

## D) CISM / Peer Support CAN HELP with Resiliency

- Research shows that people will heal and recover faster from stress by responding to stress appropriately; this is the basis of peer support. Peer support can be as informal as "talking it over" with a trained peer or with a group. Even if you do not want to speak about the incident there is still value in listening to others speak about it. It is **entirely voluntary**, but highly encouraged to participate.
- CAP Peer Support can be considered emotional **first-aid** to help a CAP member's normal coping skills. It is always confidential, supportive, and respectful; it is performed by a peer supporter – a CAP member just like you who knows how to get you the help you need.
- All people who undergo a traumatic or critical incident are affected. Talking and going through a CISM / Peer Support is a sign of strength and maturity because it means that you are taking an active role in your health.
- CISM is a proven process that will help you heal and return to your previous state of health by talking (or listening if you choose not to talk) about the normal process your mind goes through after an incident or trauma.

### Request Help (24x7)

- **If you would like to speak with a CAP Critical Incident Stress Management / Peer Supporter contact your Chain of Command, Wing CISM Officer, OR call the CAP National Operations Center at 888-211-1812 ext 300 (24x7) who will coordinate with the appropriate help that best fits your needs. Just say that you want to talk to the CISM Team. You don't need to tell anyone why you want to talk.**
- **If you want to speak confidentially with a suicide phone coach call the suicide prevention lifeline at 1-800-273-8266 or text for free at 838255.**

This document or the accompanying presentation found on the CAP Safety website may be used by CISM, Health Services, or Safety Officers as one way to satisfy the monthly safety requirement (when approved by the local safety officer).



## Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) and Resiliency Program Monthly Training – May 2015 Emotional Awareness

By understanding what triggers our emotions and being aware on how we respond to our emotions, we can regulate and use our emotions to our advantage. This will make all CAP members more resilient to life's challenges. Being able to mentally "get up" when knocked down is the goal.

### Having Emotional Awareness and knowing what triggers our emotions will help by:

- **Increasing your positive emotions;**
- **Allowing you to navigate around emotional traps;**
- **Allowing you to choose better responses to stress;**
- **Allowing you to help other people to understand how to be aware of their own emotions.**

**A) How Emotions Work:** Emotions are a momentary reaction to a specific situation because of a trigger. Emotions mark a specific situation or event and produce a memory of that event.

- When a situation occurs (like getting called for an ES mission) AND you have an emotion (excitement) you will remember that situation better and be more likely to respond the same way the next time that situation occurs (the next ES mission your excited energy will be better harnessed and enable you to be more focused).

**B) Emotion-Thought-Response:** Triggers will cause emotions and those emotions cause a specific thought and physical response. As an example, a person shaking their fist at you is a trigger which causes the emotion of anger, the thought of "am I going to get into a fight", and the response of increased heart rate, breathing rate, pupil size, and blood to your muscles (as well as a reduced ability to think critically).

This document is informational in purpose.

This guidance is not intended to take the place of medical advice.

By having an action plan you will be able to respond more appropriately to your emotions / triggers.

- **Step 1: Identify the Emotion and Trigger**
  - Is your perception of the situation accurate? Consider asking the person to clarify before responding?
  - Is someone setting an “**emotional trap**” for you to respond in a certain way? If so, can you disengage and walk away?
  - Name your emotion in your mind: fear, anxiety, anger, jealousy, sadness, guilt, pride, happiness, attraction, or love. It is important to name the emotion because sometimes we confuse emotions with one another.
- **Step 2: Identify the Thought**
  - What thought did the emotion create in your mind?
  - Is the thought a logical response to the emotion?
  - Have you had a similar experience that you are responding to that has nothing to do with this situation?
- **Step 3: Response**
  - Remember, that your body will have an automatic physical reaction to an emotion:
    - **Negative Emotions (Fear, Anxiety, Anger, Jealousy, Sadness, Guilt):** produce an increased heart rate, change in breathing rate, decreased ability to think critically, a clenched mouth, and eyebrow changes).
    - **Positive Emotions (Pride, Happiness, Attraction/Love):** produce an increased heart rate, a smile on your face, and an increased mood.
  - **TAKE A DEEP BREATH BEFORE YOU RESPOND:** this one-second pause will help you think critically and allow you to react less automatically with a more level head.
- **Step 4: Prepare for the Next Situation**
  - Think critically about how the situation played out and identify if you could have done a better job “stepping around an emotional trap”, or allowing a short pause before you responded.

1

**Emotion / Trigger**

Is your perception accurate? Is this an emotional trap?

2

**Thought**

What thought is in your mind? Is it logical?  
Has this emotion / trigger happened before?

3

**Response: TAKE A BREATH**

This will allow you to respond with a level head.

4

**Prepare for Next Trigger**

Think critically about the situation; could you have responded differently?

**Key points of the Emotion-Thought-Response Action Plan**

- Perform the steps in order when you become aware that you are reacting emotionally.
- The trait of preparing for the next situation by critically thinking about how you could have responded differently is commonly seen in people who are described as good decision makers.
- Taking a deep breath and one-second pause before responding has been shown to produce well thought out and emotionally appropriate responses.
- Consider talking a friend through the four steps if they become stuck in making rapid emotional responses.