MISSION READINESS AND STRESS MANAGEMENT

New York, May 1998
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How can you prepare for the unexpected? What can a civilian do to be ready to deal with the stress of quasi-military situations such as those encountered on a mission? What about all the details to be sorted out before you leave? And how will your partner and family cope while you’re away?

Mission readiness is a long-term process. It begins from the moment you consider mission service, continues throughout the duration of your assignment and even extends beyond, as you reintegrate into your previous lifestyle. A whole host of issues is involved, from mundane organizational matters to complex emotional problems which may arise from your mission experiences. It is this process which we seek to address within the following pages.

Anyone going on mission service is advised to attend a “Mission Readiness” seminar, one of the ways in which the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) aims to prepare staff for an assignment. This booklet has been designed primarily for use in conjunction with such seminars, but it also provides valuable information for those who are unable to attend.

We hope it will assist you in your mission preparation, leading to enhancement of both your performance and your enjoyment of an overseas assignment.

Mrs. R. Salim
Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management
Glossary

The following is an explanatory list of the less familiar phrases which appear in the text.

Critical incident (CI) — an event outside the range of normal human experience which causes distress to almost everyone. Such events are usually sudden and life-threatening and often involve physical or emotional loss.

Critical incident stress (CIS) — a term for the unusually strong physical and emotional reactions experienced in the face of a CI.

Critical incident stress debriefing (CISD) — conducted by specially trained staff, this is designed to lessen the impact of a CI. Ideally taking place 48 to 72 hours after the event, a CISD is an organized group meeting which allows and encourages those involved to discuss their thoughts and reactions in a safe, non-threatening environment.

Critical incident stress defusing — a meeting directly after a CI which allows those involved to describe what happened, talk about their reactions and get information about normal stress reactions and support services available.

Cumulative stress — stress which builds up, often unrecognized, over a period of time. Some issues may be big and long-lasting while others may be small or just part of the problems involved in everyday life.

Deployment — a field assignment away from the normal place of duty and/or headquarters, often unaccompanied by partner or family.

Distress — stress when it occurs too often, lasts too long and is too severe may lead to distress.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) — a medical diagnosis which can include chronic symptoms of critical incident stress that interfere with work and social life long after the critical incident.

Responsible adult (r.a.) — a close friend or family member designated to handle your personal documents or transactions while you are away on a mission assignment. For the sake of simplicity we have used the phrase "responsible adult" or "r.a." to describe this person.

Spouse — used in this booklet to refer to a husband, wife, partner or companion.

Stress — defined as any demand or change which the human system (mind, body, spirit) is required to meet or respond to.
Part 1: Mission Readiness

The Staff Counsellor’s Office and the Staff Development and Learning Service of the Office of Human Resources Management have compiled a Mission Readiness Checklist and a Mission Readiness Self-evaluation Form to help prepare you for your future assignment.

When you go through the Mission Readiness Checklist you will find that some items are so common and so routine that they are often forgotten. Others, while extremely important to your personal well-being, are more unusual and often overlooked. All are important.

As the date of your departure draws closer, each completed item should be checked off the list. Once everything has been done you are asked to review the list with your local counsellor, contact details for whom are given at the back of this booklet. Completing the checklist often takes a lot longer than you would imagine. You should start dealing with these items as soon as you have made a commitment to a mission assignment.

Following the Mission Readiness Checklist is the Mission Readiness Self-evaluation Form. Working through this form should help you determine whether you are ready for mission work.

There are some circumstances in which it might be advisable to postpone accepting a mission assignment. These include pending legal action, family crisis, pending marital separation or divorce, an unresolved traumatic experience, treatment for a chronic ailment and treatment for alcohol or drug abuse. If any of these or similar circumstances are currently affecting your life or those of your family, accepting an assignment before they have been resolved could be extremely stressful. We suggest that you consider all points carefully.

If you find that you are having difficulty getting properly prepared or have any worries about your mission readiness, it is important that you contact your staff counsellor to discuss the issues in detail.
Mission Readiness Checklist

There are many versions of a "readiness" checklist currently available on the market. This one has been compiled with particular relevance to unaccompanied mission deployment.

