleepy can actually experience something called a “microsleep,” which is a brief occurrence of falling asleep.

A microsleep is involuntary and lasts just a few seconds.



It can be very dangerous!

Sleep inertia

Grogginess, the period of hypo-vigilance, impaired cognitive and behavioural performance that we experience upon waking.



An on-call officer jolted awake by a phone or pager may experience sleep inertia, within the first 3 minutes of waking, decision-making ability can be as low as 51% of this person's best decision making ability.

Decision-making ability may stay 20% below optimum performance 30 minutes after awaking

Sexton, 2008, p. 56

Night shifts

Enlist the help of those you live with - your family's cooperation is critical. You will also need their help in establishing quiet hours so you can get the sleep you need to function at night.

Avoid Caffeine - it stays in your system for hours after you feel the effects, and it can prevent you from sleeping well after work. Drink water whenever possible.

Avoid Alcohol - it can make you fall asleep faster, but it also reduces rapid-eye-movement (REM) sleep. REM sleep is the restorative phase of your sleep cycle, so if you interfere with that by consuming alcohol, you interfere with your body's ability to repair itself.

Night shifts - piece of advice

Get some sunlight when you're not working - try to spend at least 30 minutes in the sun.

Sleep in the good environment

- Keep your room cool (below 19 C°).
- Make your room as dark and quiet as possible.
- Consider wearing a sleep mask and earplugs.
- Turn off all electronics two hours before heading to bed (this blue light causes your body to produce less melatonin).

Night shifts - piece of advice

Avoid nicotine before bed - it is a natural stimulant. You may feel like you need a cigarette before bed to relax, but it's all in your head. When you introduce nicotine into your body, your heart rate increases, your breathing becomes faster and shallower, and your blood pressure goes up.

Eat A Healthy Diet:

- If you work the night shift consistently, try to eat the same way you would during the day even though you may feel like consuming less.
- Eat frequent light meals and healthy snacks in order to avoid the drowsiness that comes with rich, heavy meals.
 - Similarly, choose foods that are easy to digest
- Drink plenty of water but stop several hours before bed

Night shifts - piece of advice

Nap During Breaks

- You may not need to during the day shift, but taking a nap during the night shift can become essential to helping you work safely.
- A short 20-minute nap can restore energy levels and keep you alert and vigilant throughout the night.



Deployment to Frontex missions

- Deployment to international missions and operations is usually a great professional experience. It gives you a unique chance to learn new things, to share and exchange your knowledge with officers from other Member States and to refresh your mind from your daily routine.



Deployment to Frontex missions



- Prepare yourself properly to your mission to minimise stress caused by demands related to your deployment.



Prior to the mission

- Prepare yourself to the deployment - familiarise yourself with local conditions in a country of your deployment (food, currency, local transportation, access to medical help, laws, customs and culture etc.)
- Read documents provided by your authority and Frontex prior to the mission (information learned in advance helps you to prepare yourself to your new duties and challenges you can face during deployment).
- Complete necessary trainings and pre-deployment procedures.
- Take care of your health: check that you have insurance, complete vaccinations, buy supply of medicine if necessary.
- Try to complete packing and preparations early so that the last day and evening can be family time.

During the mission

- Take part in an initial briefing with local authorities and Frontex staff as well as meetings and debriefings organised during your mission.
- Follow carefully security/emergency procedures provided by host MS and Frontex.
- Remember about sanitary rules you should follow in your operational area.
- Keep your awareness of local working conditions and migratory situation on the spot.

You are experienced professional but local conditions can differ from your home daily work. Please, be aware of that. Don't be afraid to talk to your local coordinator/FSO/team leader/commander in case of any doubts relating to your duties during deployment.

During the mission

- Keep your healthy habits - sports, exercising, healthy food.
- Avoid excessive use of alcohol.
- Avoid cigarettes and substances.
- Use breathing and mindfulness exercises regularly.
- Take an advantage of social interactions with your colleagues/team members - talk with them about your deployment experiences. You all share the same deployment conditions and understand each other's experiences the best.



