Baker’s Dozen of Mental Toughness

Your stress management and resilience toolkit

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Introduction

Emergency services staff have intense workloads and exposure to high stress and trauma. This increasingly stressful work environment takes its toll not only your health and personal life, but also your job performance, personal, social and environmental resources.

You deserve to have access to every tool and every opportunity to maintain or even increase and improve your personal resilience. This toolkit will provide you with a series of resources to help strengthen your mental toughness and allow you to carry out your life to the best of your ability.

The skills outlined are easy to learn but for them to be useful to you, you must practise and practise until they become a habit embedded in the way you behave. Used regularly these tools will optimise your performance under pressure, enhance your life both at work and home and enable you to function better but it will take time and effort.

It will be worth it.
#1 CHANGE perspective

OPPORTUNITY

NOWHERE

PROBLEM

Should there be a space here?

What do you see?

CHALLENGE

THREAT
#2 BECOME MORE optimistic

3 IS THE magic NUMBER

IT TAKES THREE POSITIVE EMOTIONS/ACTIONS TO BEAT ONE NEGATIVE ONE!

(UNLESS YOU'RE IN A RELATIONSHIP)
#2 BECOME MORE optimistic

PERMA

- Positive Emotions
  - feeling good

- Engagement
  - finding flow

- Relationships
  - authentic connections

- Meaning
  - purposeful existence

- Achievement
  - a sense of accomplishment
#3 Become a STRESS MANAGEMENT EXPERT

part 1: the HELICOPTER TECHNIQUE

Imagine flying up...

... and looking down on your situation.

In your 0-80 lifespan,

How important was that incident?

Not important at all.
#3 Become a STRESS MANAGEMENT EXPERT

part 2: the STRESS BUCKET

HERE IS A:

stress bucket

AT WORK:

AT THE END OF THE DAY:

empty it!

AT HOME:

So YOU NEED TWO THINGS:

the bucket

AND TRIGGERS TO EMPTY IT!
THURSDAY

1. Leah surprised me with a coffee!
2. Lovely walk to work
3. Reading a bedtime story

FRIDAY

Write down 3 things that went well for you in the last 24 hours
Take a break to meditate

Breathe in (4 secs)

Hold (4 secs)

Hold (4 secs)

Breathe out (4 secs)

Box breathing
#6 GET BETTER SLEEP AT HOME

**Use your bedroom for two things only:**
- Sleep
- Sex

**Optimise your sleeping position:**
- Lie on your non-dominant side
- Only

**Get to know your sleep cycle:**
- 11pm Bedtime
- 7am Wake up
- Restless
- Awake

**Banish the blue light!**
- No electronics!
STAY ALERT at work

Know your dipping points

2-4 pm  1-3 am
12 pm  12 am  12 pm

If you need to stay alert, prepare by sleeping!
#7 Improve your DECISION MAKING

the WRAP model

Widen your options

Reality test your assumptions

How will I feel about this in 10 minutes? months? years?

Attain some distance

Prepare for failure

How will I cope?
#7 Improve your DECISION MAKING

Be aware of how your brain can respond: **FAST** or **SLOW**

How many animals did Moses bring on the Ark?

2 of each!

Hang on, it was Noah - not Moses!!

Use pre-mortems

ASSUME THE WORST HAS HAPPENED

FAST FORWARD A MONTH AND LOOK BACK.

WOULD YOU HAVE DONE ANYTHING DIFFERENTLY HAD YOU KNOWN THE OUTCOME?
ASK FOR help

Don’t be afraid to ask...

...and let go of the ego!

Use the expertise in the room
ANGER IS NOT A GOOD WAY TO DEAL WITH CONFLICT...

OUCH! THAT REALLY UPSET ME... I KNOW YOU WORK HARD AND I NEED TO BE CLEAR ABOUT THIS.

... INSTEAD, BE ASSERTIVE AND RESPECTFUL OF OTHERS
DO PHYSICAL EXERCISE every day

the 7-MINUTE workout

1. Jumping Jacks
2. Wall Sit
3. Push-Up

4. Abdominal Crunch
5. Step Up
6. Squat

7. Triceps Dip
8. Plank
9. High Knees Running in Place

10. Lunge
11. Push Up & Rotation
12. Side Plank
#11 LEARN something new REGULARLY

HOW TO peel a banana!

- Take the bottom end
- Squeeze it with your fingers
- Peel back
- Voilà!

ALSO CHECK:

HOW TO tie your shoe laces

GO FIND OUT!

KEEP LEARNING

You don’t know what you don’t know
And you may not even know what you think you know!
TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

(AND THOSE YOU WORK WITH — SO THEY CAN LOOK AFTER YOU!)

Are you:

HUNGRY?

LATE?

ANGRY?

TIRED?

OR HANGRY?

avoid these!
#13 Smile! & VISUALISE SUCCESS
References / Recommended Reading

CHANGE PERSPECTIVE
Duckworth, Angela (2016) *Grit*, Vermillion

OPTIMISM
http://losada.socialpsychology.org/

MANAGE STRESS

GRATITUDE DIARY

MEDITATE
• Tan, Chade-Meng (2012) *Search Inside Yourself: Increase Productivity, Creativity and Happiness*, Collins

SLEEP
Littlehales, Nick (2016) *Sleep: The Myth of 8 Hours, the Power of Naps... and the New Plan to Recharge Your Body and Mind*, Penguin Life

DECISION MAKING
• Kahneman, Daniel (2011) *Thinking Fast and Slow*, Penguin
DEAL WITH CONFLICT
Harris, Thomas A. (1995) I’m Ok, You’re Ok, Arrow Books

EXERCISE

LEARN
- Oakley, Barbara (2014) Mind for Numbers: How to Excel at Math and Science (Even If You Flunked Algebra), Tarcher
- Ericsson, Anders (2016) Peak: Secrets from the New Science of Expertise, Bodley Head

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF – HALT

SMILE
https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-mirror-neuron-revolut/

DEVELOP FLOW

For further resources and reading visit:
https://www.walesdeanery.org/new-initiatives/resilience-medtrim/mental-toughness-resources