Deployment Safety and Health: Preparedness, Protection, and Recovery for Federal Responders

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Goals

- Prevent or mitigate injury and illness from environmental, occupational, and operational threats

- Integrate safety, health, and resiliency into planning and command functions

- Enable investigation of emerging concerns
  - Real-time exposure assessment and control

- Ensure resources and services are available when prevention fails

Safety, Health, Resiliency Activities

Pre-Event

Event Response

Post-Event

Demobilization
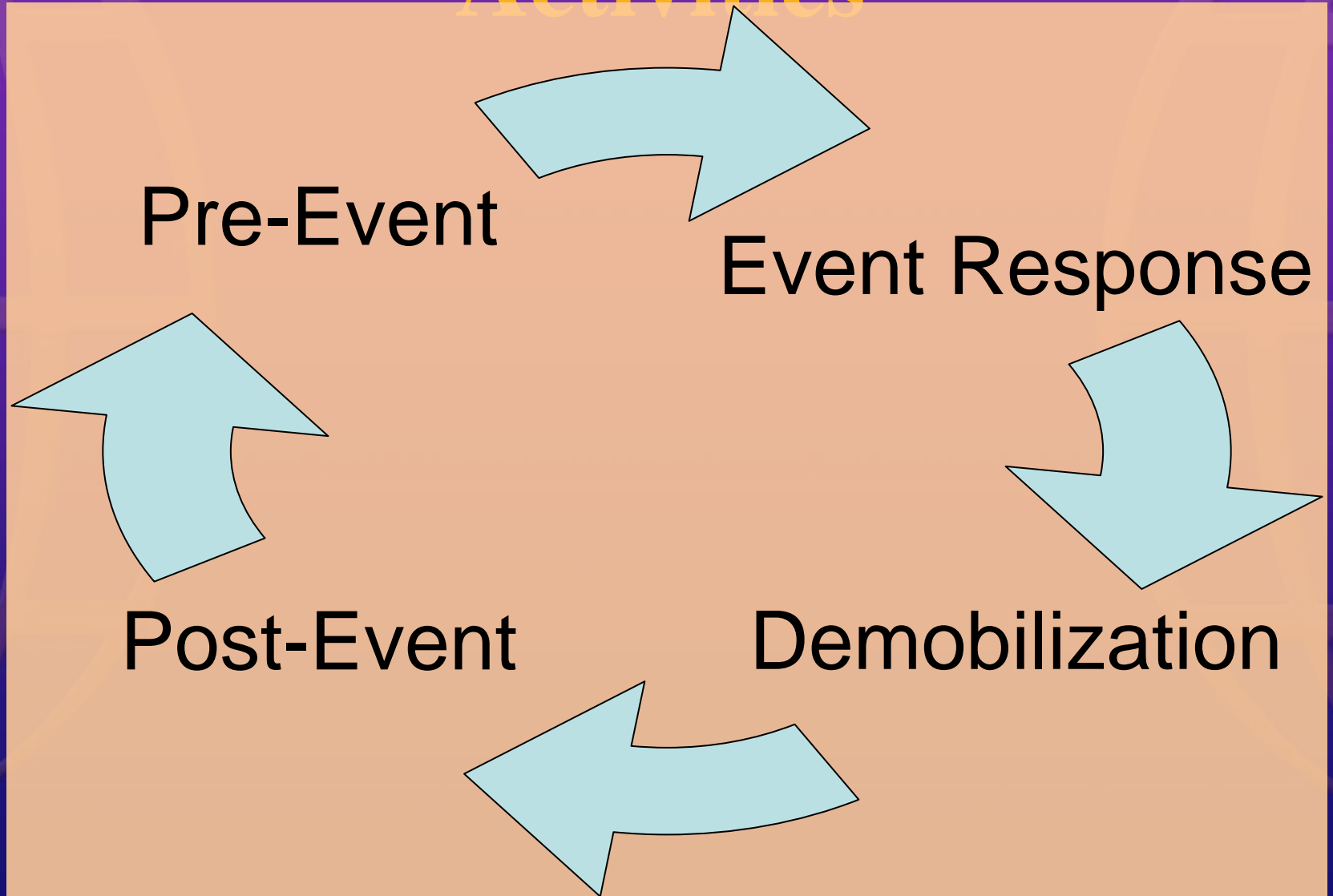
Pre-Event (Prepare)

