

# DEVELOPING BASELINE:

BUILDING RESILIENCE



Published by:  
Headquarters Joint Forces New Zealand  
2 Seddul Bahr Road  
UPPER HUTT

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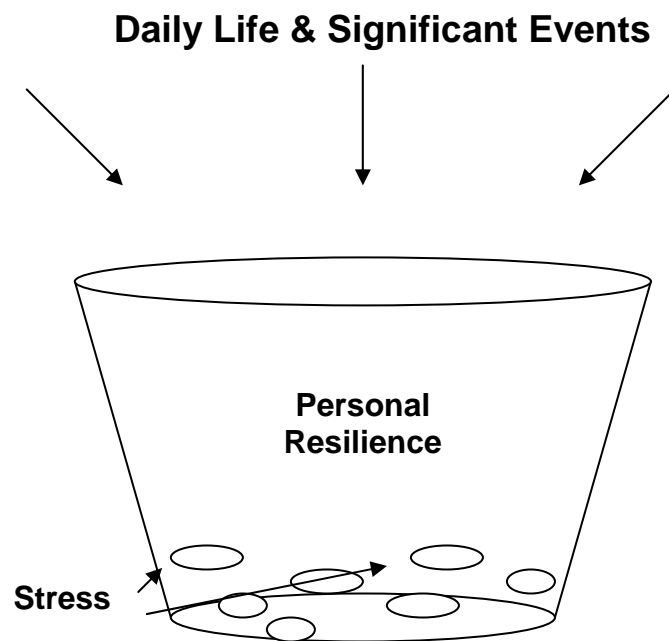
## Notes ...

“What are your current thoughts about the coming deployment?”

# BUCKET MODEL OF RESILIENCE

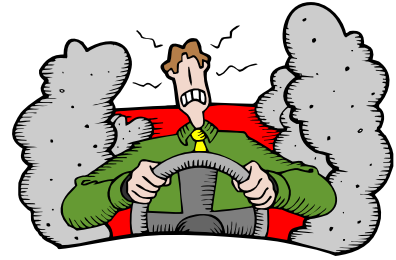
*In this model your bucket (resilience) is increased by things that help you cope. These are things that you enjoy and find relaxing. There are also holes in your bucket that drain your resilience, these are stressors.*

When doing this exercise think about your life at present. Then on the diagram below, identify the things that increase your resilience. Complete the diagram by identifying the stressors that drain your bucket. For example, for some people talking with others and gaining social support increases their resilience and a potential stressor would be the possible isolation of being deployed as the only Kiwi on a base.



# The Stress Response

To understand stress, it is helpful to know what stress is. Basically, stress is anything that **activates the stress response** in you. For example, for some of you that could be public speaking, sitting an exam, deploying overseas or dealing with work pressures. The stress response can be activated following one large event like an accident or by a build up of smaller events over time.



The **stress response** is the set of **physiological changes** that occur in your body when the brain perceives that there is some sort of threat or danger, or that your coping skills are being stretched! In response to this, your brain tells your body to switch on the stress response or “**flight or fight**” response, in order to survive.

While the stress response is useful when the source of stress is a physical one and we need to respond in a physical way, in today's society, the majority of our stress comes from other things (e.g.: preparing to deploy overseas or dealing with work pressures). Unfortunately, this means the physiological nature of the stress response is not actually that appropriate in many of the stressful situations we find ourselves in.

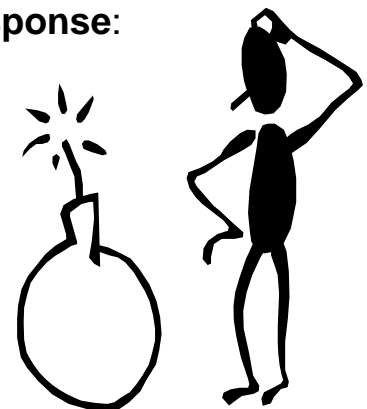
When it comes to stress however, no matter what the source or response needed, the **same** reaction is triggered. Whether the stress response occurs after one big incident like a near miss car accident or as a result of the build up of lots of small things like work hassles, relationship hassles, money problems and whether the source of stress is physical or ‘mental’, the physiological response is the same.

## Positive and Negative Stress:

We can all recall times of stress in our lives – often a reaction to events that are negative (loss of job, financial trouble, workload) but can also occur in response to things that are positive (birth of a child, new job, planning a wedding or just heading away on holiday). Often it is ‘change’ that brings about stress – we perceive it as challenging and often demanding. However how we react to change, whether it be in a positive or negative manner, is crucial to how stressed we become – this is one aspect we have some control over.

There are three main characteristics of the **Stress Response**:

- Your body gears up to produce **Extra Energy**,
- It prepares for **Damage Control**, and
- It needs to be a **Fast Response**.



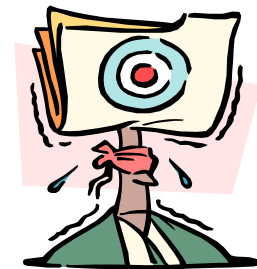
(Remember: You are preparing for a “*Fight or Flight*” response.)

## In order to provide **Extra Energy**:

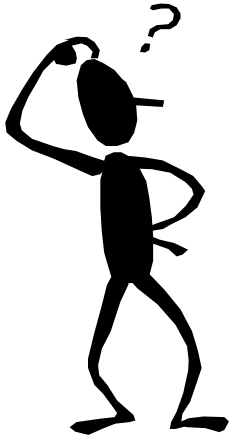
- **Blood flow is diverted** away from where it's not needed for "fight or flight" (e.g. your stomach), to where it is needed (e.g. your major muscle groups). Blood flow also changes to your brain. It goes away from your thinking areas to the areas involved with breathing, heart beat, moving - things important to your immediate survival. (*Think about a really heated argument you've had & how, about an hour later, you suddenly remembered exactly what you wanted to say & how you should have said it. The same thing with exams when people say "my mind just went blank".*)
- **Digestive system shuts down** as you don't need to be digesting food in order to fight or run.
- **Sugar and insulin** are released into the blood stream. Sugar gives short-term energy and insulin helps regulate the sugar levels. At the same time, cholesterol is also released into your system for longer term use.
- **Heart rate increases** to get the blood to flow around your system more efficiently.
- **Respiration increases** to get more oxygen in and carbon dioxide out faster.
- **Adrenaline** is released. This is the "supercharger" that gets things going quickly.

## In order to provide **Damage Control**:

- **Cortisone is released.** This steps your immune system down one level. When your body is dealing with a perceived threat, you don't want to be distracted with things like infections, inflammation & allergies. The release of cortisone deals with these.
- **Blood flow is redirected.** Initially when someone's stressed or angry, their skin goes red; blood is pumped around more efficiently (increased heart rate) and there is more oxygen in it (higher respiration rate) making it appear redder. When they become more stressed or angry however, the skin goes white. The blood has gone away from surface capillaries so that if you're hurt, you won't bleed as much.
- **Natural pain killers are released.** Beta Endorphin, (naturally produced morphine), is released into your system. Again, if you're hurt, you won't be held up by injuries as the painkillers will diminish the impact. (e.g. when you sustain an injury during a sports game but don't notice it until after the game ~ pain killers were released during the game when you were 'hyped up' and then stopped when you relaxed.)
- **Clotting agents are released**, so that if you are injured you won't lose too much blood and you will be able to carry on.



And finally, all of the things described above happen **simultaneously** and make you extremely alert and ready for action. The stress response needs to happen quickly. We don't think about it - it's like a reflex reaction!



## So, What's Wrong with the Stress Response?

The stress response is designed to protect you, it's designed to help you and it's designed to be useful. It **is** when we need a physical response. The problems occur when it happens in situations when running away or fighting is not appropriate; eg, an office environment where you can't run away from or fight your boss, sitting an exam or deploying overseas.

In these sorts of situations the activation of the stress response can make things worse and the long term activation of the stress response can make things worse and the long term activation of the stress response can do permanent damage to the body such as:

- Because *cortisone* *steps* the immune system down, under stress or just after periods of stress, you are more likely to get colds, the flu and other illnesses. Most of us experience this when we work hard all year, decide to go on leave – and then get sick!
- When large quantities of *painkillers* are released, there is a danger of depleting the supply and also getting tension headaches, other aches and old injuries playing up after a period of sustained stress. This is when your body is replenishing your natural painkiller supply.
- *Clotting agents*, combined with *cholesterol* being dumped into your bloodstream over long periods of time, can cause blood clots; deposits in the blood vessels, hardening of the arteries and even heart attacks in the extreme.
- One of the consequences of the *digestive system shutting down* is a very antisocial one ~ food sits and rots in your stomach (rotting food produces gas!). There are also more physically harmful consequences such as diarrhoea and in the long term, ulcers.
- *Sugar and insulin* - when people are under stress, they often feel like eating sweet things like chocolate. The more sugar you eat, the more your body will demand as sugar sets up an initial 'high' and then a 'low'. The long-term effect can be diabetes.
- *Increased heart rate and thickening of the blood* can also have serious long-term health consequences such as high blood pressure, blood clots and in the extreme - heart attacks.

So, in addition to the unpleasant feeling of being under stress, there are also short and long term health consequences of being under stress. So that is why it is important to learn how to **recognise and manage your stress** so you can reduce the potentially negative impact of stress response.



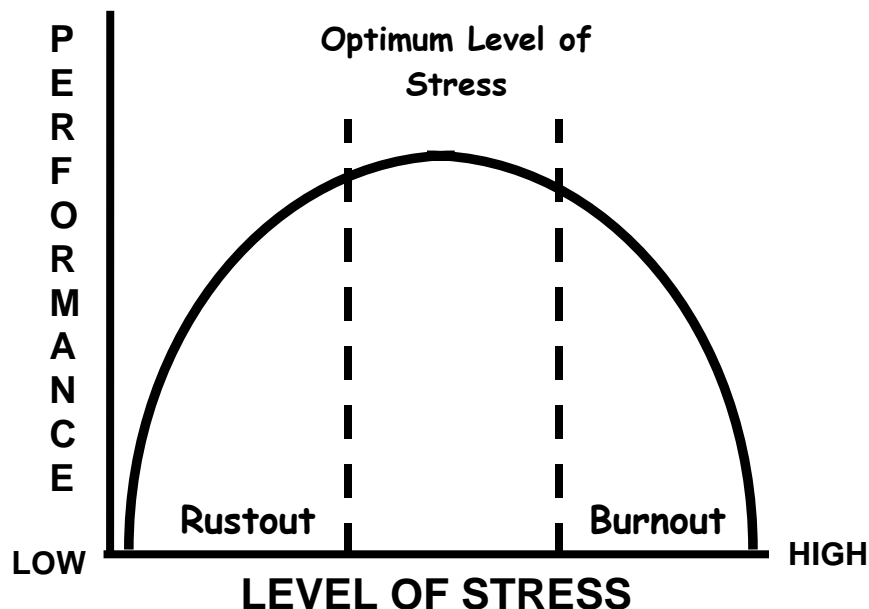
# Stress and Performance



One of the other very important features of stress is the **effect that stress has on performance**. Your performance, especially on deployment, will be critical, so it is important that your stress levels are at an **optimum level**.

Looking at the graph below, if **stress** is very **low**, **performance** is generally **low**. People can become bored, fatigued, frustrated, dissatisfied and non-productive. In other words, they can start to “**rust out**”. If **stress** is extremely **high**, **performance can also suffer**, as can health in the long term. People can become irrational in their problem solving ability; they may feel exhausted and suffer from low-self-esteem or start to “**burn out**”.

## Stress & Performance



As you can see from this graph there is an **optimum level of stress** for high, effective performance. People performing at this level are usually at their **best** - they are generally creative, solving problems rationally and logically, progressing and feeling satisfied.

However, this optimum level is **different for everyone** and you need to establish for yourself where this is and be aware that it will be different for those you are working and living with.

So, we do need a certain amount of stress in our lives. That's why we **manage stress**, rather than doing away with it altogether.

# Stress Symptom Checklists

The following pages contain checklists of physical, emotional and cognitive/behavioural signs of stress. These checklists are not exhaustive; that is they do not contain every single possible stress symptom for every single person. They are, however, comprehensive in that they draw on information from a number of different sources.

We may all experience some of these symptoms some of the time under particular conditions. They are induced by stress. Most of the time most of us recover from them quite easily and quickly. However, the more of these problems we have, the longer they last, and the slower we are to recover from them, the more likely it is that our stress is becoming chronic.

## Use of the Checklists

Scan the lists at regular intervals, e.g. every week or few weeks. Tick the symptoms that you feel apply to you. As we all have some of these symptoms some of the time, it is generally the presence of a number of these symptoms, at the same time, that suggests that we are suffering from stress. For example, having diarrhoea alone does not mean we are suffering from stress - it may be a result of diet or a virus. However, having diarrhoea in addition to a number of other symptoms suggests we may be suffering from stress.

There is no cut-off point or set number of symptoms that should alert you to your state of stress. Rather it is a matter of recognising what is normal for you and then being aware of any changes. Generally a greater **number** of ticks either down a column and/or across a row mean a higher than usual number of stress symptoms and/or more persistent stress symptoms. It is likely that you are suffering from stress if this is the case.

If you suspect you are suffering from stress, **do something about it**. Choose one, or more, of the stress management techniques introduced in this booklet and **use them**.

It is very important not to presume that all symptoms are a result of stress and ignore the fact that there may be something medically wrong. For example, if you experience chest pains, get cleared by a doctor before treating it as a stress symptom. **Seek medical advice first**.

It is a good idea to make photocopies of the Checklists so that they can be used over long periods

<i>Stress Symptom</i>	2/6	5/6	9/6	16/6	23/6	30/6
Headaches				✓		
Increased muscle tension	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Diarrhoea		✓	✓	✓		
Increased alcohol consumption	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Feeling unable to cope				✓		
Sleep problems	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

In this example, the fact that alcohol consumption, sleep problems and muscle tension have been persistent over time suggests that this person is under stress and needs to do something about it. The 2/6 to 16/6 period seems to have been a particularly stressful time. Stress management strategies applied at this time may well have not only reduced its impact at the time, but helped prevent the cumulative effects for the future.

# Physical Signs of Stress ...

Date

<b>Stress Symptom</b>															
Increased heart rate															
Aware of heart beating															
Heart palpitations															
Increased blood pressure															
Cold hands and feet															
Over-breathing, hyperventilation															
Rapid shallow breathing															
Breathlessness															
Dry mouth															
Lump in throat															
Stuttering															
Queasy stomach, nausea															
Indigestion															
Diarrhoea															
Constipation															
Flatulence															
Increased frequency of urination															
Discomfort in upper abdomen															
Headaches (particularly those that feel like a tight band around your head)															
Increased muscle tension															
Stiffness of neck and shoulders															
Clenching of fists and jaw															
Cramps															
General muscular aches and pains															
Muscle twitches or 'tics'															
Chest pains															
Feeling of heaviness in the chest															
Lower back ache															
Increased sweating, especially palms and upper lip															
Shaking															
Tremors of hands, legs and arms															
Hot flushed feeling															
Feeling faint															
Tired, fatigue, exhausted															
Sleep difficulties															
Field of vision decrease															
Increased minor illnesses e.g. colds															
Not able to rest															
Not able to wind down															

# Emotional Signs of Stress ...

Date

<b>Stress Symptoms</b>														
Wound up, up-tight, tense														
More easily startled														
Excessive worry														
Anxious or fearful feelings														
A vague but urgent feeling of unease or dread (as if you are expecting something wrong, but don't know what)														
A feeling of being very low & dulled														
Depressed														
A shut down in all emotions except anger and irritation														
No ups and downs														
All joy, laughter & pleasure have dried up														
Active love & caring have lessened or disappeared														
Tears seem frequently near for no reasons, tearful														
Distressed, upset														
Feelings of helplessness & hopelessness														
Feeling unable to cope														
Feelings of inadequacy, low self esteem														
Loss of interest in appearance, health, diet, sex														
Low motivation														
Frustrated, bored														
Impatient														
Short temper														
Restless														
Normal workloads &/or pressures seem excessive														
Intrusive thoughts														
Feeling as if you have to keep your emotions & feelings in check or else you will break down														
Feeling as if you have aged														

# Cognitive & Behavioural Signs of Stress ...

Date

Stress Symptom														
Forgetfulness														
Lack of creativity														
Difficulty concentrating														
Difficulty making decisions														
Difficulty in starting to do things														
Procrastinating														
Difficulty prioritising														
Not getting things done														
Doing more than one task at once														
Failing to finish tasks before moving to the next														
Having so much to do and not knowing where to start so ending up doing nothing or going from task to task and not completing anything														
Can't settle down to tasks														
Making silly mistakes														
Thinking problems over and over														
Always rushing														
Nail biting, finger drumming, foot tapping, etc.														
Loss of interest in, or contact with, others														
Accident prone														
Increased smoking														
Increased alcohol consumption														
Change in appetite														
Change in sex drive														
Sexual problems														

# Recognising Stress in Other People

The philosophy behind recognising stress in other people, in some respects, is very simple.