During the mission

- Keep in touch with your family/relatives/friends in your home country as well as your organization; it will make your reunion to daily life smoother.
- Try to keep balance between your shifts and off-duty time if possible.
- Keep yourself aware of sense of your duty and team accomplishment.



During the mission

Be open minded and patient!

Working in European environment with officers from other Member States creates

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED],

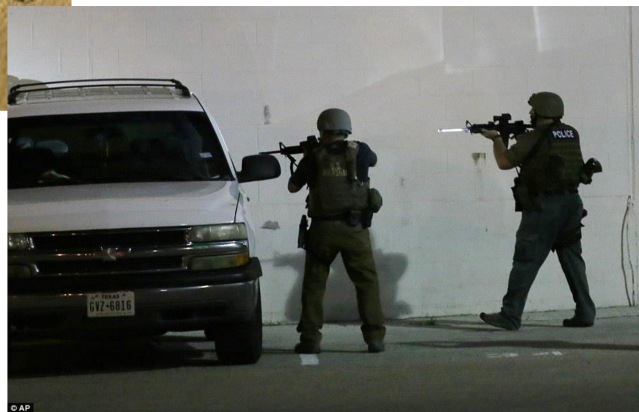
positive approach.



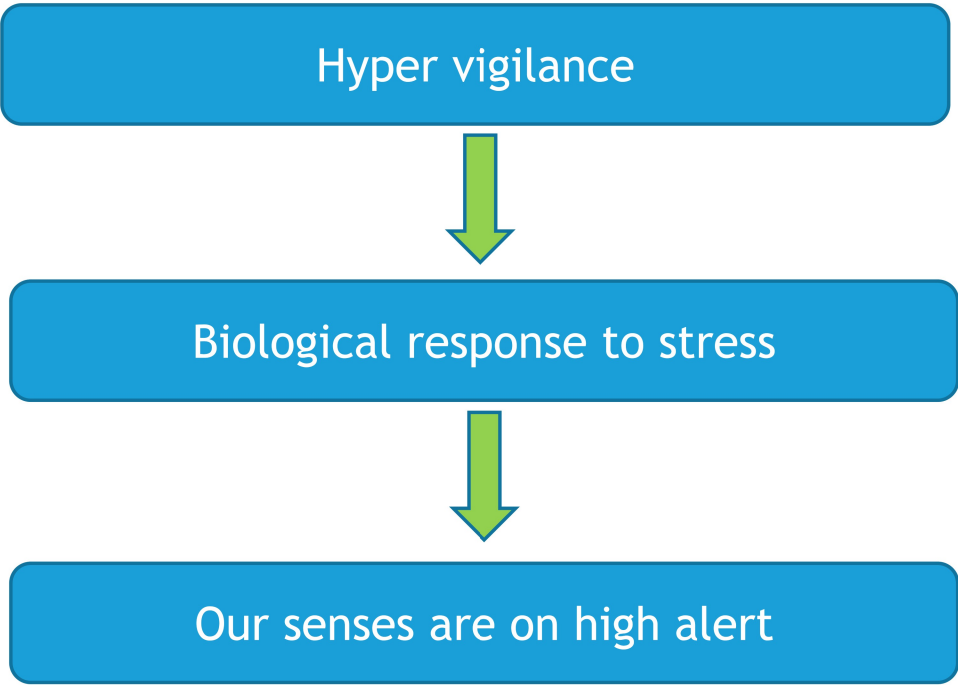
How can you deal with stress after highly stressful shift?

- Try to come back to your natural sleep pattern as quickly as possible.
- Try to come back to your healthy habits (healthy diet, sports).
- Take time to rest and reflect.
- **Talk to your colleagues/buddies about your experiences - social support is the most significant resilience factor against stress both before and after the exposure to the stressful situations.**
- Be aware of your stress symptoms. Don't ignore them. If they don't remit, seek for professional help.