With regard to the legal aspects (wills, powers of attorney etc.), worksheets are given in Appendix A.

**FAMILY WELFARE**

Preparing for a mission means getting your personal information (banking etc.) up to date and available in one place, ensuring that proper legal arrangements have been made so that appropriate action can be taken quickly in your absence (wills, powers of attorney) and making sure things will run smoothly while you’re away (car maintenance etc.).

To ensure that you remember the smallest details, you are asked to discuss and complete the various items listed in this section along with your spouse or other responsible adult (r.a).

**Basics**  
Done

a) Mission discussed in detail with family  ......................... ( )  
b) Mission extension possibilities discussed  ....................... ( )  
c) Family support system established  ............................... ( )  
d) Quick access to emergency phone numbers  ................... ( )  
e) Family communication plan worked out  
   (phone/e-mail/fax), with full details  
   of mission address, home and office details,  
   UN pouch etc  .................................................. ( )

f) Guardianship agreements completed  ............................ ( )
g) Passports and visas current for all family  ...................... ( )
h) Power(s) of attorney current  ................................. ( )
i) Wills: yours and spouse’s completed  .......................... ( )
j) UN insurance beneficiaries designated  ......................... ( )
MISSION READINESS

Documents available to spouse/responsible adult

k) Pension fund number ........................................... ( )
l) Birth certificate .................................................. ( )
m) Social Security number ....................................... ( )
n) Marriage certificate ............................................ ( )
o) Current insurance (e.g. life, health) ......................... ( )
p) Mission-specific insurance .................................... ( )
q) Military discharge papers (where applicable) .............. ( )

BANKING INFORMATION
If your bank records are in proper order before you leave, deposit and withdrawal problems are reduced or even eliminated.
The following data should be left with your spouse/r.a.:

a) Names and addresses of banks/credit union accounts where funds are held ........................................ ( )
b) Direct deposit account ........................................... ( )
c) Savings/checking accounts ..................................... ( )
d) Credit card numbers ............................................ ( )
e) Salary deposit data ................................................ ( )
f) Access to funds in emergencies ............................... ( )

BUSINESS AND FINANCE
A current copy of the following records, with details of how to access the funds, should also be left with your spouse/r.a.

a) Stockbroker name and certificate numbers .................. ( )
b) Bond company and certificate numbers ..................... ( )
c) Mutual fund company and certificate numbers .............. ( )
d) Outstanding bill/loan repayment method .................... ( )
e) Copy of UN employment contract related to Mission Service. ( )
f) Income-tax data .................................................... ( )
g) Deeds etc. of residence/other properties .................... ( )
h) Contents/personal property insurance ........................ ( )
i) Budget plan, if applicable ...................................... ( )
VEHICLE MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS
Leave your car in good working order and make sure the following documents are readily accessible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Done</th>
<th>a) Service book</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Log book (car ownership record)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Insurance documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) Dealer’s address and contact numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) Automobile club membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f) Tyre rotation/change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>g) Oil change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>h) Tune-up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Have a clear maintenance schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Done</th>
<th>a) Heating and refrigeration specialists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Plumbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Electricians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) Small-appliance repair firm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) Roofing repair company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f) Leave a set of spare keys with responsible adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>g) Re-route mail and newspapers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HOME SECURITY, MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR
You never know what might happen while you’re away. The simplest problem could cause unnecessary stress. At the very least leave the following contact details/phone numbers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Done</th>
<th>a) Heating and refrigeration specialists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Plumbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>g) Re-route mail and newspapers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MISSION READINESS

CLOTHING
Find out all you can about the terrain and weather conditions of your destination well in advance so you can be sure of packing the appropriate clothing. It is likely that some of the items you may need will not be available when you get there.

Done
a) Information on terrain/weather ........................................... ( )
b) List of clothing requirements ............................................. ( )
c) Items obtained ................................................................. ( )

GEOPOLITICAL AND CULTURAL AWARENESS
Make sure you learn as much as possible about the country you are going to, preferably from someone who has been there before, as local guide books and government publications can often be misleading and inaccurate.

This list gives some suggestions of the type of information you need. The more you know, the better prepared you will be and the easier it will be for you to adapt.