Any sort of **change** in their behaviour, that can't be explained, is cause for concern.

It could be a change in:

- \*\* **Temperament:** a usually easy going person may become difficult to be with. Laughing, joking and fun disappear and people can seem lifeless, dull and apathetic.
- \*\* **Standards:** someone who usually takes pride in their appearance may let things slip. Or someone who usually likes to perform tasks to their best ability may produce sloppy work.
- \*\* **Interests:** some people who had a range of interests may be completely disinterested in prior interests. In addition, their range of interests may narrow to include only those things that are causing them stress. Often, lack of interest is evident in appearance, health, diet and sex and this lack of interest can create further problems.
- \*\* **Decision making ability:** some people may make uncharacteristically rash decisions. Others may be very rigid in that they stick to a decision even if it needs to be adapted to changing circumstances. Others may vacillate between alternatives and some people may have so much trouble with even very simple decisions that they try to get other people to make their decisions for them.
- \*\* **Pace:** some people become *extremely active*, trying to do lots of things - they become almost "hyper". Others slow down and even though they may think they are producing and working they achieve very little. There is an obvious slowing down mentally and physically and it is as if the ageing process has taken over early.
- \*\* **Control:** some people exhibit less control over their ***behaviour and emotions*** when they are under stress and tend to play hard (perhaps even getting into trouble) and/or being more expressive and emotionally. Others are over controlled and try to keep their emotions and feelings in check.
- \*\* **Memory:** some people have problems with their memory when they are under stress. They are often absent-minded and forgetful especially of those things that are outside their narrowed field of focus.
- \*\* **Susceptibility to illness:** someone who is usually very healthy may seem to be sick all of the time or complain of minor illnesses. This is where the physical symptoms checklist may be helpful for use with other people. They may complain frequently of headaches or other symptoms from the checklist. They may seem to pick up every bug that is going around or they may go to the doctors more frequently.
- \*\* **Personality:** some *usually sociable people withdraw* and spend less time with other people than they normally do. Other people go the other way and become more socially oriented, wasting no excuse to go out. People, who may not usually get angry very easily, may become angry for trivial reasons. Others may be irritable much of the time.

# Stress Management Principles

**Find something that you enjoy and that suits you.** If you don't like it, you're NOT going to stick with it!! If you're someone who hates running, don't pick going for a run as your form of stress management. Physical exercise is good as it 'burns up' the stress response, but do something like going for a walk, yoga, golf (a driving range is a good stress release!), etc if you don't like running.

**Find something that fits your current lifestyle and possible limitations** (e.g., limitations in theatre). Think about the limitations that may be placed on you either because of the environment you're deploying to, or maybe because at home you're going to be the one and only parent! Think of the things you do currently for a stress release: are you going to be able to do them when you're away, or when your partner / family member deploys? If not, start thinking now about other things you could do for stress relief.

**Practice techniques before you need them.** This relates especially to the stress management techniques in this booklet. One of the best 'first aid' techniques is a breathing exercise. The stress response means our heart rate, blood pressure and breathing rates all go up. While most of us don't have conscious control over our heart rate, blood pressure, etc, we do have control over our breathing. If we can bring our breathing back to normal, we can 'trick' the stress response into slowing down or 'turning off'. Because all of these increase simultaneously, bringing our breathing down will bring our heart rate, blood pressure, etc down too. To make the most of them, you need to practise techniques such as this before you need them!!

**Be patient and take time to change.** Don't expect the stress or stress symptoms to go away overnight just because you start applying some stress management. Often it's been over a relatively long period of time that our stress reactions have built up, so we have to acknowledge that they will take a bit of time to disappear too.

**Approach stress management one step at a time.** Change one thing at a time and only try one stress management technique at a time. Often stress is as a result of a build up of a lot of little things so you don't want to then start 'throwing' a whole lot of other new things into the mix!! Try one stress management technique, persist with it for a few days or a week and if it's not working, that's OK, try another one.

**Try to maintain as much consistency in your life.** Get into a routine as quickly as possible so you feel you have some sense of control over your life. Human beings tend to find change a stressful thing to deal with. When you've got one big change, such as a deployment, try to maintain as much consistency as possible in all other areas. For both people deploying and those staying at home, establish your new routines as early as possible, then stick to these. Routines provide familiarity, security and stability.

**Enlist the support of others** as they can be one of the best stress management tools you will have. Other people who are going through what you are, will understand and empathise with your situation. Old adage of "a problem shared, is a problem halved" is very true!!

**Confront stressors with a positive attitude.** Your attitude in situations will often determine whether it is stressful or not. Try to approach things as challenges not problems.

# Stress Management Techniques

## Exercise



*“When the body is tired, exercise the mind ...  
when the mind is tired, exercise the body.”*

The best type of exercise for stress management is exercise, which conditions your heart and lungs, but basically any exercise is good. It's best to choose something that you enjoy. With regard to the stress response; exercise is helpful in using up the adrenaline and other chemicals produced by the response.

### **Benefits of Exercise (from the National Heart Foundation of NZ):**

These are the benefits often experienced by people who exercise regularly:

#### **FEEL GOOD . . .**

- ◆ gives you more energy
- ◆ helps in coping with stress
- ◆ improves your self-image
- ◆ increases resistance to fatigue
- ◆ helps counter anxiety and depression
- ◆ helps you to relax and feel less tense
- ◆ provides an easy way to share an activity with friends or family & an opportunity to meet new friends

#### **LOOKING BETTER . . .**

- ◆ tones your muscles
- ◆ burns off calories to help lose extra weight or stay at your ideal weight
- ◆ helps control the appetite

#### **DOING BETTER . . .**

- ◆ often contributes to more productivity at work
- ◆ increases your capacity for physical work
- ◆ helps increase muscle strength

### **Potential Risks of Exercise:**

- ◆ Muscle/joint injury - especially *if a warm-up programme is not followed*
- ◆ Heat exhaustion/heat stroke - *if precautions are not taken* on hot days
- ◆ Aggravation of existing or unknown heart problems

### **Types of Exercise:**

Exercises that **improve the condition of your heart and lungs** must have **three key characteristics**. These activities must be:

**BRISK:** *raising the heart and breathing rates enough to make you sweat*  
**SUSTAINED:** *done at least 15 to 30 minutes without interruption*  
**REGULAR:** *repeated at least three times per week*



The following table describes three different types of activities and how they affect your heart:

A.	B.		C.
Do Condition Heart & Lungs ...	Can Condition ...		Do Not Condition ...
Jogging	Walking	Bicycling	Golf (on foot or by cart)
Hiking (uphill)	Swimming	Handball	Bowls
Jumping Rope	Rugby	Soccer	Baseball
Running on the spot	Basketball	Hockey	Volleyball
Stationary Cycling	Rugby League	Squash	Softball
Rowing	Callisthenics		
	Tennis		

**Column A:** These exercises are naturally very vigorous. They need to be done **for at least 15 minutes, three times a week**. Then they will condition your heart and lungs, burn off a lot of calories and give you many other benefits as mentioned above.

**Column B:** These activities are moderately vigorous but can be excellent conditioners if done briskly **for at least 30 minutes, three times a week**. When done briskly, they give the same benefits as those activities in column A.

**Column C:** these activities by nature are not vigorous or sustained. They still have certain benefits - they can be enjoyable, help improve co-ordination and muscle tone, and help relieve tension. However, they neither condition the heart and lungs, nor burn off many calories.

## Diet

*“Eat a little of everything ..... everything in moderation.”*

Good stress management involves *healthy eating habits*. Nothing radical; just a common sense approach, basically “everything in moderation”. It is important to try to eat things from each of the five basic food groups and to cut down on caffeine, alcohol and smoking. The food pyramid designed by the National Heart Foundation is a good basic guide to healthy eating.

### Five Basic Groups of Food:

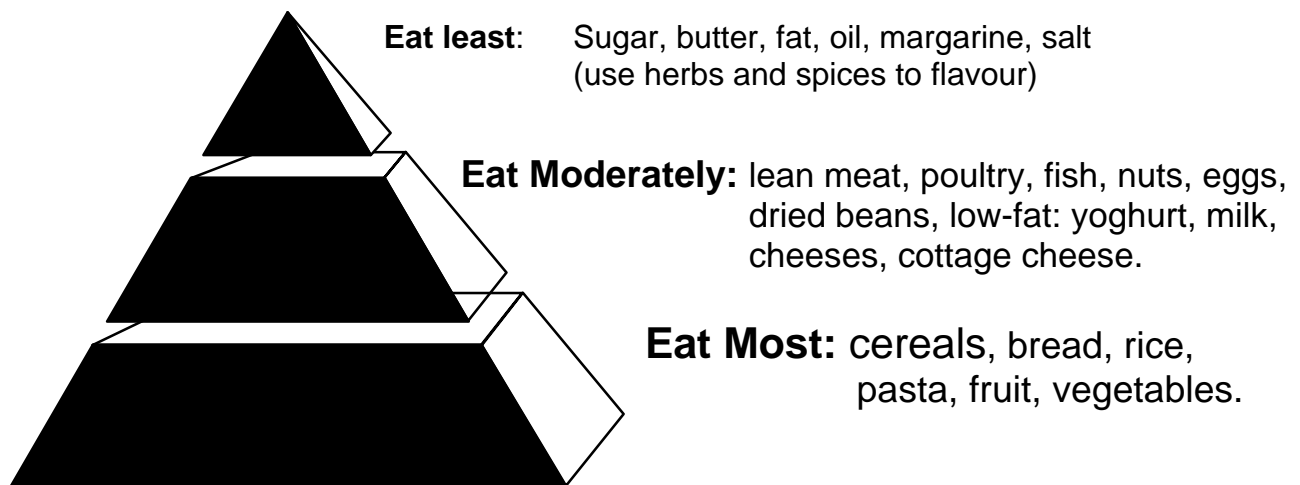
- |                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 1. Dairy Produce                | eat some daily                                   |
| 2. Meat, fish, eggs and poultry | one serving of meat daily                        |
| 3. Vegetables                   | at least two servings daily as fresh as possible |
| 4. Fruit                        | at least two servings daily as fresh as possible |
| 5. Breads and Cereals           | plenty daily, preferably whole grain             |

## Also ...

- ◆ Cut down on coffee, tea, coca-cola, chocolate (caffeine).
- ◆ Cut down on smoking
- ◆ Drink lots of water
- ◆ Take vitamin B complex - excellent for stress (this gets depleted under stress)
- ◆ Take vitamin C if there is a lack of fresh fruit and vegetables

- **Reduce:** *Fat, Sugar, Salt*
- **Increase:** *Fibre, Water*

## The Food Pyramid:



## Things that could be sent from home to supplement your diet:

- Dried Fruit - fresh fruit may be in short supply
- Dried Vegetables - tomatoes, onions, etc. to flavour food
- Canned Food
- Nuts
- Muesli Bars
- "Scroggin" mixes from the 'self -serve' bins at the Supermarket
- Sachets of Fruit Drink / Soup / Noodle
- "Just Add Boiling Water" - (dehydrated) type snacks:  
e.g.: Noodles, Pasta, Rice Mixes, Hash Brown Mix
- Sauces, Herbs and Spices
- Vitamins, Supplements

**Often when people are under stress their eating patterns change.**

**They may not feel like eating much or they may eat a lot. They may also crave certain foods, especially those containing sugar, or chocolate. If you are aware that you are in a stressful environment ~ Monitor your eating patterns and ensure you have at least three balanced meals per day.**

(Remember: "STRESSED is just DESSERTS backwards")

## RESILIENCE ENHANCING EXERCISES

**The stress response:** When we are stressed, our emotions tend to trigger our primitive, survival brain which overrides and controls our thoughts, yet when we are not under stress our higher functioning brain is in control. Here are some ways to reduce this stress response.

### **Exercise 1: 90 Second Brain Break**

If completed properly, this is one of the most effective and immediate exercises you can do for reducing stress. If you find yourself in a stressful situation and are able to go through this by yourself, you will feel a lot more relaxed and in control afterwards. You can also modify this exercise to suit the environment you are in – a couple of slow deep breaths can help arrest the fight or flight response that may activate unhelpful behaviour or reactions.

- De-focus or close your eyes. Relax your arms and hands.
- inhale (ensure it is a deep breath filling up the lungs)
- hold for a comfortable moment or two
- slowly exhale and consciously relax the muscles around your neck and shoulders
- breathe normally for a bit but continue to relax the muscles when you exhale
- take another slow, deep breath in
- hold for a comfortable moment or two
- slowly exhale and consciously relax the muscles around your jaw and mouth
- breathe normally for a bit but continue to relax all your muscles as you exhale
- take another slow, deep breath
- hold for a moment or two
- slowly exhale and consciously relax the muscles around your eyes, eyebrows, cheeks and forehead
- breathe normally, continue to relax all your muscles as you exhale
- gently return to full alertness (count from 1 to 5 slowly and shake/stretch to return to previous level of alertness).

**Thoughts and emotions - what we think controls how we feel:** By controlling our thoughts we are able to control our emotions. By slowing ourselves down and consciously forcing our minds to focus on the logic of a situation, we are able to override the automatic negative emotions that arise, and limit our judgement. This is very simple, yet very difficult to master, and requires practice. It can be achieved in part by practising the following exercises.

## **Exercise 2: Engaging your senses**

Senses include sight, sound, taste, smell, touch, or movement, and focusing on them can rapidly calm and energize you.

Move your focus away from what was causing you stress and into the here and now and what you can sense. Everyone responds to sensory input a little differently, so an awareness of your preferences is essential for reducing stress. If you are visual then perhaps it is looking at a beautiful view of nature, for those audio inclined it might be a certain type of music that lifts your spirits. Options for sense of smell include inhaling the fresh air outdoors or the fragrance of a scented candle, touch could be a hot (or cold) shower or the comfort of a blanket wrapped around you. Movement could translate to stretching or simply the sensation of your feet on the floor as you stand or walk. Taste could be a small piece of dark chocolate or a refreshing cold drink. Allow yourself to feel the sensations and the connected positive emotions.

## **Exercise 3: External sensory focus**

Another sensory focus exercise for reducing stress can be to focus on the *external* things around us, rather than the negative *internal* emotions we are experiencing by the onset of stress. A way to do this is to consciously track the things around us – for example; what are 5 things you can see right now? How about four things you can hear? Three things you can feel? Two things you can smell and one thing you can taste? Note how this has distracted you from what we were talking about before? This exercise can be used to distract yourself from the experience of stress related emotions. Use it when you are feeling overwhelmed with stress or emotion.

**Why do these exercises work?** When we feel happy we actually think differently – research shows that while stress narrows our thoughts and our abilities to use all areas of our brains, positive emotions can help broaden our understanding of what is happening and enable us see more solutions. How we feel can impact how we think, and how we think impacts upon how we feel. If we can enhance the positive emotions and reengage our logical brain, we are increasing our resilience.

# Breathing Exercises

**Breathing is one of the stress management “first-aid” measures and the best thing to do if you want to calm down quickly.** Most people take breathing for granted but we breathe in different ways depending on our moods: when we are angry we tend to breathe quickly and noisily, when we are nervous we often take quick shallow breaths and when we are relaxed we tend to breathe more slowly and evenly. Breathing exercises are a good tool for relaxation, as changing our breathing from that produced by the stress response (rapid and shallow) to slow, calm, even breathing, can “switch off” the stress response.

There are a number of breathing exercises listed below. The best idea is to choose one you feel comfortable with. Make sure you’re careful with these exercises, particularly if you suffer from any respiratory complaints e.g. asthma or bronchitis. Don’t hold your breath too long and stop if you feel light-headed.

