



Growth Mindset & Mindfulness in First Responders

Growth mindset and mindfulness skills are aimed to support the health, humanity, and performance in first responders. Attitudes and skills can also support the ability for first responders to thrive through adversity while discovering their own wisdom in adopting strategies for recovery, flexibility, and momentum toward sustained post-traumatic growth.

Impact on First Responders

- Data shows that first responders are suffering from duty-related illnesses at significant frequency and intensity
- First responders are at a high risk of
 - Chronic and acute trauma injury
 - Duty related metabolic disorder
- First responders are at risk for clinical depression, sleeping problems and chronic fatigue
- Chronic fatigue reduces cognitive performance

How you think about stress matters!

"Stress happens to me and I have to survive it" can be changed to "I experience stress and I can skillfully move through it"

Growth Mindset

- **Integrated medicine.** Build a team of care providers that include your doctor, naturopath, acupuncturist, etc.
- **Mental health coaching.** Psychotherapy on a regular basis
- **Social connection.** Avoid the tendency to isolate. Try to *intentionally* pursue social connection.
- **Pursuit of spirit, awe, adventure, and joy.** Do the things you love that bring you joy. This could mean practicing faith, going to a theatre, experiencing the arts, or doing any remarkable thing that may bring you joy.
- **Meditation**
- **Movement**
- **Gratitude**

Psychological Resilience

- Key individual-level factors that promote resilience
 - **Interoceptive & emotional awareness with self-regulation.** Being aware of what is going on *in* the body, and determining how to regulate it.
 - **Self-efficacy & self-compassion.** Being able to have some internal locus of control over the world around you.
 - **Psychological flexibility.** Making sound and informed decisions.

Mindfulness

- Mindfulness is paying attention *on purpose*. It is important to train your three types of attention
 - Active: focus
 - Passive: mind wandering
 - Meta: situational awareness
- Qualities of mindfulness
 - **Curiosity:** about what we're experiencing
 - **Acceptance:** accepting what we're experiencing
 - **Non-judgment:** accepting what's there
 - **Compassion:** compassion for ourselves
- Skills
 - Awareness of body, feelings, emotions, thoughts and patterns
 - Self-compassion
 - Distress tolerance
 - Boundary maintenance
 - Cognitive empathy
 - Reflection on altruism, meaning, mission, and purpose



Data adapted from "Growth Mindset and Mindfulness in First Responders", a webinar originally held on 4/19/2021. Presented by Lt. Richard Goerling and Chief Jennifer Tejada .



NAMI Maryland can help. Visit www.namimd.org or call 410-884-8691 for more information



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