- Criteria for Ready Responder
  - Credentials, education and training, PPE
  - Fitness for duty (medical clearance)
- Personnel tracking system
  - ID # for tracking, verified as ready
  - Interoperability for workforce reporting
- Develop S&H staffing (deploy and reach-back)
- Pre-mission briefing
  - Anticipated hazards and situation awareness
  - Infrastructure for safety, health and resiliency
    - Command, Reporting, Services

Anticipate Responder Risks

- What are the anticipated **job hazards**?
  - Role and task, organization of work
  - Work/rest (fatigue and recovery) cycles
  - Health and safety threats
- What are the **personal risk** variables?
  - Chronic disease and degree of control
  - Current injury or disability
  - Personality, stress tolerance, mental flexibility

Psychologically Prepare!

- Attend to both work and family demands
- Comprehensive stress management
- Anger defusing techniques
- Team building on-the-fly
- Resources for special situations
- Enhance health and safety culture
- Address ethical dilemmas
- Self-care skills and sustainable resiliency

Reissman, Watson, Klomp, Tanielian, & Prior, JHSEM 2006

Sources of Deployment Stress

- Role ambiguity
- Mismatch of skills with assigned tasks
- Lack of team cohesion or poor leadership
- Poor health and safety culture for responders
  - Rest and recovery not built into schedule
  - Not prepared for psychological hazards
- Competing priorities and reporting chains
- Sensory overload (loss, death, destruction)
- Social disarray (equity and order)

Building Team Resiliency

- Learn about your leadership strengths and weaknesses

- Learn about rapid assessment of skills and limitations in team members

- Learn how to foster team cohesion

- Be familiar with expected roles and team functions
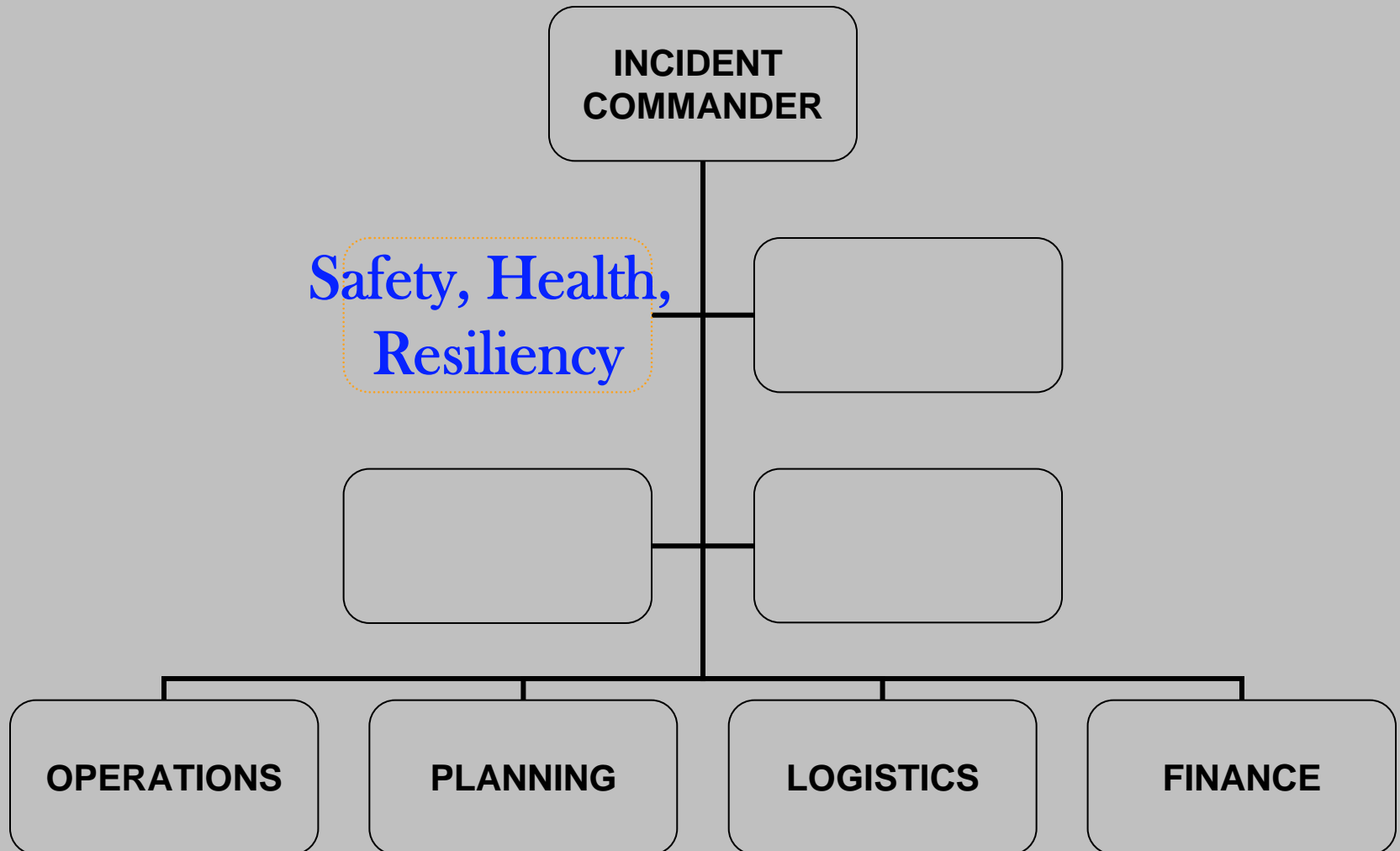
- Build social support systems