## Calming Breathing

Sit back comfortably in a chair. Drop your shoulders down naturally and feel them widen from the spine outwards to your arms. This is to allow full, wide lung expansion. At the same time pull gently up as if a string attached to the top of your head is pulling you up. This is to expand the lungs upwards. Look straight ahead as if looking at a point on the wall opposite you. Make that position feel comfortable - do not strain it. Now your whole chest cavity will be able to expand naturally and allow your lungs to fill with air from the top to the bottom. So, to recap. Sit comfortably with a wide expanded chest cavity, dropped shoulders and an easy feeling. Now take five slow deep but gently steadying breaths. Having done this, you are ready to start calming breathing.

Breathe in easily and gently to a count of three and out just as easily and gently to the same count. Think of the three lobes of a lung and give a count to each one. Keep it all very relaxed and gently expand the chest outwards rather than trying for depth of breathing. Remember that this breathing should not be noticeable to others; the only external sign should be your calmness. It is not as deeply relaxing as when you are practising a more advanced form of deep relaxation.

It is an opportunity for quietly dampening down the stress response by saying to your chemical and nervous system in effect, “There is no need to come to my aid. I am coping with this easily and calmly.” So breathe away gently and slowly, 1-2-3 in and 1-2-3 out. As this is gentle, expansive breathing you can keep it up, for example, through out a difficult interview. Once practised you can dispense with the preliminaries and breathe away gently and calmly whenever you need to, regardless of where you are.

### When to use calming breathing:

- When driving in heavy traffic your pulse rate can go up to 136 and higher. Bring it, and your blood pressure down with calming breathing.
- On courses that are designed to stress you.
- When facing something that you know will put up your blood pressure such as facing a difficult interview, making a speech, dealing with awkward people, chairing a stormy meeting.
- Whenever you need a cool clear head, as when being interviewed or taking a test.
- When facing a hectic day, particularly when you feel harassed and need to reduce the stress arousal levels, use it frequently.
- Whenever you feel yourself getting uptight, bring down the tension with calming breathing.

## Diaphragmatic Breathing

In order to benefit from this it is probably better to practise at home first. Lie down on the floor with a small pillow under your head and another comfortably under your knees. Place your hands flat across your stomach with just the tips of your fingers touching. Now bell out your stomach as you breathe in, and press your fingers down with flattened stomach as you breathe out. As the stomach bells out, filling the lower lobes of the lungs with air, your fingers will separate and be drawn well apart. They come together again as you breathe out. Practise this 'belling' out and deflating, moving the stomach muscles and the diaphragm as much as possible, but keeping the shoulders and the tops of the lungs as still as you can, thus allowing the diaphragm to do all the work. When you have practised this well you will be able to do it anywhere without attracting attention.

From: Livingston Booth. A (1985) Stressmanship. London: Severn House Publishers.

### More Breathing Exercises:

Exercise 1: Place one hand on your chest and one hand on your abdomen as you breathe. There should be a rise in the chest and the abdomen, then a collapse, a letting go, of the chest and the abdomen down again. Ideally the chest begins the wave, then the stomach rises; at the crest of the wave both chest and abdomen let go for exhalation; don't push, your natural body elasticity will force the air out. This movement should flow in a smooth wave so that it goes down your entire body, and with practice it will. Continue this breathing awareness until you feel completely relaxed and are breathing easily.

Exercise 2: Now take a deep breath and, without expelling the air, hold your breath and make the movements of breathing. Repeat this exercise four or five times, filling your lungs and making movements of the chest and abdomen. Stop and rest, and then do the sequence five more times. This exercise frees your diaphragm and starts the breath flow moving; it also gives you a feel for the exaggerated movements of breathing, and how close to this exaggeration you normally come.

Exercise 3: Begin to add some sound to your breathing. As you take a breath in, imagine the air is going completely down to the bottom of your pelvis ... like a huge yawn, in which you fill your whole body with air. When it gets to the bottom let it go, open your mouth, letting the air come out of you very much like a sigh ... a sound of release ... (huhhh) a complete letting-out, letting-go sound. The vibration in the throat relaxes and releases that area. Continue to make the sound. It does not have to be a loud sound but you should emit a sound each time you breathe throughout the exercises. Keep your mouth open. As children we used to make sounds all the time, but now as adults we are controlled and quiet.

From: Barrow, I. and Place, H. (1986). Relax and Come Alive. Auckland: Heinemann

## Rhythmic Circular Breathing for Sleep

This method of breathing is useful for those people who find it difficult to switch the mind off the problems of the day. The mind becomes anchored to the rhythm instead of the problems and so the natural sleep centre is encouraged to take over. Make yourself comfortable in the position in which you want to sleep because at the end of this procedure you will be asleep. Close your eyes and settle down for sleep. Now breathe deeply but gently in the same way you would for diaphragmatic breathing.

Feel the breath filling up slowly from the diaphragm through the chest to your mouth, then, as you breathe out, imagine yourself blowing the breath out of your mouth, round in a circle back and through an imaginary hole in your tummy to the diaphragm. Take the rhythm fairly slowly. Now you understand the principle, try it. Breathe in from the diaphragm slowly through the chest to the mouth, counting to four and blow it back to the diaphragm in another count of four. Pick your most comfortable, fairly slow, rhythm. The most important part of this is the full involvement of the mind in the circular process of breathing. Keep a mental picture of the circle in your mind and follow it round at all times, making sure that the mind concentrates on and thinks only of this circular rhythm. Then, as there is nothing more interesting going on, you will fall asleep.

I use this method to get to sleep and rarely have to go beyond ten circles before I succeed. You will find that your eyes will automatically follow the circle from the mouth out and back to the diaphragm, and this is good, showing the mind is involved. If you do wake during the night, know that you can get to sleep again quickly with this method.

From: Livingston Booth. A (1985) Stressmanship. London: Severn House Publishers.

## Relaxing Breathing

You should breathe in and out through the nose because inside it is so arranged that it warms and filters the air passing through.

Now think about your lower ribs and the triangular area enclosed in front between the curve of your lower ribs on either side and your waist below. As you breathe in, this area gently expands forwards and to either side, slightly lifting your ribs out sideways like the wings of a bird. As you do so the air will flow into and through your nose to fill up your lungs. You have been using your diaphragm but you will not be able to feel its movement as you do not have any suitable sensory nerves there to inform you. Obviously also you cannot feel it by touch as it lies entirely inside your ribs. But you will feel the result of its work as a slight increase in pressure in your abdomen, and in the rib movement. Never hold your breath but when you are ready, breathe out slowly and easily, not for unduly long. You will feel your ribs fall inwards and downwards again.

All this should be done without any effort. Do not sniff the air in with any force or blow it out. There is no need for huffing and puffing. All you have to do is give a little extra attention to the area just above your waist in front and to the movements of your ribs which you can readily feel. The exquisitely designed mechanism of your chest will then do the work for you. Never push the lower curve of your abdomen forward as this is a trick movement performed by arching the spine and interferes with the mechanism. Don't overdo the breathing even if you are enjoying it. You may upset the respiratory centre in your lower brain whose job it is to regulate your breathing by the amount of carbon dioxide in your blood. Don't annoy it.

From: Mitchell, L. (1977) Simple Relaxation. London: John Murray

# Using Your Imagination...

Your imagination is a very powerful tool. If you are consciously using your imagination to relax you, fill in time or take you away from the situation, then you are controlling your mind. It has been shown that people often turn to mental activities to cope with isolation or take themselves away from a stressful situation.

Included in this section are a number of scenes or scenarios which, by using your imagination, can become 'fantasy journeys', used to mentally remove yourself from a stressful or unpleasant situation. Choose the scene which most appeals to you or make up one of your own. Either way, it must be appropriate and relaxing for you.

**Scene A:** You are by a lake. It is a hot still day with fleecy clouds drifting across a deep blue sky. The lake is very still and glassy looking, it is deep green in colour, and round the edge there are ferns and foliage, which are reflected, in its clear surface. On the far side of the lake you can see swans drifting lazily along. Their grace and beauty are in harmony with the scene as they follow each other across the lake. It is still and peaceful and your eyelids grow heavy as you watch the scene.

**Scene B:** You are lying on the top of a high hill. You are in a sunlit clearing, which is surrounded in bush and trees. It is a beautiful isolated spot and you feel as if you could be on top of the world, lying there listening to the call of the birds. Far below you can see the sea on two sides. It is very blue and it reaches into the distance. The long yellow grass you are lying on smells sweet and fresh and is soft to the touch. All the lazy sounds of summer drift your way, making you feel drowsy just listening to them.

**Scene C:** You are deep in a forest by a waterfall. Everything is very still and green; occasionally you see a native bird flitting through the ferns. You are lying on a bed of ferns by the waterfall, which is cascading down from above and curling around the rocks in front of you. You hear no sound except the noise of the waterfall, and it lulls you as you listen to it. You can just see the sunlight filtering through the trees in place, but apart from this everything is intensely green. You feel as if you were back in the beginning of time, in a scene of unspoiled beauty and tranquillity. It is unbelievably peaceful.

**Scene D:** (This scene will appeal to people who prefer 'active' scenes.) You are lying down on the bow of a yacht sunbathing while it skims across the water. The gentle rising and falling motion has a very soothing relaxing effect. A soft breeze sweeps over you keeping you cool and refreshed. A school of dolphins swims alongside and then drifts away. In the distance you can see land and it seems to change in colour and shape as you pass. It seems very far away, just as your cares and worries are far away and cannot reach you at this time. As the yacht continues to skim across the water its gentle motion lulls you in to a state of complete relaxation.

From: Barrow, I. and Place, H. (1986) Relax and Come Alive. Auckland: Heinemann.

**Scene E:** If you have trouble with mental distractions, imagine that all your thoughts or problems are bubbles, floating up to the surface of a glass of carbonated water. As the bubbles reach the surface they burst and all your worries are released into the air. See and feel the word "calm", as you watch the bubbles slowly rise to the surface. Watch the bubbles until the water is completely clear and your mind is no longer distracted.

From: Mason, J. (1980) Guide to Stress Reduction. USA: Peace Press



# Creating Your Own Guided Imagery

One way to create your own guided imagery is to pay attention to what occurs to you in any one moment. Close your eyes and imagine various locations - the bush, beach, city streets, a mountain stream, etc. Choose from these scenes a place to relax that is uniquely satisfying to you. What does it smell like, what are the textures, what do you see, what does your body feel, what do you hear? Imagine doing a relaxing thing such as fishing, lying in the sun, sailing, reading by the fire, etc.

Write out a guided imagery that you find appealing. Practise it. Refine it. Practise it again. Use it when you feel the need for relaxation or when you want to be away from an unpleasant situation.

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From: Davis M.; Eshelman, E. R.; and McKay, M. (1982). The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook. Oakland. New Harbinger Publications.

# Progressive Relaxation

You cannot have the feeling of warm well-being in your body and at the same time experience psychological stress. Progressive relaxation of your muscles reduces pulse rate and blood pressure as well as decreasing perspiration and respiration rates. Deep muscle relaxation, when successfully mastered, can be used as an anti-anxiety pill.

Edmond Jacobson, a Chicago physician, published the book **Progressive Relaxation** in 1929. In this book he described his deep muscle relaxation technique, which he asserted required no imagination, will-power or suggestion. His technique is based on the premise that the body responds to anxiety provoking thoughts and events with muscle tension. This physiological tension, in turn, increases the subjective experience of anxiety. Deep muscle relaxation reduces physiological tension and is incompatible with anxiety: The habit of responding with one blocks the habit of responding with the other.

## Symptom Effectiveness

Excellent results have been found in the treatment of muscular tension, anxiety, insomnia, depression, fatigue, irritable bowel, muscle spasms, neck and back pain, high blood pressure, mild phobias and stuttering.

## Time for Mastery

One to two weeks. Two 15 minute sessions per day.

## Instructions

Most people do not realise which of their muscles are chronically tense. Progressive relaxation provides a way of identifying particular muscles and muscle groups and distinguishing between sensations of tension and deep relaxation. Four major muscle groups will be covered:

1. Hands, forearms and biceps.
2. Head, face, throat and shoulders, including concentration on forehead, cheeks, nose, eyes, jaws, lips, tongue and neck. Considerable attention is devoted to your head, because from the emotional point of view, the most important muscles in your body are situated in and around this region.
3. Chest, stomach and lower back.
4. Thighs, buttocks, calves and feet.

Progressive relaxation can be practised lying down or in a chair with your head supported. Each muscle or muscle groupings tensed from five to seven seconds and then relaxed for twenty to thirty seconds. This procedure is repeated at least once. If an area remains tense, you can practice up to five times. You may also find it useful to use the following relaxing expressions when untensing:

Let go of the tension.

Throw away the tension - I am feeling calm and rested.

Relax and smooth out the muscles.

Let the tension dissolve away.

Once the procedure is familiar enough to be remembered, keep your eyes closed and focus attention on just one muscle group at a time. The instructions for progressive relaxation are divided into two sections. The first part, which you may wish to tape and replay when practising, will familiarise you with the muscles in your body, which are most commonly tense. The second section shortens the procedure by simultaneously tensing and relaxing many muscles at one time so that deep muscle relaxation can be achieved in a very brief period.

### **Basic Procedure**

Get in a comfortable position and relax. Now clench your right fist, tighter and tighter, studying the tension as you do so. Keep it clenched and notice the tension in your fist, hand and forearm. Now relax. Feel the looseness in your right hand, and notice the contrast with the tension. Repeat this procedure with your right fist again, always noting as you relax that this is the opposite of tension - relax and feel the difference. Repeat the entire procedure with your left fist, then both fists at once.

Now bend your elbows and tense your biceps, tense them as hard as you can and observe the feeling of tautness. Relax, straighten out your arms. Let the relaxation develop and feel that difference. Repeat this, and all succeeding procedures at least once.

Turning attention to your head, wrinkle your forehead as tight as you can. Now relax and smooth it out. Let yourself imagine your entire forehead and scalp becoming smooth and at rest: Now frown and notice the strain spreading throughout your forehead. Let go. Allow your frown to become smooth again. Close your eyes now, squint them tighter. Look for the tension. Relax your eyes. Let them remain closed gently and comfortably. Now clench your jaw, bite hard, and notice the tension throughout your jaw. Relax your jaw. When the jaw is relaxed, your lips will be slightly parted. Let yourself really appreciate the contrast between tension and relaxation. Now press your tongue against the roof of your mouth. Feel the ache in the back of your mouth. Press your lips now, purse them into an "O." Relax your lips. Notice that your forehead, scalp, eyes, jaw, tongue and lips are all relaxed.

Press your head back as far as it can comfortably go and observe the tension in your neck. Roll it to the right and feel the changing locus of stress, roll it to the left. Straighten your head and bring it forward, press your chin against your chest. Feel the tension in your throat, the back of your neck. Relax, allowing your head to return to a comfortable position. Let the relaxation deepen. Now shrug your shoulders. Keep the tension as you hunch your head down between your shoulders. Relax your shoulder. Drop them back and feel the relaxation spreading through you neck, throat and shoulders, pure relaxation, deeper and deeper.

Give your entire body a chance to relax. Feel the comfort and the heaviness. Now breathe in and fill your lungs completely. Hold your breath. Notice the tension. Now exhale, let your

chest become loose, let the air hiss out. Continue relaxing, letting your breath come freely and gently. Repeat this several times, noting the tension draining from your body as you exhale. Next, tighten your stomach and hold. Note the tension, then relax. Now place your hand on your stomach. Breathe deeply into your stomach, pushing your hand up. Hold, and relax. Feel the contrast of relaxation as the air rushes out. Now arch your back, without straining. Keep the rest of your body as relaxed as possible. Focus on the tension in your lower back. Now relax, deeper and deeper.

Tighten your buttocks and thighs. Flex your thighs by pressing down your heels as hard as you can. Relax and feel the difference. Now curl your toes downward, making your calves tense. Study the tension. Relax. Now bend your toes toward your face, creating tension in your shins. Relax again.

Feel the heaviness throughout your lower body as the relaxation deepens. Relax your feet, ankles, calves, shins, knees, thighs and buttocks. Now let the relaxation spread to your stomach, lower back and chest. Let go more and more. Experience the relaxation deepening in your shoulders, arms and hands. Deeper and deeper. Notice the feeling of looseness and relaxation in your neck, jaws and your facial muscles.

