



City of Albuquerque

EAP Newsletter

"The City of Albuquerque's most valuable asset is its employees!"

June 2021

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Helpful Links for you and your family:

Stress Management and Emotional Wellness

Resources:

[My Stress Tools](#)

Click the link to register for this free online stress-reduction program!

[Free Webinars from the Solutions Group](#)

Click here to sign up for a variety of free Webinars offered by the Solutions Group

[Summer Wellness Tips](#)

This article contains 7 simple tips for staying healthy and prioritizing your own wellness over the summer!

Stress and Resiliency in the Fire Service: Helping Yourself So You Can Help Others By Maia Dalton-Theodore, LCSW, SAP – Director of Behavioral Health, Albuquerque Fire Rescue

Whether Fire fighters are responding to an aggressive fire or saving the life of a civilian after an accident, doing their duty to protect the community can be a challenging and rewarding experience. Fire fighters are expected to be calm, level headed and able to face even the most challenging situations with courage. They have long been expected to contain their feelings and approach their jobs with logic and reason. Saving civilians from fires and other emergencies can be mentally and physically demanding for first responders who depend on their bodies to do their job. While most first responders do a good job of keeping their physical health maintained, they often neglect to keep a tab on their mental wellness. This often manifests itself in the form of high stress levels as a result of traumatic experiences on the job. Many fire fighters have suppressed their feelings which can cause devastating effects on their mental health. The need to protect civilians can wear down even the toughest of firefighters and paramedics.

People who are attracted to firefighting tend to have certain traits that make them good at their jobs, they tend to have a strong attention to detail, and they have a rescue personality and have a high need for stimulation. The work environment is unique and carries its own set of stressors. The ongoing sound of alert tones every time there is a call, physically demanding work, interrupted sleep cycles, shift work, exposure to extreme temperatures and exposure to human suffering are things that most people do not experience in their work place. Life in a fire house is also unique. Because Albuquerque City firefighters and paramedics have 48-hour shifts, they live with each other for days at a time, and often the fire service is the family away from home. Living with each other under high stimulation times can lead to its own set of issues. Sometimes there are personality conflicts with coworkers, a perceived lack of respect from their managers or the public, fear of failure and inadequacy, concerns over promotions, transfers or retirement, family problems, or substance abuse issues.

What is stress? Simply stated, it is the wear and tear of the body caused by living. It is also a state of physical and psychological arousal which is unavoidable. It can motivate us to do better and achieve more and can hinder us if it remains chronic. First responders need to be aware of and on the lookout for cumulative stress, which can develop if stress becomes chronic. It is also known as burnout. When incidents pile up over time, your job performance, relationships and health deteriorate over time and you can begin to show symptoms. These symptoms can include cynicism, procrastination, feeling lethargic, having a sense of a shortened future and eventually suicidal and homicidal thoughts.

To make your careers as productive and rewarding as possible and to help you maintain a balance with your personal life, it is important to work on resiliency. What is this trait? George Valliant of Harvard University states that "Resilient individuals are those who resemble a fresh green living twig - when twisted out of shape, such a twig bends but does not break. Instead it springs back and continues to grow". Resilient individuals have the ability to make realistic plans, have skills in problem solving, and have confidence in their strengths and capabilities. It develops over time and can be learned. It is about pride and the feeling that you have been tested and have prevailed.

Crisis Management

Resources:

[AGORA CRISIS CENTER](#)

1-866-HELP-1-NM

[NEW MEXICO CRISIS AND](#)

[ACCESS LINE](#)

1-855-NMCRISIS

[SUICIDE PREVENTION](#)

[LIFELINE](#)

1-800-273-TALK

[NATIONAL DOMESTIC](#)

[VIOLENCE HOTLINE](#)

1-800-799-SAFE

[HOPELINE: CALL OR TEXT](#)

1-877-235-4525

We'd Love to Hear From you!

Please call or email us for more information on our program or to set up an appointment! Our contact info is below!

Phone (8am-5pm):

(505) 768-4613

Email:

eap@cabq.gov

After Hours Phone:

(505) 254-3335

[TalkSpace](#) is a text therapy platform free to CABQ Employees and family members 14 and older (must have Presbyterian Insurance thru CABQ)

To promote psychological wellness, it is important for you to understand your stress response, manage your stress and stress reactions, and work on building your resilience. Much like building muscle memory and strength to make you physically strong, emotional resiliency can be learned and worked on to make you psychologically fit.

What works in the fire service to help you? Camaraderie, dark humor, social support, family support, debriefings after potentially traumatic events and having a fire service identity are some of the things that have been identified.

Changing the fire house environment and establishing one that is supportive and understanding, where everyone is aware of the signs of an issue both within themselves and each other, will go a long way toward removing the stigma around mental health issues. At Albuquerque Fire Rescue, the Behavioral Health program along with the City Employee Assistance Program (EAP), the Members Assistance Program (MAP), Peers and Chaplains is forming into a cohesive support network to help you stay a healthy and productive employee and also to have a quality of life outside of work.

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What I Did (For Me) This Summer

By David Pulliam, CABQ Health and Wellness Coordinator

Summer is the time to take a break from your normal activities, and do things that are fun. It is also the easiest time to do things that are good for you. Often, these things can be fun too. The weather is nice, and it is the perfect time to get outside and enjoy it. Going for a walk, taking a hike in the mountains, swimming in a pool or lake, canoeing or kayaking, riding a bike or horse, playing softball or catch with your kids, trying a round of golf or a bucket at the driving range, or any activity that gets you outside and moving is a great escape from your normal routine. It is a fun way to spend time with family or friends, or a good activity by yourself, as long as you take basic precautions. It doesn't have to be elaborate or expensive to be enjoyable, but you can also plan a vacation or long weekend that includes activity and experiences. It is the perfect time to try something new or just experience your regular activity in new surroundings. Opportunity is knocking, get off of your couch and answer.

A quick, common sense reminder: If you are going in nature or out for adventure by yourself, make sure to let someone know your plans and location, and take a charged phone. Summer is also the best time to improve your eating habits. Fresh fruit and vegetables are in abundant supply, and there are more varieties to choose. Add some to each meal. If you are grilling, try grilling vegetables or fruits. Even if you are not normally a fan of certain vegetables or fruits, grilling changes the flavor and texture, and may become your next favorite. Be bold, and try something new. The experience is half the fun. Head to your closest growers' market for supplies, and ask the vendors for an idea or two.

Summer is opportunity. You do not have to do something crazy, but trying a new activity or two can create good memories and keep you active. New activities plus new experiences with food will help you to be healthy, plus provide ways to have fun with your family and friends. And, it will give you something to talk about when you are asked "What did you do this summer"!

Thank You for Reading! Please stay safe and healthy out there!