Event Response: (Protect)

- Connect with infrastructure for coordinated health and safety activities
- Situational awareness and anticipate hazards
- Compliance with site-specific health and safety plan (HASP)
- Real-time exposure assessment and control
- Monitor physical and behavioral health
- Injury and illness reporting

Building Team Resiliency: During Response

- Deploy as a team or use a "buddy system"
- Ensure regular communication bi-directional (especially problem-solving)
- Clarify tasks required for mission success
- Match tasks with team member skills
- Delegate as needed to keep manageable
- Monitor occupational safety, health, and psychological well-being

Safety, Health, and Resiliency Command Function

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              │    COMMANDER     │
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Demobilization

- Joint verification of recorded injury/health events or potential adverse exposures while deployed by ID#

- Future contact information for responder

- Post-mission briefing

Operational Evaluation

- Review of strategies and lessons
  - Mission
  - Self-care
- Exit interviews in the field
  - Continuity for ongoing response
  - Resource for reach-back
  - Closure

Post-Event *(Encourage Recovery)*

- Monitor health and well-being
  - Exit interviews for closure
  - Delayed reactions with increased demand for services (onset >5 weeks)
  - Give yourself time to recover
  - Seek support when needed
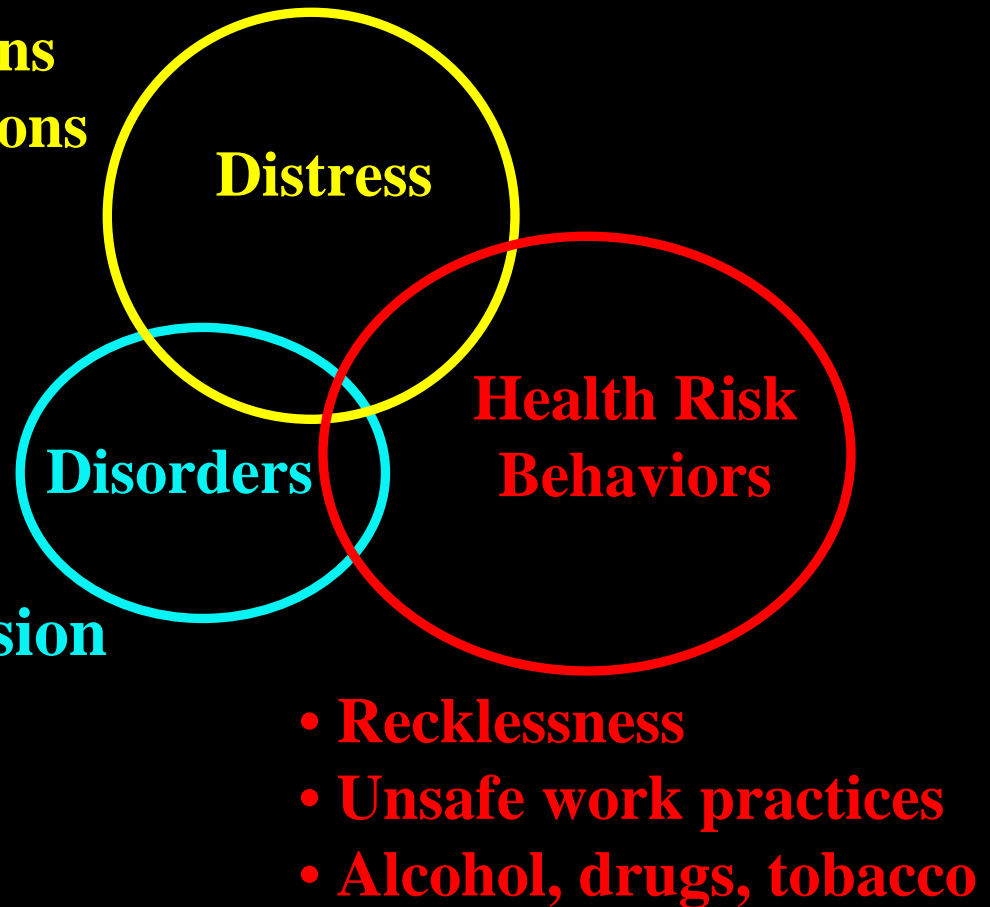- Create opportunities for team to reconnect
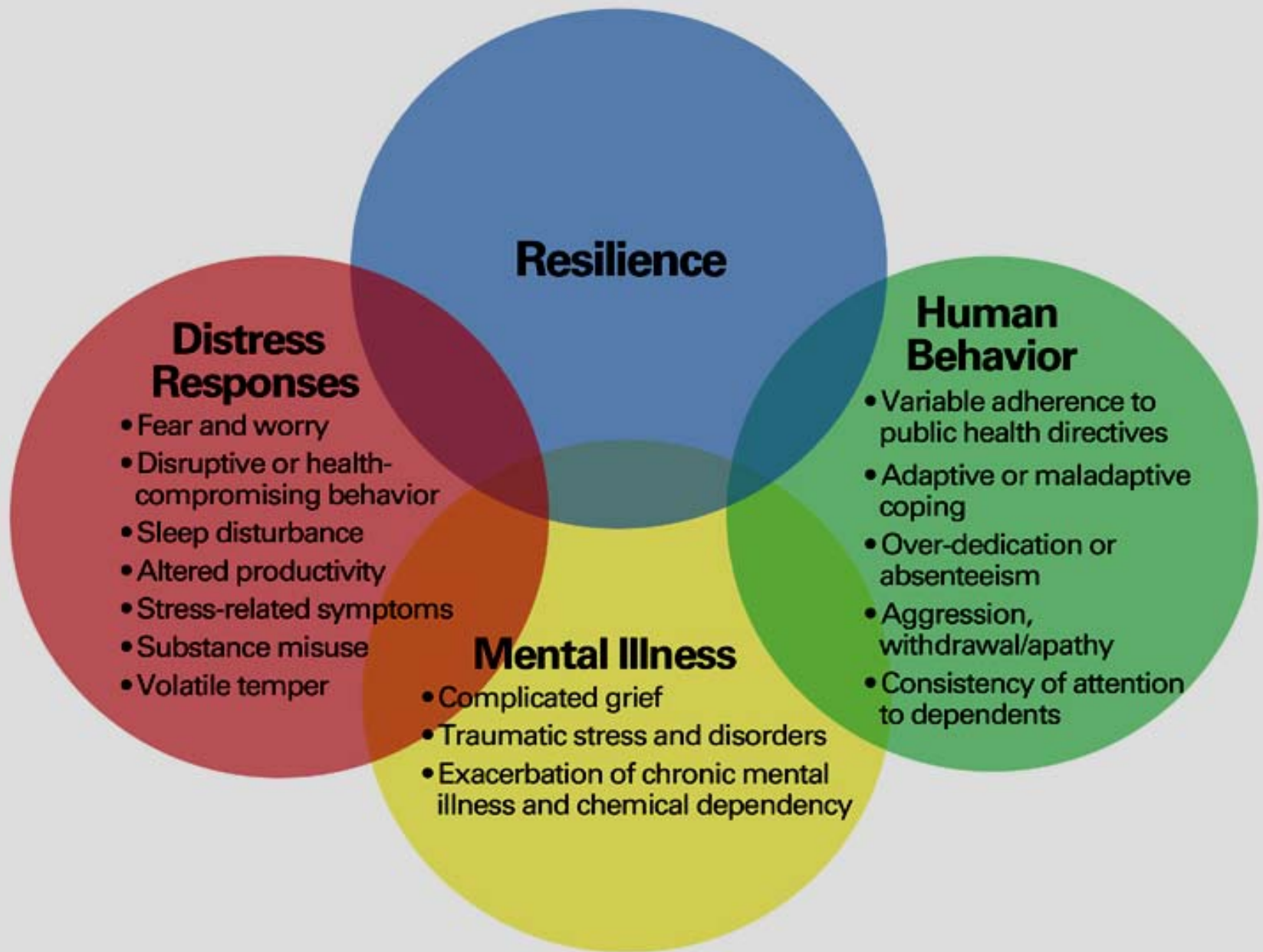
Post-Event