### **Shorthand Procedure**

The following is a procedure for achieving deep muscle relaxation quickly. Whole muscle groups are simultaneously tensed and then relaxed. As before, repeat each procedure at least once, tensing each muscle group from five to seven seconds and then relaxing from 20 to 30 seconds: Remember to notice the contrast between the sensations of tension and relaxation.

1. Curl both fists, tightening biceps and forearms (Charles Atlas pose). Relax.
2. Wrinkle up forehead. At the same time, press your head as far back as possible, roll it clockwise in a complete circle, reverse. Now wrinkle up the muscles of your face like a walnut: frowning, eyes squinted, lips pursed, tongue pressing the roof of the mouth and shoulders hunched. Relax.
3. Arch back as you take a deep breath into the chest. Hold. Relax. Take a deep breath, pressing out the stomach. Hold. Relax.

## Special Considerations

1. If you make a tape of the basic procedure to facilitate your relaxation program, remember to space each procedure so that time is allowed to experience the tension and relaxation before going on to the next muscle or muscle group.
2. Most people have somewhat limited success when they begin deep muscle relaxation, but it is only a matter of practice. Whereas 20 minutes of work might initially bring only partial relaxation, it will eventually be possible to relax your whole body in a few moments.
3. Sometimes in the beginning, it may seem to you as though relaxation is complete. But although the muscle or muscle group may well be partially relaxed, a certain number of muscle fibres will still be contracted. It is the act of relaxing these additional fibres that will bring about the emotional effects you want. It is helpful to say to yourself during the relaxation phase, "Let go more and more."
4. Caution should be taken in tensing the neck and back. Excessive tightening can result in muscle or spinal damage. It is also commonly observed that over-tightening the toes or feet results in muscle cramping.

From: Davis, M; Eshelman, E.R; and McKay, M. (1982). The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook. Oakland: New Harbinger Publications.

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# Deep Muscular Relaxation...

## Procedure for Deep Muscular Relaxation: Allow 15 minutes.

Sit comfortably well back in the chair so your back is supported and both feet rest flat on the floor a little way apart. Rest your arms in you lap. Keep your head straight with you chin parallel to the floor. Your breathing should be abdominal and relaxed – gentle, slow and unforced.

Close your eyes and direct your attention to each part of your body in turn. Each time relax the muscles and concentrate on the sensation of relaxation. Notice how the tenseness disappears and the muscles feel at ease, warm and heavy (stay in this position for about ten seconds.)

Concentrate first on your left leg. Focus your attention on each part of your leg in turn, starting at your toes and working toward your hip. As you relax each set of muscles feel the tension drain away and notice the sensation of limpness, heaviness and warmth. Relax your toes concentrate for about five seconds on the feeling of relaxation (do this between relaxing each part). Now relax the instep ... heel ... and ankle. Now relax your calf muscles ... feel them become limp and warm.

Now focus your attention on your right leg. Concentrate on each part of your leg in turn, starting at you toes and working toward your hip. As you relax each set of muscles feel the tension drain away and notice the sensation of limpness, heaviness and warmth. Relax your toes concentrate for about five seconds on the feeling of relaxation ... now relax the instep ... heel ... and ankle. Now relax your calf muscles ... feel them become limp and warm ... now relax your knee ... thigh ... and your hip. Concentrate on the relaxation of your right leg ... heavy, limp and warm.

Now concentrate on your left arm. Focus your attention on each part of your arm in turn. Staring at you fingers and working towards your shoulder. Relax your fingers and thumb ...

feel then curl inwards, ... relax your palms ... now your wrist ... fore arm ... elbow ... upper arm ... and lastly your shoulder.

Concentrate on the limp heavy and warm sensation.

Now concentrate on your stomach muscles. Let them relax ... limp, heavy and warm.

Now concentrate on the base of your spine. Slowly work your way up the spine towards the neck relaxing each part of the spine and associated back muscles as you progress towards the neck. Feel the muscles relax, becoming limp and heavy as your back sinks into the chair.

Now relax your shoulders again ... feel them drop towards the floor, limp, heavy and warm.

Relax your neck muscles but keep your head straight, your chin parallel to the floor. Your head should now be balanced on your spine.

Now focus your attention on your head. Relax your jaw, let it drop and feel your mouth slightly open ... relax your tongue and feel it drop behind your lower teeth ... relax the muscles around your eyes ... feel them become limp, heavy and warm ... relax your forehead ... and scalp. Your head should feel totally relaxed, heavy and warm.

Concentrate on your breathing: feel your abdominal muscles move slowly out and up as you breathe in and then down and inward as you breathe out. Your breathing should be slow and gently.

Now quieten your mind. Allow your thoughts to drift through your head without trying to pursue them. As easily as thoughts come into your mind they leave and as easily as they leave more thoughts effortlessly come in. Recall happy memories. Picture a walk along the seashore; the waves, warm water lapping around your feet as they sink in the sand. Sun glistening on the water. Deep blue cloudless sky. The cries of the seagulls.

Sit quietly for five minutes and enjoy the state of relaxation you have created throughout your body. Your body should feel warm and heavy - totally relaxed.

From: Looker, T. and Gregson, O. (1989). Stresswise. London: Hodder and Stoughton.

# Other Stress Management Techniques...

**Balanced lifestyle ...** this means not letting one part of your life (e.g. work) rule you, at the expense of other things. Seek ways of living a balanced lifestyle both in NZ and in theatre.

**Recreation ...** doing things you enjoy and value in your spare time. Seek out activities to do when you get any spare time, rather than electing to stay at work.

**Time Out ...** getting physically away from a stressful situation to give you the chance to take a deep breath, unwind and reassess the situation.

**Letters/diaries: good for letting frustrations and feelings out ...** not only do letters give people at home or in theatre the chance to know what you're doing and how you're feeling, but it gives you the chance to get things off your chest. If you have vented a number of frustrations, you may not want to send the letter to anyone, but it helps to 'get it all out' on paper. Just screw up the letter and throw it away. Hopefully you will also be throwing away the frustrations.

**Time Management...** organising your time so you feel you have control over what you do and so use your time more efficiently. This can be applied both when you are extremely busy and when you have little to do at work.

**Ventilate...** talking about your feelings, worries and frustrations to each other. If someone does talk, just listen. Don't feel you have the responsibility of solving their problems and don't judge people. Listening is normally all that is required.

**Group Support...** particularly important for everyone. Look out for each other, support each other and listen to each other.

**Bitch Sessions...** if there is a problem within the group, get together as a group and get things sorted out. Allow everyone to have a say, regardless of rank or role BUT make sure you set the rule at the start of the session that the aim is to solve the problem or situation and DON'T walk away without having solved anything.

**Coping Skills Training ...** rehearsal for the real life events you find stressful (e.g. confrontation and negotiation). It also involves learning new skills e.g.: assertiveness, communication, and negotiation.

**Refuting irrational ideas or self-talk ...** means replacing the irrational self-talk in which we indulge with more rational statements. E.g.: replacing thoughts like "I should be competent at everything I do" with "we all have strengths and weaknesses".

**Thought stopping ...** Thought stopping is a simple way of dealing with unwanted thoughts and worries. When you have an unwanted thought, tell yourself, in your mind "STOP", in a forceful way. Many find it helpful to picture a red light or a stop sign at the same time. You can repeat this as much as necessary until the thought is out of your mind. Many thoughts will revisit you and give you a chance to use thought stopping again. Some people find it helpful to also snap a rubber band around their wrist at the same time they say "STOP".

**Humour ...** a great way of reducing stress and very acceptable in the military environment. You may have noticed that just prior to something stressful people laugh at almost any joke. Humour is excellent for releasing tension and when you laugh it's almost impossible to feel down.

**Professional counselling ...** available through a number of organisations for both individuals and groups, both face-to-face and over the telephone. It is also available from NZDF Psychologists and civilian clinical psychologists and counsellors.

**Help agencies ...** are of particular relevance to the partner staying at home. Organisations like the Samaritans, Parentline, Relationship Services, etc. have been found to be helpful.

**Attitude...** the most important!! Be positive and look for all the positive things you can gain from the situation, whatever the situation.



# Management of Deployment Stress

The following is a summary of ways to deal with specific deployment stressors raised by previously deployed personnel.

(The asterisks highlight those stressors where management begins before you deploy)

## **No account of personal circumstances. \***

Tell someone about your situation. Make sure that you bring it to someone's attention. People are generally supportive of genuine cases. Establish a good POC, ensure that they are aware of possible problem areas, and work together on a plan of action. Elicit support from family, neighbours, and friends. Establish good plans for communication with your family. Ensure that your partner or other family member has a method of contacting you immediately if they need to.

## **Isolation. \***

Communication by whatever means possible, keeping busy and ensuring a *balanced lifestyle* is important. Before you go, write a letter about your deployment, what you will be doing, your address and details regarding postage. (You could even send stamped and addressed envelopes.) Send this to family members, friends, and acquaintances, anyone you can think of, and ask them to send you even just one letter while you are away. Write *letters yourself*, and keep a *diary*.

Isolation is a particularly important issue for people deploying on observer missions. Debriefs suggest that important ways of dealing with this are:

- keep busy. Be able to see things that could be done and **do** them, rather than do nothing. Keep active. Nothing breeds apathy more quickly than inactivity.
- do things for the locals. Odd jobs, soccer coaching and teaching English are examples of what other observers have done.
- keep your accommodation as clean and comfortable as possible. Make it a place you enjoy rather than dread.

## **Separation.**

Communication is the key here. See section in Management of Deployment-Related Family Stress.

## **Problems with Mail. \***

Establish plans for mail; for example, one letter a week. Number and date your letters. Don't be surprised if the people to whom you are writing don't seem to have caught up with a particular piece of news - they probably won't have received your letter. Sort out alternative means of communication, if there are any. Fax machines, phones, radio and e-mail have been found to be good alternatives to conventional mail. Contact "Telecom" and "Clear" to find out about any possible discounts you may be able to get for overseas calls. E-mail facilities are available in the Community Centre and libraries in most camps/bases for your family to use.

## **Culture shock.**

Your *attitude* is important here. Find the differences interesting, try to learn more about other cultures, learn another language etc. However, there **will** be times when you have absolutely had it with a particular race. Be careful not to offend. Use *time out* as a management strategy.

Be careful not to create a "little NZ". Whilst it's good to have pride in NZ, you lose that "bigger perspective" that's so important in dealing with the situation. Get all you can from your surroundings; learn from others and experience other ways of life as much as possible. It would be unrealistic to expect yourself to do this all the time, however - sometimes you get sick and tired of others and different ways of doing things. Read the information provided on "Working with others", pages 43-46.

## **No consideration given to picking a team that was well integrated.**

Make the team work as well together as possible. *Group support*, *bitch sessions*, *debriefs* and *time out* are good management strategies, as are respecting each other's wishes for privacy. Look out for other team members and be supportive of others. *Group support* is one of the most powerful stress management tools you have. Share things (e.g. food, parcels from home, news, feelings etc.) with other team and contingent members. Celebrate events like children's birthdays together. Make sure you communicate with each other and make sure that you are aware of other people's likes and dislikes.

*Bitch sessions* and operational *debriefs* have been found to work particularly well. These can be 'no rank' sessions, (in that everyone has an equal chance to speak) and allow, without getting personal, the chance to learn from others, vent dissatisfactions and frustrations, and explore any worries or problem areas. It is important to actually address the issues which are raised and come to some consensus if possible. Read the information provided on "Working with others", pages 43 – 46.

## **Being poor cousins compared with other countries.**

There is not much that you can do about this one except raise it with the appropriate personnel, and then try to forget about it. Let it wash over you, once you have done what you can. Assess what is important in the overall scheme of things: money or other things such as phone calls, leave, trips home etc. may not be as important to you as the experience you are gaining, the chance to perform well in an operational setting and the chance to contribute towards the rebirth of a country. Your *attitude* will help you, as will trying to understand the allowance-setting procedures.

## **Frustration of working with the Peacekeeping Force/Organisation (e.g. UN, MFO).**

There is not a lot you can do except learn to "roll with the blows" and let it wash over you. Make sure that you keep up your own standards so that at the end of the day, you know that you did your best. Try also to look at the "bigger picture" issues and focus on what the peacekeeping force achieves on a larger scale, rather than everyday concerns. Again it's your *attitude* that will help you here.

## **Lack of recreation opportunities. \***

Information from debriefs seems to suggest that peacekeeping missions are easier to cope with if you maintain a balanced approach and try to achieve a *balanced lifestyle*. This is very difficult in some environments, so you will need to take things with you. For example; study material, books, puzzles, miniature games, sports equipment,

MP3/CD player, tapes/CDs, needlecraft, laptop computer etc. Create opportunities for recreation activities, have a positive *attitude*, make things happen and meet people from other countries. However, leave heavy drinking alone, as alcohol generally aggravates difficulties and doesn't solve problems. Many members of peacekeeping missions find they drink more on deployment than they usually do.

### **Poor administration.**

Do what you can then forget about it. *Thought stopping* may help here, if you find that you are stewing over something.

### **Lack of predeployment information. \***

Find out what you can, and then try to forget it and get on with things that are important to you. For example, get all your gear ready; be prepared, then leave it and concentrate on your family, friends, recreation etc.

### **Family support back in NZ. \***

Try to pre-empt any problems **before** you go by organising legal and financial affairs, Point of Contact (POC), unit, friends, family, school and neighbour support; maintenance of car, WOF, washing machine, lawn mower etc. When you are in-country, there is not a lot you can do except be supportive of any problems and action taken. Some partners have expressed frustration that their input is made out to be less important and may not be acknowledged. Try not to give the impression that your role is more significant. Compliment partners on achieving things they have not had to deal with before, but don't be patronising! Offer **constructive** advice, if it's asked for. Try not to say things like: "You should have taken the car to Blogg's Motors - it's much cheaper and they do a better job". Remember that your partner is carrying a lot of responsibility so help and support, don't criticise. Be pleased that they have found a workable solution.

If you are really worried about your family or a specific incident, phone when you can, keep writing, contact friends, family, unit, POC or home unit OC, inform them of the situation and ask them to help out. Otherwise try not to worry, use thought stopping, pour out your concerns in *letters* and/or *diaries*, *group support* and *self talk* (e.g. "I have done all I can").

### **Absence of usual social role.**

Live your home role(s) as much as possible wherever you are. Keep it alive - you will feel closer to friends and family back in NZ and it will be easier to readjust to being back again. *Letters*, phone calls, behaviour (e.g. not living life as a "single" if you have a partner) and support to family all help.

### **Loneliness. \***

*Letters*. Many people have reported that these are better than phone calls in terms of feeling less lonely. Make sure you have photos of family and friends, of your home, your unit etc. Take, or request, pictures drawn by your children. Utilise *group support*, ask for videos from home or family, friends, unit and get people to send tapes as well as letters. Ask your unit to keep you supplied with news.

## Lowering of performance standards.

Try to be true to yourself and try your best, even when the standards of those around you slip. However, be realistic. If you don't achieve as much as usual, there may be very real reasons for this. For example; climate, peacekeeping force disorganisation, slow pace of host country etc. *Self-talk* and *refuting irrational ideas* are important here. Maintain a strong sense of self-discipline and be honest with yourself. Work hard and maintain your standards. Get to know yourself - a peacekeeping mission is, for most people, a time for them to come to terms with themselves.

## Workload.

**Very high workload.** *Time management*, prioritising, delegating and using any time off to maximum advantage are important.

**Very low workload.** Structure your time, establish a routine and **make** things happen. Teach English to locals, learn a language yourself, organise sports, and become involved in as much as possible. *Exercise, recreation/leisure* and *balanced lifestyle* are important when workload is low.

In either event (high or low workload), make sure that you take any leave you are able to, preferably well away from the environment in which you are living and working. People often do not realise the stress they have incurred, until they 'finally' take leave. On reflection, a number of people have reported that they should have taken more leave, and that they should have taken it sooner.

## Unrealistic expectations. \*

This is something that you need to start working on **now**, before you leave. Learn as much as possible before deployment and get all that you can from your pre-deployment training. If you know people who have been on similar missions in the past (or, if you don't, try to get names and phone numbers) **contact** them and learn what you can from them.

## Medical problems. \*

Get all that you can from the medical training you receive and take notice of what the medics tell you.

