Broadening the Value of Critical Incident Response

Jeff Gorter, LMSW

What Comes to Mind

“Hard to tell from here. Could be buzzards. Could be grief counselors.”
PTSD Controversy

Are We Asking The Right Question?

A Rose is a Rose…except when its not

- A **Disruptive Event** (formerly Critical Incident) is any event that has the real or perceived power to temporarily disrupt an individual or group’s ability to cope
- Impossible to predict accurately – it’s the **impact**, not the incident
- Crisis, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder

Start With the End in Mind…

- Most CIR models historically were developed in the **First Responder/Public Safety Arena** (i.e. Mitchell Model)
- These models have unknown or indirect relevance to corporate/workplace outcomes following a disruptive event
- Recent debate and research continues to focus almost exclusively on clinical perspectives (i.e. prevention of PTSD)
- Corporate Customers expect specific productivity deliverables
Research – Preliminary Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incident Type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accident/Injury</td>
<td>933</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>5378</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armed Robbery</td>
<td>3609</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td>12728</td>
<td>44.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homicide/Suicide</td>
<td>920</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illness</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layoff/Termination</td>
<td>2295</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Event</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Disaster</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shooting</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat/Violence</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>818</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28942</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Implications and Applications

Top Three Response Categories:
- **Death**
  - Most are natural or accidental
  - Non-work related as well as related to work function
- **Robbery/Armed Robbery**
  - Targeted criminal activity
- **Layoffs/Downsizing/Termination**
  - Planned event with predictable disruption associated

Implications and Applications

Challenge existing concept of CIR
- PTSD is the least likely outcome
- Are EAP customers seeking a clinical intervention or a management tool?
- Data suggests that CIR is most often requested – and presumably valued – more for the later
- Disruptive events (non-traumatizing deaths, downsizing, etc.) are no less impactful from a business continuity perspective
Implications and Applications

Clear opportunity to demonstrate value of EAP
• Goal is as much about a business objective as a clinical outcome
• Disruptive Event Management becomes the focus
• Expands the utility of EAP services to multiple stakeholders
  • Executive Leadership
  • Risk Management
  • Enterprise Resilience
  • Business Continuity
  • Safety

A Commitment to Resilience

• Resilience is the most common trajectory (Bonano)
• Efforts should be directed to promote resilience vs. pursuing pathology (iatrogenic effect)
• Organizational Resilience and Personal Resilience are closely aligned

Promoting Resilience

Watch your Language!
A Little Knowledge is a Dangerous thing

The Trauma Culture

We live in a culture of trauma that needlessly reinforces personal narratives of victimization (Chase, 2005).

A culture of trauma is socially constructed through language:

- The language of critical incidents
- Cultural Roles: The Hero-Victim Syndrome

The Trauma Culture: The Language of Critical Incidents

- “Traumatic Event” or “Critical Incident” are symbolically loaded
- “Trauma victim” communicates powerlessness
- “Recovery” assumes injury, damage or pathology
- Care is needed to avoid defining negative identities for employees
- The clear majority are resilient, and many report personal growth (PTG)
Cultural Roles: The Hero-Victim Syndrome

- A cultural narrative about victims is compelling
- Workplace CIR evolved out of emergency services
- Hero & Victim: Complimentary cultural roles (Reyes, 2015)
- Perceiving victims has consequences for those so perceived
- Over focusing on “rescuing” victims distracts from:
  - Promoting solution-oriented change
  - Facilitating individual resilience
  - Maintaining an organizational focus

Interface of Individual & Organizational Resilience

Distinct experiences, or different expressions of the same phenomenon?

Corporate Impact of Disruptive Events

- Actual or perceived decreased safety
- Pursuit of medical and psychiatric opinions
- Employees coping with issues related to grief/loss, financial strain, generalized stress, family concerns, physical needs
- Harsh judgments if emergency decisions were handled poorly
- Tolerance among departments and personnel often decrease as stress, role conflict, and extreme fatigue set in
- Difficulty concentrating at work/increased mistakes
- Irritability with fellow workers and customers
- Decreased productivity
- Ongoing corporate financial concerns
- Absenteeism and presenteeism

Adapted from: Veteran’s Administration & National Center for PTSD
**Same Worries, Different Flavors…**

**Employee’s Concerns:**
- Cope with the immediate crisis
- Resist reactive decision making (personal cost)
- Maintain stability for self/family
- Access appropriate care if/when needed

**Employer’s Concerns:**
- Contain the immediate crisis
- Mitigate the dynamics of reactivity (corporate cost)
- Maintain viability of the organization
- Facilitate access to appropriate care