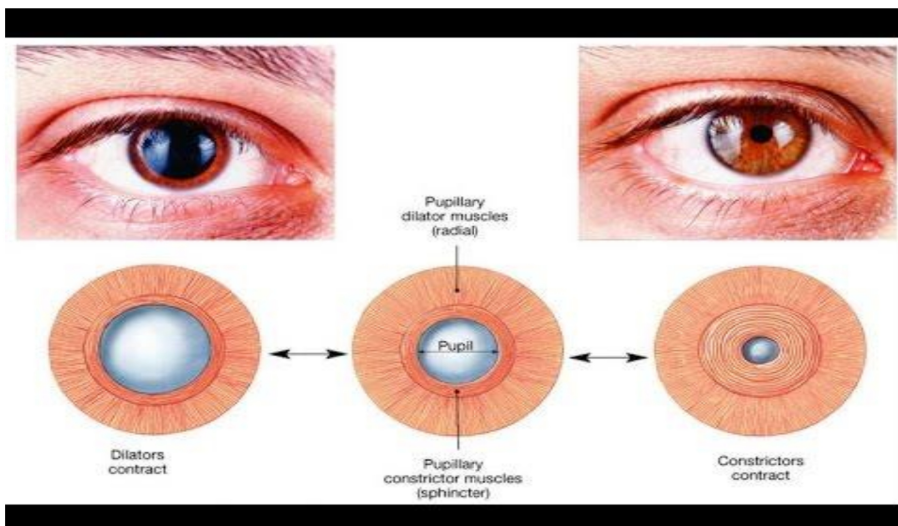
Acute stress - immediate, short-term



Heartbeat	Condition
60-80 (100)	normal
115	Deterioration fine motor skills
115 -145	Optimal for combat behaviour
145	Deterioration complex motor skills
145-175	Deterioration cognitive performance, perceptual distortions of view, listening and other senses
175-220	Irrational behaviour, black out



Primitive areas of our brain shape our perception - pupil size = better vision



BUT

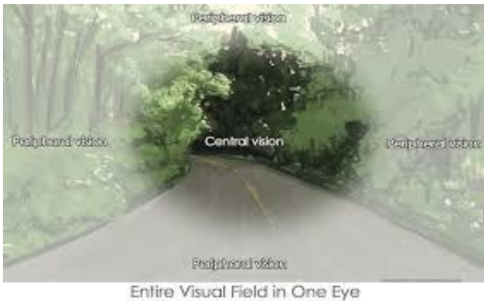
Stress related hormones increase
arousal of the senses

but

Brain struggles to process all the
information coming in



Perception



Adrenaline



Peripheral vision loss

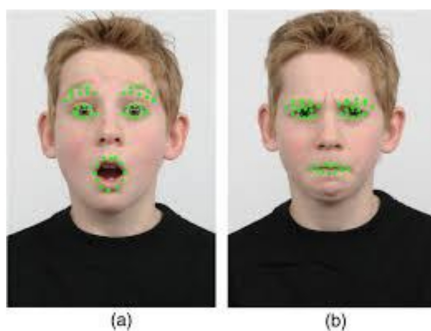


Tunnel vision

Perception - possible symptoms



Myope



Smaller capabilities
in facial expression
recognition

How the body responds to acute stress?



Stress severe enough
>
The hearing receptor
in the brain may shut
off completely.

Police officers report that
they are unable to recall a
number of shots because
they didn't hear them

How the body responds to acute stress?

Peripheral parts of our body (arms/legs) receive less blood and oxygen



How the body responds to acute stress?

Peripheral parts of our body (arms/legs) receive less blood and oxygen

Muscle tonus and feeling in your fingers - disrupted

Cold hands, sense of touch deprivation, sweating



How the body responds to acute stress?