## Sleep difficulties.

Remember it is very common to have difficulty sleeping for the first few nights of a deployment. *Relaxation exercises, fantasy journeys* and *breathing exercises* will all help. Using progressive muscular relaxation when you have little chance to sleep can often be more beneficial than sleep itself. Take sleeping pills only as a last resort or for temporary relief after a particularly traumatic event. Sleeping pills provide temporary relief only and can easily become addictive. For further information, read the section on 'Having Difficulty Sleeping?' on page 42.

## Finance/Pay. \*

Organise your allotments before you go, ask one person to keep an eye on things for you to check that your pay is coming through properly and advise them what to do if something goes wrong. Make sure that you appoint a Power of Attorney and ensure that you and they know exactly what this means. Remember that this must be completed in front of a lawyer or JP for it to be valid. Organise any allotments **before** you go and open a special account for emergencies.

## **Restrictions.**

Learn to live with them and around them. Don't take risks but don't treat yourself like a prisoner. Remember, aim for a *balanced lifestyle*.

## **Uncertainties. \***

Find out as much as you can and then try to live with them. Be prepared, and then live as normally as possible.

## **Climate. \***

Take the appropriate equipment and request further equipment if you need it. Be sensible regarding working and exercising in extreme temperatures. Read the information provided on 'Exercise', pages 14 -15.

## **Change in temperament and personality in people around you.**

First of all, remember that this is often a sign of stress, for example; a person may be having difficulties adjusting to their new environment. Offer support and any practical help that you can give. It may be that they need someone to *listen* to them. Use *time out* if things become really stressful and seek the support of others in the group. However, **do not** unite against the individual, or isolate them, but offer group support.

## **Real and imagined problems at home.**

In terms of real problems, do what you can (this may involve writing to a friend or colleague and asking them to help), continue to write letters, offer the support you can in your letters and then phone if you can. However, once you have done what you can, try to forget about it. Try not to be hard on yourself and expect more of yourself than is possible. *Thought stopping* and *refuting irrational ideas* may help. For example, replace "I should be able to do more. It's my fault that I am here and can't provide more support" with "I have done all I can". *Ventilate*; talk to people about your problems and *share* your worries with someone else.

Imagined problems may be slightly harder to deal with but the same methods also apply. Try to be logical and use your head. Don't read more into letters or tones of voice on toll calls than is really there. Don't get caught up with rumours.

## **Lack of privacy.**

*Time out* should help as well as *writing letters and/or diaries*. *Bitch sessions* and communication with others may help everyone to understand each other's likes and dislikes and perhaps rules could be made within the group. Remember, people don't always know that their behaviour may be irritating to others and generally, once they are made aware of the issue, will attempt to modify their behaviour. Open communication will help to ease any tensions. Read the information provided on "Working with others", pages 43 – 46.

## **Emotional and sexual deprivation. \***

Some people seek relief from the effects of both of these whilst they are away. One can also unwittingly lead to the other. If you have a partner, becoming involved in another relationship, even if it is only on an emotional level, does affect your primary relationship. Be well aware that any relationships you may form will affect the contingent. This is particularly so if one or both of you are in relationships back in NZ.

Communicate with your partner at home as much as possible, so that you feel as close to them as you possibly can.

**All** personnel should be aware of the risks of catching sexually transmitted diseases and HIV, which are extremely prevalent in many countries.

## **Diet.**

Ensure that your diet is as balanced as possible. If it is not balanced or if it is very boring, you will need to think of ways to supplement it. Vitamins can supplement inadequate diets and Vitamin B Complex is particularly good when you are under stress. You will probably need Vitamin C if you don't have any fresh fruit or vegetables. Otherwise multi-vitamins should give a healthy general balance. If your diet lacks fibre (e.g. if you are eating American MREs) then you should try to increase this. Perhaps the easiest way is to get someone to send you dried fruit. In terms of making a bland diet more interesting; try sauces, spices, herbs, sachets of things like 'Cook in the Pot' etc. A list of things you could request from home is listed on page 65.

## **Exercise. \***

Running is generally the staple type of exercise for Defence personnel, but options may be limited on deployment. In that case, you may need more static types of exercise. You could take along some music and plan aerobics sessions, take sports equipment, use your initiative to come up with things you could use for weight training etc.

When exercising in **very hot** climates, try to ensure that you:

- exercise in the early morning or evening.
- drink plenty of water before and after exercising.
- check your heart rate. Your heart rate will increase more quickly due to the heat. Don't let it get higher than your usual training heart rate (check this in NZ before you deploy).
- memorise the symptoms associated with dehydration and heat illness: headache, nausea, weakness and the more severe symptoms of cessation of sweating, confusion and collapse.
- cancel plans (e.g. for a sports game) if the weather is unusually hot.
- dress appropriately for the weather.

When exercising in **very cold** climates, try to ensure that you:

- spend longer warming up to increase the circulation of blood to the arms and legs. Cold muscles are more susceptible to injury.
- spend longer cooling down; it is dangerous to stop suddenly when you are overheated.
- dress appropriately for the weather during and after your exercise session.

### **Attitude.**

Information from debriefs has suggested that certain types of behaviour and ways of dealing with things can help in the peacekeeping role. Or at least, help not to make your frustrations greater.

- Be as open-minded, flexible and tolerant as you can. Be tolerant of other people, other cultures and religion, different situations and the way things are done in your "host country". Tolerance of the peacekeeping force and support from NZ will also be required at times. Other people from previous missions have also stressed the necessity of being tolerant of other people's weaknesses. Try to be diplomatic, meet others half-way and be careful of not offending other people without realising it.
- Try to be easy-going, calm and don't "go off the handle". Try to maintain a sense of humour and try to remain relaxed.
- Try not to let things frustrate you, and try to let things you can't change wash over you. Learn to work **around** things. Remember that you're in another country and accept that they do things their way.

### **Violent and traumatic incidents.**

During the incident, a *breathing exercise* will help calm you down and clear your head. If you are detained in some way in an uncomfortable environment *fantasy journeys* and *relaxation exercises* should be helpful. In addition, *exercise* as much as possible.

After a traumatic, difficult or unpleasant event, *defusing* (the initial process in the debriefing process) and group support are essential. We call these difficult events '**critical incidents**'. Basically, a critical incident is:

“... an event outside the usual range of human experience which is sudden and unexpected, disrupts our sense of control, and may include physical and emotional loss ...”

The next section contains a full and detailed explanation of “Critical Incident Stress”.

# Critical Incidents and Reactions to Critical Incidents

## What is a “Critical Incident”?

A critical incident is an event outside the usual range of human experience, which is sudden and unexpected, disrupts our sense of control, and may include physical and emotional loss. It can be a single event or multiple events, usually involving one or more of the following:

- *injury (or threat of death or injury) to self*
- *witnessing violent incidents, death or injury*
- *receiving incoming fire and/or using a weapon*
- *events involving injury, death or poverty of children*
- *witnessing unpleasant incidents*
- *treating casualties*
- *handling body parts*
- *death or injury of co-worker*

## What is “Critical Incident Stress”?

“Critical Incident Stress” is a term used for the unusually strong physical and emotional reactions experienced in the face of a Critical Incident. These reactions could interfere with your ability to function during or after the event. A strong reaction is a commonly experienced reaction; few people remain unaffected by Critical Incidents, although - reactions may differ in their intensity and duration. Some reactions are immediate and some may occur and / or recur days, even weeks after the incident.

## What are the Possible Reactions to Critical Incidents?

It is common for people to experience some of the following after a critical incident:

- *tension, anxiety* - general agitation, physical or mental
- *sleep disturbances* - inability to sleep, thoughts that prevent sleep, replaying the incident
- *dreams and nightmares* - of the incident or other vivid and frightening events
- *fearfulness* - including fear of the unknown, of the place or other reminders of the event
- *feelings of guilt and anger* - about the event or non-specific feelings
- *depression* - about the event or non-specific, deadened feelings
- *fluctuating moods* - including irritability
- *preoccupation with the event* - difficulty focusing on other things, may interfere with concentration
- *intrusive memories or feelings* - flashbacks to event, may interfere with daily life
- *feelings of isolation* - feeling: alone, as if no one knows what it's like, different from others
- *social withdrawal* - wanting to be alone
- *more easily startled*
- *physical sensations* - those from the list of physical stress symptoms



**These reactions are commonly experienced responses shared by many people following an event or events outside of their usual range of experience. They generally serve to aid recovery and help the person deal with that event or events.**

*“They are NORMAL reactions, by NORMAL people, following an ABNORMAL event or events.”*

Reactions to Critical incidents can be broken down into three main areas; **Physical, Cognitive and Emotional**. There are reactions that are more common *immediately* following or during a critical incident and reactions that are more *delayed*...

### **Common Immediate Physical Reactions:**

- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Increased Blood Pressure
- Muscle Tremors
- Chills
- Hyperventilation (fast, shallow breathing)
- Sweating
- Increased Heart Rate

### **Common Delayed Physical Reactions:**

- Fatigue
- Increased use/misuse of Alcohol
- Exaggerated Startle Response
- Sleep Related Difficulties: nightmares, difficulty falling asleep, night sweats, restlessness, awakening early, difficulty awakening.

### **Common Immediate Cognitive Reactions:**

- Impaired Thinking
- Difficulty in Problem Solving
- Anomia (difficulty remembering the names of things)
- Confusion
- Memory Loss
- Difficulty Making Decisions
- Calculation Difficulties

### **Common Delayed Cognitive Reactions:**

- Decreased Attention Span
- Memory Problems
- Poor Concentration
- Flashbacks (re-experiencing the event)

### **Common Immediate Emotional Reactions:**

- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Grief
- Anger
- Feeling Overwhelmed
- Hopelessness
- Fear
- Guilt

### **Common Delayed Emotional Reactions:**

- Feeling Abandoned
- Feeling of Alienation
- Resentment
- Numbness
- Withdrawal
- Depression

Adapted from “Mission Readiness and Stress Management” United Nations Office of Human Resources Management

In most cases these symptoms will diminish within a few days to weeks, but for some people they do not. In other people, these symptoms are delayed. That is, they do not occur until a period of time after the event or events.

# What Can **YOU** Do About “Critical Incident Stress”?

The following is a variety of techniques that research and people who have been exposed to traumatic events (critical incidents) have recommend as being useful, both during and after the event.

## Self Help During the Critical Incident

- recognise the signs of critical incident stress
- maintain a positive attitude
- try to control breathing - slow, regular
- focus on the immediate task
- stay in contact with others by talking
- care for yourself - food, water, clothing, rest
- if prolonged exposure, take breaks and rotate tasks

## Self Help After a Critical Incident

- rest and try to get plenty of sleep (see 'Having Difficulty Sleeping')
- be gentle with yourself
- contact friends and family - don't isolate yourself
- don't block out dreams or thoughts about the incident. Although they may be frightening, they are to be expected and they help you recover
- eat well-balanced meals
- **talk** to people (especially those who love you)
- keep exercise/activity level up - aim for a balanced lifestyle
- look after yourself and keep up usual safety standards
- **listen** to friends, family, and other team members (they often pick up ideas about you better than you do yourself)
- use stress management techniques
- get back into a routine as quickly as possible
- allow yourself time for recovery and time to grieve - you are allowed to feel sad. Give yourself permission to take time to work through the critical incident.
- plan for memories of the event - e.g. seeing the place where the incident occurred may bring it back
- don't drink alcohol excessively - too much alcohol never helps any situation
- if other people were involved in the incident, don't think you are the only one who has been affected

**Make sure that you bring up any critical incident during your post-deployment debrief.**

# How You Can Help Others After a Critical Incident

It can be very difficult to know what to do for your colleague, friend or loved one after they have experienced a critical incident, particularly as some of the reactions they may experience can cause you to feel distant from them or helpless to assist them.

Some of the most important things you can do to help your colleague, friend or loved one after a critical incident include:

- offer support (and love to loved ones)
- ask them what they would consider helpful
- spend time with them, be sensitive, patient, genuine (and loving to loved ones)
- talk is the best medicine, all you have to do is listen and reassure. Encourage them (but do not pressure) to talk about the incident, any particularly stressful aspects and their reaction to it
- allow them some private time
- try to re-establish normal routines, assign un taxing but meaningful tasks
- don't ridicule behaviour or suggest that they should be over that sort of thing
- don't take their feelings or moods (e.g.: anger, withdrawal, etc.) personally
- call for help or support as soon as you feel you, your colleague, friend or loved one needs it
- last, but by no means least, seek support for yourself as well

## Future Action

If your colleague, friend or loved one continues to experience any of the reactions listed in this handout (in particular, intrusive memories or feelings, sleep disturbances and re-experiencing the event), and /or work or family relationships seem to be suffering, or if there is noticeable increase in alcohol consumption **FOUR TO SIX WEEKS** after the event, encourage your colleague, friend or loved one to seek further assistance from support agencies such as the local Medical Treatment Centre (MTC) or Doctor, NZDF Psychologist, Community Counsellor, Padre or Minister.

# Having Difficulty Sleeping?

**If you are having difficulty sleeping, then here are some things to try:**

**Exercise.** Make sure that you get some form of exercise during the day, but avoid exercising too soon before going to bed.

**Fresh air.** Get as much fresh air as possible during the day.

**Diet.** Avoid a heavy evening meal, particularly foods high in fibre and fats.

**Drinks.** Avoid excess alcohol and caffeine at night. Instead, make yourself a soothing bedtime drink.

**Naps.** Avoid taking naps during the day or evening.

**Bed.** Make your bed as comfortable as possible. Make sure it is warm enough in cool climates and cool enough in hot climates. Pure cotton sleeping bag sheets are excellent and are all that is required in hot climates. Keep your bed, as much as possible, as your **sleeping** place. Don't take work to bed with you or write letters in bed. Forcing yourself to stay alert while lying on your bed reinforces bad sleeping habits.

**Bedtime.** Don't go to bed until you feel sleepy.

**Routine.** Set up a routine that will condition you to go to sleep. For example, have a warm drink, clean your teeth, then read a few pages of an untaxing book. If possible, go to bed at the same time each night and get up at the same time each day.

**Relaxation Techniques.** Try one or more of the relaxation techniques in this booklet.

**Pen and Paper.** Have a pen and paper beside your bed so that you can write down those things which come into your mind that you "must not forget".

**Get up.** If your mind is racing or if you are worrying over and over about something, don't stay in bed. Get up and do something like making yourself a warm drink. Stay up until you feel drowsy. Sleep comes in cycles of about two hours so you will feel sleepy again before long. **Then** go back to bed.

**Paradoxical Intention.** Worry about lack of sleep produces more symptoms than the sleep loss itself and also makes it more unlikely that you will be able to sleep. Making yourself try to stay awake for 40 minutes, when you are having difficulty sleeping, will probably mean that you fall asleep long before that.

**Don't worry - Even if it feels like you are not getting enough sleep you generally get more than you realise. Your body is geared to make sure you get enough sleep.**

# Working With Others

When people live in very close proximity to each other for periods of time there is a probability of conflict arising. Much of this conflict can be prevented, or defused, by simply understanding more about group processes and altering your communication style.

## Group Formation

When groups are formed they go through a number of stages in their formation:

- **Forming** – when group members are most concerned with being accepted, and learning more about the group and its situation. Behaviour in this situation is usually polite and inhibited with individuals pursuing the goal of information seeking.
- **Storming** – which is a period of conflict in which group members confront their differences. May be subtle or overt conflict, establishing each other's boundaries.
- **Norming** – only occurs if group members make it successfully through the 'storming' stage. In this stage the group develops its own norms and practices regarding roles, status, and procedures (e.g. buzz words). Through this stage the group should be able to establish some degree of openness and trust, group cohesion, and lowered conflict.
- **Performing** – The group begins to more effectively address its group goals. At this stage there is generally less conflict and emotion.

Not every group goes through every one of these stages. Sometimes the influences in the environment can result in groups skipping stages, or repeating stages.

