

# Common Stress Reactions

## A Self-Assessment

*Before the workshop begins, think about how you know you are experiencing stress and check no more than ten reactions you commonly have when under stress. This is for your personal use and will not be shared.*

### Behavioral:

- Change in activity levels
- Decreased efficiency and effectiveness
- Difficulty communicating
- Increased sense of humor/gallows humor
- Irritability, outbursts of anger, frequent arguments
- Inability to rest, relax, or let down
- Change in eating habits
- Change in sleep patterns
- Change in job performance
- Periods of crying
- Increased use of tobacco, alcohol, drugs, sugar or caffeine
- Hyper-vigilance about safety or the surrounding environment
- Avoidance of activities or places that trigger memories
- Accident prone

### Physical:

- Increased heart rate and respirations
- Increased blood pressure
- Upset stomach, nausea, diarrhea
- Increased or decreased appetite which may be accompanied by weight loss or gain
- Sweating or chills
- Tremors or muscle twitching
- Muffled hearing
- Tunnel vision
- Feeling uncoordinated
- Headaches
- Sore or aching muscles
- Light sensitive vision
- Lower back pain
- Feeling a "lump in the throat"
- Easily startled
- Fatigue that does not improve with sleep
- Menstrual cycle changes
- Change in sexual desire or response
- Decreased resistance to colds, flu, infections
- Flare up of allergies, asthma, or arthritis
- Hair loss

### Psychological or Emotional:

- Feeling heroic, euphoric or invulnerable
- Denial
- Anxiety or fear
- Worry about safety of self or others
- Irritability or anger
- Restlessness
- Sadness, moodiness, grief or depression
- Vivid or distressing dreams
- Guilt or "survivor guilt"
- Feeling overwhelmed, helpless or hopeless
- Feeling isolated, lost, lonely or abandoned
- Apathy
- Over identification with survivors
- Feeling misunderstood or unappreciated

### Cognitive:

- Memory problems/forgetfulness
- Disorientation
- Confusion
- Slowness in thinking, analyzing, or comprehending
- Difficulty calculating, setting priorities or making decisions
- Difficulty Concentrating
- Limited attention span
- Loss of objectivity
- Inability to stop thinking about the disaster or an incident

### Social:

- Withdrawing or isolating from people
- Difficulty listening
- Difficulty sharing ideas
- Difficulty engaging in mutual problem solving
- Blaming
- Criticizing
- Intolerance of group process
- Difficulty in giving or accepting support or help
- Impatient with or disrespectful to others

(adapted from CMHS (Rev. Ed., 2000)