



Mismatched: Your Brain Under Stress

Educational Unit

Lesson Plan Module #4: *Resilience for First Responders*

Overview

What are the unique stressors experienced by first responders? First responders are more likely to suffer from psychological distress due to job stress, repeated exposure to trauma, lack of sleep, lack of resources, and working long hours or multiple jobs.

Throughout the years, our communities have experienced many natural and human-caused disasters. During and after these events, the affected communities rely heavily on an effective and efficient response from first responders to be able to recover. But who can first responders rely on to ensure they can recover too? First responders face many difficult and stressful situations as they are the first to arrive on the scene of events involving injuries and loss of life. They often provide emotional as well as physical support to traumatized survivors. These duties often put first responders at risk for secondary or vicarious traumatization.

Mindfulness practices, such as yoga and meditation, have distinct positive effects on physiology. However, these tools of self-regulation and self-healing need to be developed well in advance to promote resiliency and to avoid a traumatic response.

Lesson Objectives

After viewing Episode 4: *Resilience for First Responders*, participants will be able to:

1. Identify causes of stress response in first responders.
2. Define secondary or vicarious trauma.
3. Classify different forms of mindfulness and summarize positive effects.
4. Analyze heart rate variability and determine what characterizes a healthy heart rate.

Vocabulary:

Vicarious Trauma

Mindfulness

Focus Awareness

Open Monitoring

Heart Rate Variability



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Lesson Discussion Points

- What are the different types of stress first responders face?
- How does the physical and psychological strain of the job affect first responders?
- What are some reactions first responders might experience?
- How do mindfulness practices, such as yoga or meditation, help people handle stress?
- How is the heart rate variability affected by stress?
- Why is the heart rate variability a topic for concern with first responders?

Activities:

Activity #1: Relaxation Planning Chart

Take a few minutes to think about ways you relax. If you do not take time to relax, think about what stops you from taking time for yourself. What are some internal barriers you face? External barriers? Complete the table to brainstorm relaxation activities, challenges to relaxation, and possible solutions.

Some things I do now to relax:	1. 2. 3.
What internal barriers do I face?	
How can I overcome these barriers?	
What external barriers do I face?	
How can I overcome these barriers?	



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Activity #2: Watch Video

View Episode #4: *Resilience for First Responders* and discuss content using the discussion questions above.



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Name _____ Grade or Employee Dept _____

Module #4 Quiz: *Resilience for First Responders*

Directions: Please circle the correct answer.

- 1. Sleep is major concern for first responders because:**
 - a. They must work nights
 - b. They must work rotating shifts
 - c. They are not as attentive if sleep deprived
 - d. All of the above

- 2. Exposure to repeated traumatic events over time can cause secondary or vicarious trauma that vary from person to person.**
 - a. True
 - b. False

- 3. Police and first responders that witness another person's trauma can experience:**
 - a. Memory impairment
 - b. Secondary or vicarious trauma
 - c. Wearing down of the heart and muscles
 - d. Exhaustion

- 4. Chief Richard Biehl has an interest in techniques for reducing stress and building resilience.**
 - a. True
 - b. False

- 5. Chief Richard Biehl has a master's degree in:**
 - a. Acute stress
 - b. Mindfulness
 - c. Stress Management
 - d. Yoga



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- 6. One of the first techniques Chief Biehl used to help with depression was:**
 - a. Yoga
 - b. Cognitive therapy
 - c. Biofeedback
 - d. Fight-or-flight response training
- 7. What are the main forms of mindfulness mentioned?**
 - a. Resistance and exclusion
 - b. Alarm reaction and calm reaction
 - c. Focus awareness and open monitoring
 - d. Adaptation and response
- 8. People often go through life on autopilot where thoughts are going on under the surface of awareness which drive many of our thoughts and behaviors.**
 - a. True
 - b. False
- 9. Yoga is a movement practice with regulated breathing where the breathing helps to still the body and the mind.**
 - a. True
 - b. False
- 10. The more variability you have in blood pressure, the healthier you are.**
 - a. True
 - b. False