## Types of Difficult Behaviour

It appears that there are four major types of difficult behaviour you may come up against:

- **Moaning and complaining:** The person using this behaviour will complain to you, or even about you, whenever an opportunity arises. The slightest problem becomes a great issue and source of complaint. They will often want someone to take full responsibility for their problems and may attempt to make others feel guilty.
- **Constant talking:** The person using this behaviour usually wants an audience and may consider you to be fair game. They may, however, demand great chunks of our time, which we are not prepared to give, but feel guilty if we don't.
- **Angry or aggressive behaviour:** The person using this behaviour usually tends to want everything their own way and they want it now. They can be very explosive and lose their temper if they don't get what they want. They tend to treat other people in a rude, ill-mannered and patronising way.
- **Manipulation:** The person using this behaviour tries to achieve their objectives by attempting to manipulate others in some way, e.g. personal attacks, threats, other person approach, false information, name dropping, inadequacy.

# Communication Tools

## Stop and Think

If something is really winding you up, the first thing you should do is stop and think before opening your mouth. Chances are that the person is not in reality trying to wind you up. Although you may not immediately realise it there is likely to be a genuine reason why the person is acting the way they are. Often if we take the time to assign a reason to someone's behaviour we don't find it quite so annoying.

Make yourself stop to give yourself time to figure out why the person is acting the way they are. For example, if someone is bombarding you with questions or just talking to you while you are trying to have some quiet time out reading or writing letters in your bed space, ask yourself why the person is doing that. Is it because they are looking for some company and human interaction because they have had a hard day, or haven't received communication from home for a long time?

## Accept that Other People Prefer to do Things Differently

Different people react to identical situations in different ways. For example, some people deal with things by going away and thinking for awhile, whereas other people tend to deal with things by talking to anyone and everyone they can pin down.

If you happen to prefer some quiet time to think about things and are living or working with others who prefer to talk about everything, then there is potential for conflict. Consciously accepting that others deal with things differently may help you, but if it is not enough then you may need to explain (in an appropriate way) to the other person that you prefer to function differently.

## Get to the Facts

If someone comes to you on the attack, as hard as it is, try to ignore the emotional content of what they say and listen to the factual content. For example, someone may come up to you, chest poke you and call you a slob for leaving your kit all over the place and encroaching on their bed space.

Your instinctive reaction may be to tell them a few home truths. However, try and ignore the emotional content of what they are saying and the fact that they chest poking you and try to listen to the facts of the situation. Chances are, if they are so wound up then rightly or wrongly they believe they have a genuine reason to be angry with you.

With the tools listed here, it is important that you not only use these tools, but that you use them in an appropriate way. If you try and use these tools when speaking in a very emotive way, then chances are that the other person will react to your emotion and the interaction will again deteriorate quickly. The trick is to use these tools while communicating in a calm and rational manner. This may mean that you need to take some time out to give yourself time to calm down before dealing with a situation.

In reality, we cannot change a person, but we can influence their behaviour by how we respond to it and by being aware of our own behaviours when we are under pressure. The actions we take are the key to dealing with the difficult behaviours of others. So, we need to ask ourselves as well, what do we bring to the situation that is making it worse?

When difficult behaviour cannot be changed, it has to be managed, controlled and coped with. This involves having some idea of “what to do” as well as determining, “how you will do it”.

## Strategies for Managing Difficult Behaviour

- **Use problem-solving language.** This is using clear, but positive communication to say what you mean and to get what you want. The aim is to encourage co-operation and reduce conflict. This is done when you speak decisively; get to the basis of an issue, project positive issues rather than dwelling on the negatives of a situation.
- **Communicate clearly.** If the other person thinks you are listening to their needs, then a difficult situation is less likely to develop. There is more about communication strategies shortly.
- **Be aware of your body language.** People will react to what we do, before they react to what we say. The non-verbal messages we give when we first start to deal with people have a powerful influence. Be conscious that certain messages give people signals, which can put them into a victim role.
- **Maintain emotional control.** Some situations can be very difficult and stressful. It is important to maintain your emotional control, and not get hooked or baited into any type of emotional exchange. Ignore unhelpful comments and stay with the facts and realities of the situation. If you have to repeat yourself, do this in a business like way, using problem solving language.
- **Defuse angry people.** Anger is a powerful emotional reaction, which can be a response to fear or frustration, or it can be a manipulation when people use anger to intimidate, in order to get their own way. One means of dealing with verbally aggressive behaviour is an approach to anger defusing called the LASSIE technique.
- **Listen to the other person, Acknowledge their problem, concern or worry, Separate them from others to deal with their problem one to one. Sit them on a seat, Indicate what you can do to assist them with their solution, Encourage them to focus on the possible solutions.**
- **Allow people to save face.** Even when the other person is wrong in their facts and information, resist the urge to bluntly tell them so, as this will probably only extend the problem due to a hurt ego. Unless there are legal or regulatory issues involved, it is often better to avoid getting hooked into arguments of who is right and who is wrong. This is usually a “no win” situation.
- **Ignore or manage criticism and negative comments.** Some people use these methods to either get them what they want faster or as a means of putting down or devaluing your competency, comments, beliefs, values or actions. Many people feel they have to stand up to criticism, or else they will look weak and not in control of the situation, regardless of whether this is criticism of themselves, the organisation or information being given. Such behaviours have to be either ignored or effectively dealt with using effective communication skills.

## Avoid “You” Statements

“You” statements such as “you should have...” or “you always...” tend to immediately make a person feel defensive, threatened, and argumentative or they may switch off completely to what you are saying.

Think about situations where some one has said something to you like “You are always late to work”. In reality it is very unlikely to be true that you were **always** late to work. Such a statement immediately makes you feel defensive and chances are that you would quickly point out that it is in fact not true that you are always late for work and an argument may develop. So, the outcome is likely to be that you end up angry and don’t accept the criticism that is given. In this situation it would be far more constructive to say that you have been late for work three days in the past week and that you need to be at work on time every day.

## Use “I” Statements

Speak only for yourself by using “**I**” **statements** because they are not so threatening and what you say about your opinion, wishes, feelings and so forth can not be disputed. Communication is a two-way process and therefore you will need to convey your thoughts, ideas and feelings. However, it is important that when you do, you are speaking only for yourself. That is, use “**I**” **statements** such as “I feel...” or “I think...”. The reason for this is:

- *Only you can know what your thoughts, feelings, ideas and experiences are.*
- *Only you can express or describe them.*
- *You are not inside someone else’s head, therefore it is inappropriate for you to speak for other people’s thoughts and feelings.*

This is different from reflecting, where you are rephrasing or identifying the speaker’s own thoughts and feelings, rather than saying what you think they should be thinking and feeling.

## Actively Listen

Actively listen by encouraging; reflecting and using appropriate body language such as nods, facing the person, eye contact and so forth. When we are tense or stressed, very often we forget to actually listen to anyone else. This compounds any difficulties you are experiencing as to properly listen to some one takes quite a lot of attention and concentration. If you can convey to people that you are listening to them by repeating the content of what they are saying, or by asking them relevant questions, you will most likely diffuse a potentially stressful situation and learn a great deal in the process.

### Information in this handout is adapted from:

Tunnecliffe & Associates Pty Ltd, 1996. Dealing with the Behaviour of Difficult People.  
Bayside Books: Western Australia.



# Management of Deployment-Related Family Stress

The following is a summary of ways to deal with specific deployment-related family stressors raised by partners/family members from previous deployments.

(The asterisks highlight those stressors where management begins **before** deployment)

## Pre-deployment Stressors

### Uncertainties. \*

Encourage your partner/family member to find out all that they can about the deployment, but be aware that whoever they ask may also not know. In addition, try to understand the way the peacekeeping organisation and the NZ Government work when deciding things like whom to send, when to send them and for how long. Do attend the pre-deployment training and get what you can from the day. Encourage your partner/family member to get prepared to deploy, and then try to forget about it as much as possible. Try to start living your life the way you hope to when your partner/family member is away. If, for example, a course that you want to do starts while your partner/family member is still in NZ, it is probably better to start the course, rather than put it (and everything else) "on hold", waiting for your partner/family member to deploy. This is especially true for those whose deployment dates are uncertain or changing. Trying to live a *balanced lifestyle, time out and relaxation techniques* are helpful here.

### Amount of Notice. \*

You can do very little about this one. If notice is very short, you may want to push other things to one side and concentrate on getting your partner/family member ready to go. However, don't forget that you will probably also have some needs - perhaps to work through things and become emotionally ready for the departure. You can forget these needs in the rush to get your partner/family member ready and find that they "catch up with you" after the departure. However rushed the pre-deployment time is, make sure that you **talk**. And service personnel, make sure that you listen. *Group support* (possibly from others you have met at pre-deployment training) is excellent, *time management* and supporting each other are also helpful.

### Lack of Control. \*

Discuss **together**, the pros and cons of the deployment and try to make participation a joint decision. It is possible to do this even if you feel that the deployment is compulsory, by your attitude towards it and your communication with each other. Older children can also be involved in this way. *Self talk group support, attitude and relaxation techniques* can be helpful.

### Pre-deployment Information. \*

Write down all of your queries and work your way through them, finding out what you can from appropriate sources. Do this **together**. If you can't find answers to all your questions, and realistically, you won't be able to for some time, try to forget about them. Use other sources of information besides the military e.g. your local library for information about the country etc. *Attitude, relaxation techniques and group support* can be helpful.

## **Relationship with Partner. \***

The pre-deployment period can be a very difficult one and can give rise to a real "mixed bag" of feelings. The Emotional Cycle of Deployment article (the green pages in this booklet) may help you realise that the feelings you have around this time are completely normal. You may find that you argue about silly things during this period, that you almost **pick** fights without even knowing why. Don't attribute any difficulties you may have with each other to your relationship, it is most probably the situation. Team members, try as much as possible to put your partner first, during this period. Obviously, there are things that you need to do to get ready, but leave that extra work at **work**. Make sure also that you communicate with each other. You may feel that you shouldn't tell your partner if something is upsetting you because you are not going to see them for a long time, but if you bottle things up, they often come out more strongly before deployment or stay with you right through the deployment. Resolve any areas of contention **before** they go (this also includes matters unrelated to the deployment). Also read the information provided on "Working with others", pages 43 – 46 for tips on effective communication.

## **Departure Arrangements. \***

Work out how **you** would best like to say goodbye to each other and work this around any arrangements that may have been made by the military. This last bit of time together should be yours to handle, as you want. Some people find that keeping the departure low-key helps. This can be quite hard in some respects, as it can mean not accompanying the service person to the airport but it can also mean, especially for children, less disruption in routine and less like the deployment is ruling your lives. Others find that having an "all-singing all-dancing" departure is right for them, with a number of family members and friends present. The advantage of this is that you can support each other after the departure. In any case, it can be a good idea to have already planned some sort of treat for yourself for the post-departure time. *Recreation/leisure* and *group support* is critical.

## **Practical Arrangements. \***

Make a list of all the things you need to do before deployment and work through them. How much you can do will depend on the amount of notice you have been given. Things to include are appointing a power of attorney, opening a special emergency-only bank account, reviewing insurance, making contact with your POC and establishing what sort of support could be available and what you think you would like, visiting your child's school to explain the situation to your children's teachers, fixing the cold water tap, getting the car serviced etc. Service personnel, use work time if possible - they are legitimate activities for the pre-deployment period. *Time management*, *help agencies* and sometimes even *time out* can be helpful.

## **Media Attention. \***

Whether or not you talk to the media is completely up to you. The military cannot tell you what to do in this respect, as it can for service-people. If you do want to speak to them, that's okay. If they harass you for interviews and stories that you don't want, if you are having trouble getting rid of them yourselves, or if you would like some guidance on talking to the press, contact your POC and if they do not take any action, contact the appropriate information office for your service, directly.

They will then deal with the particular newspaper, TV or radio that has been bothering you and may even offer them an alternative person to interview so that they will leave you alone. *Self talk, refuting irrational ideas* e.g. replacing "I should really speak to the press" with "It is my right not to speak to the press" can help.

## During Deployment

### Your Partner's/Family Member's Absence and Loneliness. \*

Make sure that you communicate as much as possible, by whatever means available. Send plenty of **letters**, both ways. Get the first one away ASAP, both ways. You can send letters and parcels even before the deployment begins. Partners, you could also hide notes and small treasured objects in luggage. And service personnel, you can leave notes etc. hidden around the house, arrange with a florist for flowers to reach your partner a couple of days after you have left and on different occasions thereafter.

Many partners find that letters tend to be better at helping people combat loneliness because they last a lot longer than phone calls, you can carry them around with you, you can re-read them, you have something that your partner has touched and written, not long ago, you are less likely to argue and say things you don't mean and you can't be cut off at a critical point.

Be aware that you sometimes may not feel like writing because it reminds you that your partner/family member is away. This is a normal coping mechanism - trying to deny your partner/family member is away or simply being sick of writing (it becomes very draining at times). Service personnel, if letters dry up for a while don't assume the worst.

It's very important to keep the communication as open as possible, and on a deep level. The more closely you communicate when you're away (feelings, worries, etc. not just descriptions of what's happening) the easier it is to adjust when you get back together again. You are used to sharing things and don't have to learn to do this again.

Sort out beforehand what sort of information you would like, including what you would like each other to try to put into their letters. And communicate this to each other when you are apart.

Send photos, lots of photos, both ways. Often the more mundane seeming to you the better for your partner or family member. And photos of your home, inside and out, children and yourselves are very important. This way your partner/family member can picture you and your home more easily and can see any changes, especially in children, in hair styles, any new furniture you may have bought etc. and also watch the children as they are growing up. Videos are excellent, so try to get access to one. This is a good example of an area where partners/family members can share and help each other out. You can further combat feelings of loneliness by **sharing** these things with fellow service personnel and fellow partners/family members.

Partners: join clubs, play sports, perhaps do a course that you have always wanted to do but have never seemed to find time for. Try to think of it as time for you to do something you've always wanted to do. This is sometimes easier said than done, especially if arranging babysitting is difficult or expensive for those of you with children. If this is the case, look for courses run by organisations that have crèches, or things like aerobics sessions that have babysitters for children.

Partners, try to ensure, especially for longer deployments, that you have some leave together. Whether you meet overseas or in NZ, try to make it on neutral ground i.e. don't spend the leave at home. If you do spend it at home this means another departure and a feeling of yet again being left at home. However, if it is at home, make sure that you have plenty of time to yourselves. Don't feel that you have to visit friends and family constantly so that you end up getting no time together. One compromise to this that was used successfully by one partner was to hold a party shortly after her partner arrived home, inviting all those people that they felt they ought to see. That way, they 'killed all the birds with one stone', then could spend the remaining time together.

If you have an overseas holiday together, make sure that it is together and not with half the contingent. Those of you with children are going to have to make a decision about whether or not to take them, and this is up to you. But you are less likely to talk to each other and become a couple or a family again if there are other distractions, like other service personnel, there.

Most importantly for partners, sort out now before the service person goes away, what you expect from each other in terms of fidelity and what you want for the future, in terms of your relationship. This will probably be different for each couple, but it is important to establish your own 'code', as a couple.

Most of the stress management techniques can be helpful, particularly *group support*, *ventilating/sharing*, *balanced lifestyle* and *recreation/leisure*.

### **Mission and Information.**

The main concern for most partners/family members is **safety**. This is not helped by rumours, TV news showing film of the more sensational material and often well meaning people exclaiming about how worried you must be. The best way to set minds at rest is **information**, good reliable information. Get information from any reliable source you can - your Point of Contact (POC); Deployed Personnel Support Cell (DPSC) Headquarters Joint Forces New Zealand (HQ JFNZ); welfare staff or the service personnel's unit/ship/base. Pass on **only** reliable information to other partners/family members, not rumours. If you hear what you suspect is a rumour, or if you see something that concerns you in the news, contact your POC, DPSC, HQ JFNZ or an appropriate organisation straight away. They have a responsibility to investigate. *Group support* again is important as is coping skills training (particularly assertiveness skills), *thought stopping* and *relaxation techniques*.

### **Communication.**

To work around a potentially unreliable mail service, date and number your letters, keep records of what you have sent, be careful about what you send - if you don't want to lose something (e.g. rolls of undeveloped film), don't send them. Investigate all other methods of communication - phone calls, faxes, e-mail (people have found this to be an excellent means of communication). If you are not "on the net" at home, try to find other methods of communication within your local camp or base but make sure the service person overseas knows that you are going to do this. Receiving a signal message or a fax can be very frightening - people may assume the worst when they are not expecting to hear from you by a particular source.