- Injured people can ignore pain and injury - noradrenaline
- Time slowing or speeding up
- Memory loss or remembering details





Communication skills



“People are fundamentally all the same”

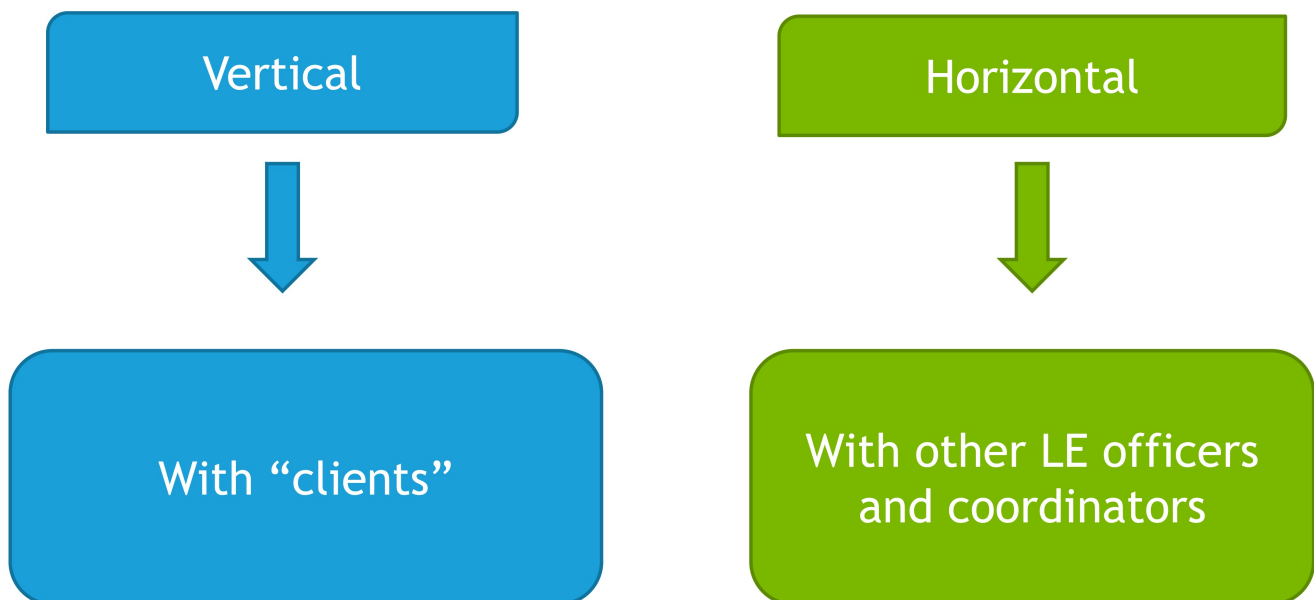
YES

“Isn't every individual different?”

YES

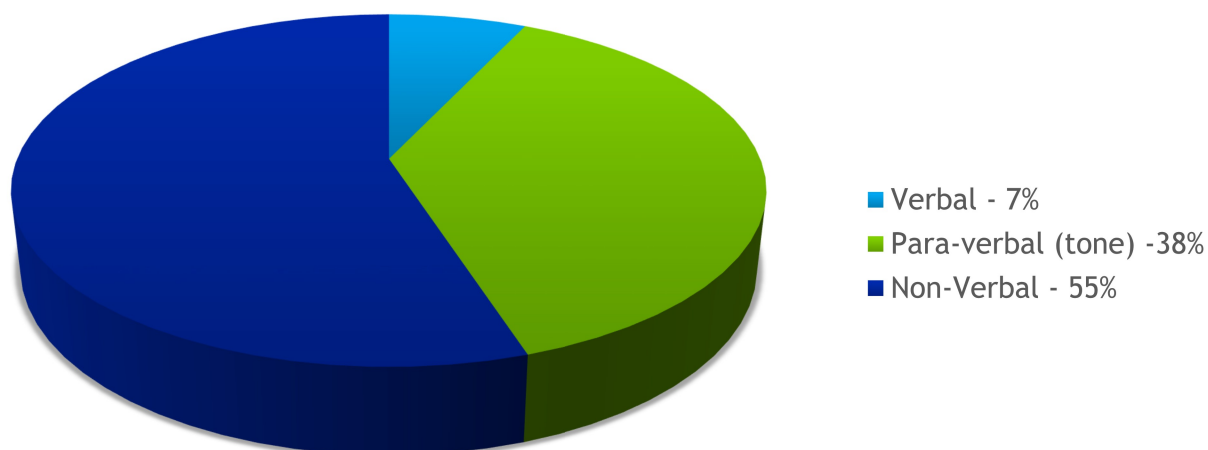
but
the culture has an impact on how we see the world.
It can be a great value for every team!