- Passive and active reporting of emerging health concerns for specified time

- Information sharing about potential concerns and continuity of, or new, resources

- Tracking health concerns that trigger more formal investigation, medical monitoring and/or treatment programs

Impact of Behavioral Health

- **Problems making decisions**
- **Less able to assess situations**
- **Bodily complaints**
- **Slow to respond**
- **Change in behavior**

Distress

Disorders

Health Risk Behaviors

- **PTSD**
- **Depression**

- **Recklessness**
- **Unsafe work practices**
- **Alcohol, drugs, tobacco**

Interagency Working Group on Behavioral Health and Pandemic Influenza, 2007

Sustaining Resiliency

- Health and safety culture, policies
- Work flow adjustment and support
- Work and family/life balance
- Stress, anger, grief management
- Team building and skills training
- Situational leadership
- Address ethical dilemmas
- Teach self-care skills

Workforce Management in Times of Disaster

- Rotate people
- Reserve force
- Limit work hours
- Regional response networks
- Cross training and surge capacity
  - Across tasks, managers, locations
  - Shared leadership
- Selection/Deselection of individuals

Reissman, Watson, Klomp, Tanielian, Prior, 2006 JHSEM
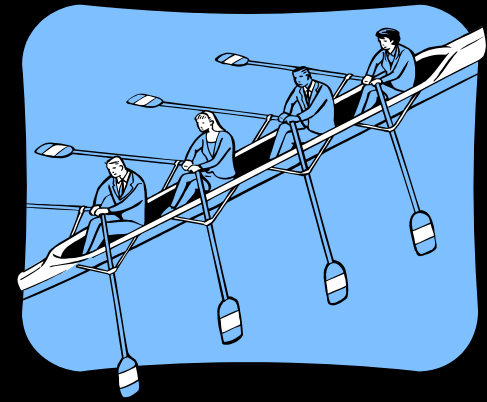
What Is At Stake?

- Mission success

- Reputation

- Staff retention, recruitment, performance
  - Morale and motivation

- Health and welfare of personnel
  - Workers compensation claims
  - Disability and early retirement

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- American Psychological Association
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