Your service person's deployment directive should state exactly what you are entitled to in terms of phone calls for which Defence will meet the cost. Make sure that you use this entitlement. Be aware too that additional own toll calls can be very expensive and add to stress later on when huge phone bills finally make their way home. Make sure you establish which is the cheapest way to make toll calls. It is generally much less expensive to phone from NZ. Contact "Telecom" and "Clear" to find out about any possible discounts you may be able to get. Before you phone your service person, have a list of all the things you want to say - you will waste less time this way and you are less likely to have that dreadful feeling of "Oh no", when you forget something important and know that it will be several weeks before you can speak to each other again. Better still, make a list next to the phone whenever you think of something you want to discuss with your partner/family member rather than trying to make a list at the last moment. You can plan your phone calls using this. During the actual phone call, say "I love you" first, and then deal with other matters. This way you have said the most important thing if you do happen to get cut off. In the past it was necessary, in some countries, to watch what you say, otherwise you could have been cut off. This included criticism of the country and talk of a sexual nature, which was culturally insensitive. Watch out for this if your service person is deploying to a country where this could be the case - nothing could be more frustrating than being cut off on your only call for several weeks.

If you don't hear from each other for a while, try very hard not to assume that your partner/family member doesn't care for you any more. Local holidays, celebrations or festivities can affect in-theatre communications. If you haven't heard from your partner/family member for awhile *refuting irrational ideas* and *self talk* can be used, as well as spending time around people who endorse your relationship and your feelings for each other - e.g. family members and close friends.

### **Family Life Events. \***

You are going to miss some events - birthdays, anniversaries and other occasions. Prior orders with florists and leaving presents with friends can help. Also send cards and mementoes from overseas. Partners/family members, you could get another service person to take a **small** package with them for your service person's birthday or for your anniversary. You could follow it up by sending something else, but the advantage of doing this is that not only does your present arrive on time, but it can become a team event. Some personnel from previous overseas missions, who knew they would miss Christmas, put off celebrating until they came home, or celebrated it prior to going.

If you have parties or celebrations, try to take photos or preferably videos, of the event either to send to your partner/family member or to view after they return home. Tape recordings of messages can also be effective. Some things will be especially difficult, like births and deaths. Support from each other and *group support* will be of utmost importance during these times. If there is a death in the family in NZ and you really want to be able to get home, make sure you tell someone about it and see that they do what they can to effect this. For things like births, you could use the media. Not to televise the whole thing! But they could perhaps do a story on the situation. Again your own photos etc. will help as will family support.

## Other Family Members. \*

Tell other family members how they can make things easier for you and what things they are doing that make it more difficult for you. Establish a method of distributing information so that you don't feel that you are the point of contact for everyone. And, if you really find it hard to get on with some of them simply don't see them or contact them. Look after yourself first - you certainly deserve to. *Coping skills training* (particularly assertiveness skills), *refuting irrational ideas* and *self talk* (you **don't** have responsibility for everyone), *time out* and *humour* can be helpful.

## Your Health and Well-being. \*

This may be a difficult one to deal with, especially for those of you with children who worry about who will look after the children if you are unwell. Make sure your *diet* is adequate, that you are getting some form of enjoyable exercise, that you have a *balanced lifestyle*. If you do have any problems, either of a physical or emotional nature, seek help and support. Family and friends are generally only too happy to help, but they won't necessarily know that you need help if you don't say anything. If you are starting to feel run down and you can get away for a few days then go to stay with someone and let them do a few things for you, e.g. cooking. It can be quite a relief and a break to be away from your home for a while. If you are having difficulty sleeping, use the tips enclosed in this booklet. If you are nervous when you are alone in a house at night, buy a portable phone, speak to your neighbours and work out exactly what you will do if you suspect someone is outside or inside your house, have someone to stay (but be careful - this is often a lot more stressful if it doesn't work out), see the MPs, the civilian police force, get security latches, deadlocks and sensor lights installed, if this is within your budget. You may be able to get help from the military to install these things.

*Self-talk* is important - you **are** worth looking after, *thought stopping* when imagining all sorts of scenarios from one small noise late at night, *diet*; *exercise* and *relaxation techniques* are important to maintain health.

## Household Issues.

First of all, get things in perspective. Sometimes these issues are not very big, but they all add up to suddenly make you feel overwhelmed. Make a list of the things that concern you and decide which you can deal with, how you are going to deal with them and prioritise them. Then get onto them. Try not to stew over them - doing something about them gets you into action and hopefully will prevent this. You may need some help or advice for some of the issues. Ask other people, for example your POC, your parents or parents-in-law, community self-help groups for specific issues; e.g. child care, legal and financial affairs, budgeting etc. Make a note of those things for which you feel you need your partner's advice, write to them and also note them on your steadily growing list of things to talk about on your next phone call. Be aware of time frames, however, as this may turn out to be impracticable in the end. Try the fax machine, e-mail or a trusted friend. And have confidence in yourself and your ability to make decisions. Use *time management*, *group support* and *refuting irrational ideas* (don't expect to manage **everything** by yourself).

## Support. \*

You are **entitled** to support while your partner/family member is away and it is a Defence responsibility to ensure that you get this support. So, please, do not ever feel that you cannot ask for help. Be persistent! If you meet with a negative response try someone else, preferably someone higher up the command chain. However, be reasonable with your requests, as to be otherwise could be self-defeating.

Take advantage of all the different sources of help that you have:

- a. Unit POC. Remember that this should work for single personnel as well. It is a good idea to make friends with your POC, so that it is easier for them to approach you. Some people find it a good idea to choose friends as POCs, but others have found it better **not** to have close friends as they feel awkward about comeback if things are not done to their satisfaction.
- b. Unit OC/CO.
- c. Padres.
- d. Psychologists (refer to page 67 for contact numbers).
- e. Welfare/Deployment Support Officers (W/DSO) and Community Services Officers (CSOs) (refer to page 67 for contact numbers).
- f. Organisations in the civilian community - Citizen's Advice Bureaux (CAB), counselling services, 'helping' agencies, church groups etc.
- g. Other partners/family members. Don't feel shy about contacting each other - think how you would feel if someone phoned you. Research has shown that when people are deployed, the most effective source of support for partners, parents and other family members is people in the same situation.

Some ideas for group support are:

- (1) Take the opportunity for getting together with other people whose partners/family members are away and organise regular functions. Take it in turns to organise simple functions on a regular basis. SATS (Air Force) flights are available for next-of-kin and family, if you are feeling adventurous.
- (2) Those of you who have children and live in the same area could arrange to take 'time out' from your children by organising a roster for childcare.
- (3) Go to any functions that are organised, if you can. If you don't like a particular type of function, still go to it, but perhaps you could also organise a different type of function for the next month.
- (4) Share news, photos etc. with other partners/family members. A casual and easy function might be an afternoon tea with a video screening and showing some photos.

Tell people if they are providing inappropriate types of support. Some people who cannot imagine being parted from their partner/family member for even one day/night, may say things like "you poor thing, I don't know how you can possibly cope". Comments like these are not very constructive and they can also imply that perhaps you **shouldn't** be able to cope. As we well know, military life in particular, means simply getting stuck in and dealing with things.

*Group support* is absolutely essential; *coping skills* and *self-talk* are also helpful.

### **Career Management Issues. \***

Service personnel, if you have the time, try to find out about your next posting or course **before** you go. This is so that you can begin to make arrangements or decisions before you go, especially if the posting falls hard on the heels of your RTNZ. Partners, if you hear something about a possible future posting for your partner while they are away, check it out. Phone either your POC or unit OC/CO. There is no point worrying over something that is only a rumour. Make sure you bring it up with your partner (chances are, they won't have heard about it). As much as possible try to communicate what you **both** want to do about it. Ensure that your unit OC/CO knows how you feel about it. Service personnel, you could also write a formal letter in theatre. At home and overseas do what you can then forget about it - you may need to use *thought stopping*.

### **Pre-deployment Promises.**

Ensure that you know what to do if you need something and be prepared to stand on your own feet as much as possible. This way, you also assert some control over the situation rather than waiting for things to happen around you. *Bitch sessions* with other partners/family members may help you get rid of some anger and frustration. However, be careful that these do not cause further bitterness and increase the frustration.

### **Finances. \***

Have an emergency bank account and ensure, **before** the deployment, that the person looking after the bank accounts (this usually tends to be someone in NZ) receives the pay-slips. If you have difficulty with finances during the deployment, get your POC to check pays etc are going through properly. Seek budgeting help, perhaps through the Citizens Advice Bureau. Also be aware that loans are available through the Welfare Fund (Army). In real emergencies you could get your POC or unit OC/CO to help with this. Perhaps notify and explain to appropriate organisations that your partner/family member is deploying and that, on the odd occasion, difficulties with finances, or the administration of finances, may occur. This may eliminate any unpleasant situations that could possibly arise.

### **Social Life.**

Make sure that you do things that you enjoy socially. You have a right to enjoy yourself. You may find that your preferences for socialising change, and that's fine. Ask people to visit and to dinner - that way you should get plenty of invitations in return. You don't have to place yourself under extra stress by preparing cordon bleu meals - you could have a supper party, a pot luck dinner, a take-aways evening, a



games evening etc. One of the most enjoyable things for partners during deployments can be developing their social life. This is perhaps because they are doing it as an individual, so that their worth as a person is endorsed, not just as one half of a couple. Try not to become a recluse. Partners look out for each other and if you suspect that this is happening to another partner, involve them in activities with other people. Aim for a *balanced lifestyle* and don't ignore *recreation and leisure*.

### **Support for Partner/Family Member. \***

Try to share the load when it comes to providing support for your partner/family member when they are in theatre. Family and friends will probably often ask you what to send. This can be annoying in itself, especially when you are racking your brains to try to come up with things to send.

However, take them up on it - photocopy the list of things to send in this booklet. Or organise "week about" with another family member, so that you are not constantly trying to find and buy things to send. Some *time out* from the responsibility of supporting your partner may be all you need. And, service personnel, when you are overseas, provide some feedback about the things you receive - what you liked, what you didn't like, how they travelled etc. And, if you want something, don't **always** ask your partner/parents, ask other people instead.

### **Administrative Matters.**

At times these can be difficult, especially for people who do not know the system. So, pass it on to someone who **does** know the system e.g. POC. If no response is forthcoming (and, remember some things can take a while in the military), try again, then raise it with someone else e.g. unit OC/CO. Be reasonable but persistent. Gain some control over the situation.

### **Inequities between Contingents.**

Try to live with these as best you can. In terms of types of support, turn it around and use the situation to your advantage. Obviously, if someone else is receiving support that you are not, it must be a reasonable request, so let this help you if you feel awkward about asking. Differences in allowances are another thing you have to just bear with.

## ***Household Preparation Tip Sheet***

The following information has been provided by personnel who have deployed previously and has contributed to better preparing them and their family for deployment. It is recommended that personnel and partners, if relevant, consider the list and identify any relevant.

### 1. Finance considerations:

- Joint accounts
- Partner's knowledge of how to use internet banking
- Bills/invoices due dates
- Automatic payments to pay bills
- Money available for emergencies

### 2. Household considerations:

- Lawn mower operating/Lawns organised to be mown
- Pet vaccinations up-to-date (since required if lodged at a cattery)
- Pet food stock at home
- Contact details for the veterinarian
- Ensure home maintenance is organised prior to deployment
- Security of home (burglary etc)
- Organising the feeding of pets

### 3. Management of own role

- Management of study
- Out of office on work computer
- Fatigue management
- Prior preparation for role, reading exercise instructions, studying.
- Ask someone who has been on a few deployments, especially someone who has already been on that deployment that you are going on.

From: Beccard, M (2011). PDT Psychology Needs Survey, RNZAF, Auckland

## **Contact and Contingency Plan Tip Sheet**

The following information was provided by personnel who have deployed previously and has contributed to better preparing them and their family for deployment in relation to communication and contingency management. It is recommended that personnel and partners, if relevant, consider the list and identify any relevant

1. Communicate expectations and contingency plans:
  - Talk through the 'what ifs' with partner as relevant to your family/household
  - Explain work routine so partner/family know when not contactable
  - Plan time together with partner/family when return
  - Identify a support person/family available for your partner/family in the event of an emergency
  - Introduce partner/family to another partner/family in unit who has a similar home life, e.g. flats or have children
  
2. Identify means of contact whilst deployed:
  - Ensure Skype is working on all computers and partner/family understand how to use Skype
  - Provide own contact details and times most likely contactable when deployed
  - Provide contact numbers of Unit members/Unit Commander or Unit in case of emergency.
  - Identify/discuss with partner/family knows who in the workplace who she is comfortable talking to about any issues if she is unable to talk to me whilst deployed
  
3. Ensure Unit and other family support:
  - Introduce them to a similar family who have already been through the process

From: Beccard, M (2011). PDT Psychology Needs Survey, RNZAF, Auckland

# The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

A summary of an article by Kathleen Vestal Logan

**A deployment can be an emotional experience both for those deploying and those left behind. Understanding the emotions surrounding separations caused by deployments and realising that these emotions are perfectly normal can make it a lot easier for everyone.**

A model, called the Emotional Cycle of Deployment, was developed for use within the United States Navy. It describes changes in partners' behaviour and emotions during deployments of three months or more. It is also useful as a guide for understanding emotions relating to shorter deployments. Although it was initially developed for the partner who remained at home, the model is also useful for understanding some of the separation-related emotions of the deployed partner and children.

It is important to understand that the ECOD is a **model**. It is an attempt to tie together a number of concepts. Whilst it appears to be true for most people, this does not mean that it should be true for **you**. You may feel that some parts are relevant and some are not. You may find that you experience many of the emotions described in the model, but in a different order or for different lengths of time than the model suggests. That's fine. The model represents an attempt to help you understand and interpret your feelings in the hope that the entire deployment/separation process is a little easier for you.

Different circumstances may vary the applicability of the model, for example, different amounts of notice prior to deployment, different lengths of deployment, and differences in ability to meet your partner part-way through the deployment and differing personal circumstances. Most people, no matter what their circumstance, find something of relevance in the model.

Finally, the model does not attempt to **tell** you how to deal with different emotions and behaviours. Some ideas are suggested, but it is presented on the basis that acknowledging the whole range of feelings, "both "positive" and "negative", is the first step towards dealing with them in a healthy manner.

## The Emotional Cycle of Deployment (ECOD)

Getting ready for a deployment often starts long before the deploying partner actually walks out the door. For a long time both partners ignore the deployment, fantasising that it will not happen. Eventually, something happens to trigger recognition of the reality of departure, perhaps a flip of a calendar so that '**The Date**' is visible. The recognition of the fact that the departure is going to occur is the point at which the Emotional Cycle of Deployment (ECOD) begins. The ECOD has seven stages.

## Stage One - Anticipation of Loss

This stage occurs four to six weeks before the deployment and can be characterised by the following:

- It may be hard for the partner remaining at home to accept that their deploying partner is leaving.
- The partner remaining at home may find themselves crying unexpectedly. This helps to release pent-up emotions.
- The couple may bicker, or argue, more often than usual. This is not a sign that something is wrong with their relationship but an attempt to distance themselves emotionally to subconsciously try to make the separation easier.
- Other frequent symptoms of this stage include restlessness, depression and irritability. In addition partners at home often feel angry or resentful while deploying partners feel guilty.

### General Suggestions:

- allow yourself to feel and express your full range of emotional responses
- encourage all family members to share their feelings
- reassure your partner of your love and commitment
- involve the whole family in preparing for the separation
- create opportunities for warm, lasting memories
- try to see the deployment as a challenging opportunity for growth
- remember that the deployment is not for ever

<b>For the Deploying Partner:</b>	<b>For the Partner Staying:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• share honestly all you can about the deployment</li><li>• choose favourite family photos to take with you</li><li>• make a list of all important family occasions; take cards with you</li><li>• <i>if you have children</i>, record tapes of you reading their favourite stories</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• take photos of your partner doing routine activities</li><li>• build a solid support network for yourself</li><li>• set realistic goals for yourself</li><li>• have concrete, written plans for an unexpected family crisis and/or emergency</li></ul>

## Stage Two - Detachment and Withdrawal

This stage occurs during the final days before departure and in many ways it is the most difficult as the relationship is out of the couple's control. It is characterised by the following:

- There is much trying to squeeze activities etc. into the remaining time together and the partner remaining at home in particular often feels tired and lacking in energy. Making decisions can be difficult.
- There is sometimes a sense of despair or helplessness as nothing either the partner remaining at home or deploying partner can do can change the fact that the deployment is going to happen.
- The couple may become less close, not sharing thoughts and feelings with each other. They may also experience a change in their desire for sex. Even though the couple may think "we've got to have sex; this is it for six months", the female in particular often finds it difficult to be that close just before a separation. This can cause problems if it is seen as rejection rather than as a reaction to difficult circumstances.
- This can be an uncomfortable stage, with perhaps an unspoken hope that the deployment won't occur but also a feeling, on the part of both the deploying partner and the partner remaining at home, that the sooner the deploying partner leaves the better. In addition, whilst both partners are physically in the same house, emotionally they may have separated.