Interoperability



Types od communication

Communication



Non -verbal communication - gestures!

Thumbs up

Approval for some cultures while offensive for other cultures (Middle East, Asia)



Non-verbal communication - gestures!

OK

- For English-speaking world - “everything is fine”
- Divers’ sign - OK
- In Latin America and France it's considered as an insulting sign
- Australia - it means zero
- Germany - a job well done
- Japan - money
- Middle East - evil eye - negative connotation



Non -verbal communication - gestures!

STOP

When one raises the hand up with the palm facing towards the opposite person, it means that an authoritative figure is asking one to 'Stop'. If the fingers are pushing down, it indicates that the person to sit down or settle.



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Is it easy in Europe?

Nothing to Declare / Rien à déclarer (2010) -1:50
Trailer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=piQPaxlZWu4>

Organisational culture

Organizational culture - the underlying beliefs, assumptions, values and ways of interacting that contribute to the unique social and psychological environment of an organization.



Communication styles

Some cultures prefer direct communication (Low-Context) while other cultures prefer indirect communication (High Context)

Direct communication cultures (Low-Context)	Indirect communication cultures (High-Context)
Concrete, explicit communication style, Precise, simple and clear	Implicit communication style, sophisticated, nuanced and layered
Verbal communication prevails	Body language, facial expressions important
Written messages/contracts/documentation	Written documentation less necessary
Reception is appreciated if it helps clarify the communication	Message often implied but not directly expressed

Low-
Context

High-
Context



Germany, Switzerland, Austria
New Zealand
USA (mainly Anglo-Saxon ancestry), Canada
Scandinavia, Finland
UK, Australia
Benelux
Other American cultures
Slavic Countries
Central Europe
Korea, South-East Asia
India and Indian sub-continent
Arabic and African countries
Latin America
Italy, Spain, Portugal, France and other Mediterranean countries
China
Japan

Based on: Morden, 1999, Usunier, 2000, Kotabe and Helsen, 2001

Communication styles - traps

If you are from:

- **high-context culture** - you may perceive a low-context culture communicator as inappropriately stating the obvious or as condescending and patronising
- **low-context culture** - you may perceive a high-cont communicator as secretive, lacking transparency or communicate effectively



Based on: Erin Meyer, The Culture Map

Communication styles - traps

You may be considered a top-flight communicator in your home culture, but what works at home may not work so well with people from other cultures.

Paradox: the more educated you are the more extreme version of your culture you represent.

Example!

sending e-mails: in US/UK the receiver usually answers promptly with sth like “I got your message and will get back to you on Friday”.

In Spain, Italy they (more often) answer on Friday with a completed task

Communication styles - tips

When you work with:

- high context colleagues: ask for clarification, read body language
- low-context culture colleagues: be as clear and specific as possible, after a phone-call write an e-mail with main recaps.

Multicultural teams need low-context processes!

The best moment to develop the processes is when the team is forming, before miscommunication takes place.

Written form reduces confusion but make sure high-context team members accept it.

Based on: Erin Meyer, The Culture Map

Leadership/hierarchy and power

Egalitarian	Hierarchical
Distance between boss and a team is low	Distance between boss and a team is high
The best boss is a facilitator between equals	The best boss is a strong director who leads from the front
Communication often skips hierarchical lines	Communication follows set hierarchical lines
“PM rides a bike”	Status symbols are important

Based on: Erin Meyer, The Culture Map

Differences visible also in naturally hierarchical institutions as LE and Army!



Thank you!

Your comments and remarks are much appreciated!