**Core Objectives of DEM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worker</th>
<th>Workplace</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual Resilience</strong></td>
<td><strong>Organizational Resilience</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Increase tolerance to stress</td>
<td>- Support/guide leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Foster adaptability to stressors (Newman, 2001)</td>
<td>- Identify emotional barriers/themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Integrate experience into sense of self (Bonanno, 2004)</td>
<td>- Foster RTW/operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Preserve/restore functioning</td>
<td>- Preserving organizational structure, stability and functioning (DeFazio, 2011, 2015a)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Why Offer DEM Services?**

- It’s the right thing to do.
- Do the right thing and it’s good for business.
  - Message sent to staff
  - Reputational risk within the community and marketplace
  - Reduce attrition and sick-time
  - Reduce claims/contain cost
  - Return to productivity
  - Substantive and defensible action
The Smart Thing to Do

- OSHA's General Duty Clause requires employer's to provide a safe workplace
- Failure to plan for "postvention" is as risky as failure to plan for prevention
- Employers can be held responsible for Mitigation (taking reasonable action to minimize the amount of loss/injury suffered following a disruptive event)

Business Continuity and The Human Element

There is no business recovery without people who:

- Are healthy enough to return to work and be productive
- Are assured enough of their safety to not feel afraid to return to work
- Have had their trust in the leadership established so that they desire to return to work
- Have had their loyalty rewarded, so they remain employees over the short haul and the long haul

Marsh Crisis Academy
Integration of Perspectives

Crisis Mitigation
- Crisis management plan
- Disaster recovery plan
- Operational contingency plan

Employee Assistance
- Corporate incident response plan
- Workplace preparedness

Focus: Business
- Management options
- Infrastructure
- Facilities restoration

Focus: Employee
- Employee benefits counseling
- Behavioral intervention
- Assessment and referral
- Management consultation
- Performance metrics

Human Resources
- Integration of perspectives
- Facilities restoration
- Communications
- Data integrity, IT
- Human Resources
- Performance metrics
- Human Resources

Business Continuity

DeFraia, 2014.

SAMHSA Recommendations

“The challenge for the incorporation of resilience into a workplace is to identify what enhances the ability of an organization to rebound effectively.”


Signs of This Type of Resilience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vulnerability Factors</th>
<th>Protective Factors</th>
<th>Facilitators of Resilience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor social skills</td>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor problem-solving</td>
<td>Intellectual abilities</td>
<td>Communication skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of empathy</td>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>Faith Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family violence</td>
<td>Problem-solving skills</td>
<td>Intellectual abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress or neglect</td>
<td>Communication skills</td>
<td>Faith Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakup</td>
<td>Social support</td>
<td>Social support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-control</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Resilience</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The ability for an individual to cope with adversity and change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Optimism
- Flexibility
- Self-confidence
- Competence
- Coping skills
- Perseverance
- Self-control
- Sociability
- Self-esteem
- Problem-solving skills
- Communication skills
- Resilience
- Intellectual abilities
- Self-efficacy
- Social support
- Relationships
- Communication skills
- Education
- Social support
- Science
- Self-esteem
- Optimism
- Performance metrics
- Education
- Social support
- Science
- Self-esteem
- Optimism
Absence Prevention

Stay at Work/Return to Work – a Key Marker of Functional Resilience

Goal: Stay at Work/Return to Work

APA Foundation Research in 2007
- Work is therapeutic
- Being off work is a crisis
- All possible resources need to be utilized to facilitate improved function and return the person to work asap
- This is echoed in Occupational Medicine and other disciplines
Impact of Worklessness

- Higher Mortality
- Poorer General Health
- Increased Chronic Illness
- Poorer Mental Health
- Higher Medical Costs, PCP Visits, and Hospital Admission Rates


We are Stronger, Together

- "Work Family"
- Shared experience
- Mutual support
- Reduce isolation

Onsite Services

Management Consultation  Educational Group  Interactive Group  1:1  Family Support
Disruptive Event Management (DEM) Deliverables

- Consultation with the organization’s leadership
- Positions the company’s leadership favorably
- Allows employees to process in a safe facilitated environment
- Identifies understandable reactions to an unusual event so that people don’t misinterpret their own reactions
- Builds group support
- Outline self-help recovery strategies
- Brainstorm solutions to overcome immediate return-to-work and return-to-life obstacles
- Triage movement toward either immediate workplace functioning or additional care

Finding The New Normal

Final Thoughts

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

Maya Angelou