### General Suggestions:

- accept your feelings as normal reactions to challenging circumstances, and not signs of rejection
- communicate as openly and honestly as possible
- be patient with yourself, your partner and, if you have them, your children

<b>For the Deploying Partner:</b>	<b>For the Partner Staying:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• if possible complete your packing and preparation early so that the last day and evening can be family time</li><li>• accept your excitement about the deployment as natural and normal, without expecting your family to share your feelings</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• try to take good care of yourself - nutrition, sleep, exercise, hobbies, social support</li><li>• ignore the rumours, try to rely on official sources of information concerning the departure and the deployment</li></ul>

## Stage Three - Emotional Disorganisation

This occurs just after the deploying partner goes away and may be difficult for both partner deploying and partner remaining at home. Both have to get used to a change in lifestyle and no matter how well prepared they think they are, the actual deployment can still come as a shock. Stage Three lasts about six weeks after the partner deploying goes away and during this time the following can occur:

- Partners at home may feel numb, aimless, without purpose and depressed. Sometimes they withdraw from contact with friends and neighbours, especially if friends' partners are at home. Other common feelings of this stage include restlessness, confusion, disorganisation, indecisiveness and irritability. The unspoken question is: "What am I going to do with this hole in my life?"
- Partners remaining at home can often feel overwhelmed as they face total responsibility for family matters. Deployed partners have reported feeling "lonely and frustrated".
- Some partners at home have difficulty sleeping, particularly those who feel unsafe on their own at nights. Others sleep excessively. Deployed partners too can have difficulty sleeping because of all that they have been experiencing in their new environment.
- In summary this is a stage characterised by both deployed partner and partner remaining at home getting used to and adjusting to their new situation. This stage usually passes within a few weeks as people adjust but some partners at home never move out of this stage, and find the deployment a very unhappy experience.

### General Suggestions:

- communicate - keep in touch about everyday events, and share your feelings to maintain the emotional bond
- date and number letters so that your partner can read them in sequence
- try to end phone calls on a positive note - it may be a long wait before the next call

<b>For the Deployed Partner:</b>	<b>For the Partner at Home:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• share as much as you can about your daily life and work</li> <li>• <i>if you have children</i>, write separate letters to them periodically</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintain the healthy self-care practises you established before the departure, participate in group support, whether formal or informal</li> <li>• <i>if you have children</i>, help them to express their feelings and to stay in touch with their absent parent</li> </ul>

## Stage Four – Recovery and Stabilisation

At some stage in the deployment both partners come to the realisation that they are doing really well. They have become used to their new situation or environment and have established new routines. This can be a very satisfying stage as it is filled with personal growth for both partners. Other behaviours and feelings typical of this stage include:

- People feel good about themselves: each new experience adds to their self-confidence.
- People feel more comfortable with their roles and responsibilities.
- Partners at home cultivate new sources of support through friends, work, church, partners groups etc. They also tend to contact old friends they haven't contacted for some time.
- Partners at home have a new sense of freedom and independence. They may begin to feel asexual as there is not much contact with the other sex and they are doing the things that their deployed partners usually do. They live the life of a "single person" and become so independent that they unconsciously refer to things, which belong to the couple as their own. For example, saying "my house" and "my car" instead of "our house" and "our car".
- This stage is one of the benefits of the deployment for the partner remaining at home as it is a time for much growth and development which may otherwise not occur.
- This stage, however, can also be difficult. Generally, partners at home on their own tend not to eat as well as when their deployed partner is home, and the stress of the deployment can contribute towards increased frequency of minor illness. For those partners remaining at home who "get stuck" at Stage Three, the continued isolation from not only their partner but their family and friends can leave them vulnerable, uncertain and unhappy.

### General Suggestions:

- enjoy new skills, freedom and independence
- celebrate positive signs of growth in yourself, partner and, if you have them, children
- offer empathy and support to family, friends, colleagues in need

For the Deployed Partner:	For the Partner at Home:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintain regular contact with family – mail (letters, tapes, gifts), phone calls, faxes, E-mail, etc.</li> <li>• participate in formal defusings following critical incidents.</li> <li>• confide in trusted colleagues</li> <li>• acknowledge and refer to your partner's activities and achievements. This implies interest and recognition of their contributions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• share your feelings of pride and self confidence, reassuring your partner that you still long for the separation to end</li> <li>• share ideas for care packages with other partners of deployed personnel</li> <li>• <i>if you have children</i>, encourage and assist them to keep the absent parent a vital part of the family</li> </ul>



## Stage Five – Anticipation of Homecoming

About four to six weeks before the deployed partner returns, partners at home often feel that time is running out, and all the things that they planned to do before the return date are not going to get done. There is often a shift in focus back to the deployed partner and their return. The following thoughts and emotions are often present at this time:

- Feelings of joy and excitement about being together again.
- Sometimes there are also feelings of apprehension. Although the partners at home generally want their deployed partners back, they may wonder what they are going to have to give up or change. They have to “make room” for the deployed partner, as the “hole” that existed when their deployed partners went away did get filled.
- Deployed partners may also be anxious about any changes that may have taken place at home. For example: will they still be needed, will their toddler recognise them, will there still be room for them in this family that seems to be coping so well without them.
- Many partners at home bury their concerns in work. There can be a sense of restlessness and confusion. Decisions are often harder to make and often they are postponed until the homecoming. Some partners at home become irritable and may experience changes in appetite.

### General Suggestions:

- share your feelings of apprehension as well as excitement and joy
- share your expectations and desires for homecoming
- reassure your partner of your love and commitment
- *if you have children*; include them in planning for the homecoming celebration  
plan some special family time with them

<b>For the Returning Partner:</b>	<b>For the Partner at Home:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• relay only officially confirmed information about your return (date, time, location) to your family</li><li>• read the RTNZ information which is sent to you in theatre (Participate in in-theatre psychological debriefs, if they occur)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ignore rumours and try to wait patiently for official date, time, location information on your partner’s return</li><li>• read the reunion information sent out to you</li></ul>

## Stage Six – Renegotiation of the Relationship

This stage occurs immediately after the deployed partner's return and can last for several weeks. Whilst partners are together again **physically**, it usually takes some time before they feel close **emotionally**. Both partners have to stop being 'single' and concentrate on being a couple again. Stage Six is characterised by the following:

- Many partners who remained at home feel some loss of freedom and independence, while others are content to assume a dependent role.
- Many of the routines established during the deployed partner's absence are disrupted. This can cause some partners who remained at home to feel disorganised, out of control and a little resentful. Sometimes it feels as if the deployed partner is intruding. The deployed partner, on the other hand, can feel like a stranger around the home.
- Both partners need to communicate with each other and share their feelings about things that have happened and their current situation. There is a tendency for deployed partners, particularly, to talk to their 'mates' who deployed with them as these are the people that they are more used to being with. Partners at home can feel resentful and hurt if this is the case.
- The couple needs time to become reacquainted and to renew their relationship. Sexual relations, often ardently desired prior to homecoming, may now seem somewhat frightening. Many females need to feel close before they want sexual relations. Males are often keen to assume sexual relations shortly after their return and these differing desires can lead to feelings of hurt and rejection.

This stage is an important one as it can affect the couple's future relationship. It is a time when the changes that have occurred during the deployment need to be evaluated. Sometimes there will be major adjustments in roles and responsibilities within the relationship.

Although this stage can be difficult, because couples have to adjust, change and re-evaluate, couples often report that it can also lead to an enriched relationship which allows for each partner's growth.

### General Suggestions:

- communicate as openly and honestly as possible – accept your feelings as normal and not a threat to the relationship
- try to be patient with yourself and your partner
- renegotiate your roles and responsibilities – the workload can again be shared but perhaps in a new way
- continue to participate in support group / network
- seek professional assistance (Field Psychologists, Chaplains, Doctors) for continuing signs of stress or other concerns – you do not have to wait until your "Follow-Up" Debrief)

## **Stage Seven – Reintegration and Stabilisation**

Several weeks after the deployed partner has returned new routines have been established for the family, and family members feel comfortable with each other again. There is a sense of being a couple and a family again. They are back on the same track emotionally and can enjoy the warmth and closeness of being a family again.

### **General Suggestions:**

- relax and enjoy yourself and your family!
- make the necessary arrangements (baby sitters, etc.) so that you can both attend your “Follow-Up Debrief”

# The Bright Side

Upon returning to New Zealand, personnel who have deployed and partners who have remained at home usually report that *the overall deployment experience was a positive one*, which involved both personal and professional growth. The following are some of the benefits people have gained from the deployment experience:

## **For the Person Deploying:**

- Experience
- Knowledge
- Skills
- Personal Growth
- Travel
- Money
- Closer to Partner/Family
- Different Cultures
- Changed Priorities

## **For the Partner / Family Member Remaining at Home:**

- Personal Growth
- Good Friends
- New Interests
- Travel
- Increased: independence  
flexibility  
direction  
social ability  
confidence  
competence
- Close to Partner/Family Member

# Suggested Things to Send to Deployed Personnel

## Communication

Letters

Tapes

Photos

Videos of family / unit / sports events / children

Paintings and pictures by children

Fax Messages

E-Mail Messages

Cards – Birthdays, Anniversaries, Christmas, New Years, Fathers / Mothers Day, Valentines Day

Postcards

“Lazy Letters”

## Recreation

Books, Magazines

Newspapers, news clippings

Videos of news, sport, favourite TV programmes

Music Tapes/CDs

Anything with a real NZ ‘flavour’ (eg: NZ scenic calendar)

Small size Board Games, a packet of cards

Crossword puzzles

Party things - eg: Christmas crackers, balloons, etc

Cartoons

## Foodstuffs

Anything typically NZ that can be posted through Customs

**e.g.:** Marmite, Minties, Oddfellows, Moro Bars, Chocolate etc (cold climates only!)

Dried Fruit – fresh fruit can be in short supply in some countries

Dried Vegetables – tomatoes, etc. to flavour food

Nuts /Chips

“Scroggin” mixes from the ‘self –serve’ bins at the Supermarket

Canned Food **e.g.:** tins of flavoured tuna, fruit etc

Drink / Juice / Soup Sachets (send in snap-lock bag in case the packing breaks!)

Cup of Soups

“Just Add Boiling Water” - dehydrated snacks

**e.g.:** Noodles, Pasta, Rice Mixes, Hash Brown Mix (Continental)

Muesli Bars, ‘Le Snack’, ‘Roll-Ups’ (fruit leather)

Lollies, Chewing-Gum, Liquorice

Vitamins, Supplements

Food for special occasions

**e.g.:** Christmas – Nuts, Easter – Marshmallow Eggs

Biscuits

## Miscellaneous

Any favourite brands of:

Soap

Toothpaste

Shampoo

Moisturiser

Razors

Deodorant

## CHILDREN AND DEPLOYMENTS

### THE FAMILY RESOURCE PACKAGE

Deployments impact upon children as well. As a result of this, the NZDF has developed the Family Resource Package, which includes resources for children and their parents. This package includes a booklet and DVD for parents and other significant care givers or teachers, and a range of children's booklets developed for children of different ages. Further information and support on children and deployments can be obtained *at any time during the deployment*, by contacting one of the NZDF Psychologists or other support personnel employed by the NZDF. Numbers for these people are on page 72.

Additional resources in relation to children and deployments can be found on-line. Some useful sites are listed below:

[www.skylight.org.nz](http://www.skylight.org.nz)

[www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

[www.sgtmoms.com](http://www.sgtmoms.com)

[www.armycommunityservice.org](http://www.armycommunityservice.org)

[www.lifelines.usmc.mil](http://www.lifelines.usmc.mil)



# Telephone List:

Name	Address	Phone No

# NZDF Contact Numbers

<b>NZDF Director of Psychology</b>		
LT COL Steve Kearney	DPE, NZDF, Wellington	(04) 498 6851
SQNLDR Jennifer Atkinson	DPE, NZDF, Wellington	(04) 498 6850
<b>HQ JFNZ</b>		
Maj Alana MacDonald	HQ JFNZ, Trentham	(04) 529 6121
<b>RNZN Psychology Services</b>		
LTCDR Matt Harrison SP(N)	HMNZS Naval Base Devonport	(09) 445 5867
LTCDR Verity Ratcliffe	HMNZS Naval Base Devonport	(09) 445 5546
Capt Geoff Sutton	HMNZS Naval Base Devonport	(09) 445 5094
<b>NZ Army Psychology Services</b>		
Maj Erik Fraser SP(A)	Army General Staff, Wellington	(04) 498 6854
	<b>Auckland Area, as above</b>	(04) 498 6854
Capt Daniel Ford	Army General Staff, Wellington	(04) 496 0746
	<b>Waiouru Military Camp</b>	(06) 387 5035
Lt Sam Williams	<b>Linton Military Camp</b>	(06) 351 9008
Miss Amy Aldridge	<b>Linton Military Camp</b>	(06) 351 9088
LT Nina Reid	<b>Burnham Military Camp</b>	(03) 363 0318
<b>RNZAF Psychology Services</b>		
SQNLDR Maurice Jennings SP(F)	Air Staff Wellington	(04) 496 0385
FLTLT Wendy Knight	RNZAF Base Whenuapai	(09) 417 7729
FLTLT Megan Hodges	RNZAF Base Whenuapai	(09) 417 7799
FLTLT Carolyn Pezaro	RNZAF Base Ohakea	(06) 351 5446
FLTLT Alan Baker	RNZAF Base Ohakea	(06) 351 5157
	RNZAF Base Woodbourne	(03) 577 7550
<b>Community Service Officers and Welfare/Deployment Support Officers</b>		
Navy Social Workers	RNZN Naval Base Devonport	(09) 445 5536 (09) 445 5538
<b>After Hours</b>		0800 NAVYHELP
CSO	<b>Waiouru Military Camp</b>	(06) 387 5531
CSO	<b>Linton Military Camp</b>	(06) 351 9970
Janine Burton	<b>Linton Military Camp</b>	(06) 351 9399
CSO	<b>Trentham Military Camp</b>	(04) 527 5029
CSO	<b>Burnham Military Camp</b>	0800 683 77 327
Carol Voyce	<b>Burnham Military Camp</b>	(03) 363 0322 (03) 363 0421 0800 337 569
Deana Lye	RNZAF Base Whenuapai	(09) 417 7035
	RNZAF Base Ohakea	(06) 351 5640
Trevor Stone	Air Staff Wellington	(04) 498 6773
Claudia Baker	RNZAF Base Woodbourne	(03) 577 1177



## References

- Barrow, I. and Place, H. (1986). *Relax and Come Alive*. Auckland: Heinemann.
- Davis, M.; Eshelman, E. R. and McKay, M. (1982). *The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.
- Goldstein, S. (1982). *Divorced Parenting: How to Make it Work*. London: Methuen Mandarin.
- Hanson, P. (1987). *The Joy of Stress*. London: Pan.
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## Further Reading

- Bolton, R. (1989). *People Skills: How to Assert Yourself, Listen to Others, and Resolve Conflicts*. Brookvale, NSW: Simon Schuster
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- Kreitler, P. and Bruns, B. (1981). *Affair Prevention: Specific Techniques That Can Strengthen and Protect Your Marriage*. New York: Macmillan.
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- Smith, R. K. and Tessina, T. B. (1987). *How To Be a Couple and Still Be Free*. North Hollywood, CA: Newcastle Publishing Co Ltd.
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Please remember when reading this booklet that:

- (1) Each deployment and personal circumstance is unique and hence the challenges faced reflect this.
- (2) The resources in this booklet are a reflection of what past deployers/families have benefited from and lessons learnt they have passed on as well.
- (3) Repeat deployers can have an important role in supporting others and their knowledge base of these issues enable them to help.