Done
a) Geographical location ....................................................... ( )
b) Governmental system and major political figures ................ ( )
c) Major ethnic groupings ..................................................... ( )
d) Basic traditions (do’s and don’ts) .................................... ( )
e) Main religions ................................................................. ( )
f) Primary languages spoken .............................................. ( )
g) Income per capita ............................................................ ( )
h) Major industries .............................................................. ( )
i) Natural resources ............................................................. ( )
j) Health and disease index ................................................ ( )

You may be able to get some language skills in advance.

k) Basic language skills training material obtained .................. ( )
l) Basic language skills developed ......................................... ( )
MEDICAL SCREENING AND HEALTH CARE
Normally all personnel will go through a medical screening examination carried out by a recognized medical practitioner. This may or may not involve a detailed briefing, so take care that the following points are covered. Note also that some medical planning may be necessary for your family members.

Done
a) Medical screening date .................................................. ( )
b) Medical screening completed ........................................... ( )
c) Vaccinations ................................................................. ( )
d) Medication supply arranged (where necessary) .................. ( )
e) Protection against environmental factors (malaria) .............. ( )
f) Records of special conditions prepared (allergies) .............. ( )
g) Blood type known .......................................................... ( )
h) Dental checkup .............................................................. ( )
i) Dental treatment completed ............................................. ( )
j) Eye test/spare pair of glasses (contact lenses) ..................... ( )
k) Living will made (see Appendices) ................................. ( )
l) Health and dental care plans current .............................. ( )

HEALTH, FITNESS AND STRESS
Physical fitness and a healthful lifestyle are not developed overnight. Now is a good time to examine your own approach, with the aim of arriving at your mission assignment in a fit and healthy condition. This will increase your overall performance, minimize the need for medical help which may leave much to be desired and make you less vulnerable to the added stress which overseas deployment brings.

Consider the following:

Done
a) Your general fitness level — an improvement strategy ........ ( )
b) Stress management — dealing with added stress ................. ( )
c) Substance abuse — nicotine, alcohol and caffeine ............. ( )
d) Prevention of sexually transmitted diseases .................... ( )
e) Lifestyle balance — work, play, rest, sleep ....................... ( )
MISSION READINESS

Done

f) Your own nutritional needs and sources .......................... ( )
g) Recreational and educational needs ................................. ( )
h) Hobbies — putting free time to good use ......................... ( )

PRACTICAL SKILLS
In developing countries, certain skills take on added importance, particularly in emergency situations. Try to become proficient in as many of these skills as possible before you leave.

Done

a) First-aid, with recognized certificates .............................. ( )
b) CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) .............................. ( )
c) Swimming, at least 200 metres ..................................... ( )
d) Driving a vehicle with manual transmission/4-wheel drive ... ( )
e) Basic car maintenance .................................................. ( )
f) Using a two-way radio* ............................................... ( )
g) Using a satellite phone ................................................ ( )

(*The phonetic alphabet is listed in Appendix B.)

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SECURITY AWARENESS

Before your departure, make sure you have read as much as you can about all aspects of security. There are a number of UN publications available which cover this topic, such as the “Peacekeeping Mission Orientation” booklet issued by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the “Security in the Field” booklet issued by the United Nations Security Coordinator.

It is important that your arrival details are given to the right person at the duty station well in advance and that you have received confirmation and details of the arrangements made for your transportation from the airport before you leave.

Should you stop over, you are advised to remain in your hotel in the evenings. This warning particularly applies in those countries where there is a known safety risk.

The following items should be included in your packing:

- small backpack
- Swiss army knife, etc.
- first-aid kit
- compass
- water bottle
- flashlight
- extra batteries
- candles
- matches
- short-wave radio for international news programmes

As soon as you arrive at your duty station, immediately request a security briefing from the Designated Official or Security Officer.
EXPLANATORY NOTES

This is not a selection test. It is a training and research tool designed by a group of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to help their staff and project participants acquire a better self-understanding and to track their own personal development.

Various surveys and social studies have identified certain characteristics related to working with people. These personal attributes are particularly relevant in situations where people of different backgrounds are required to work closely together in highly stressful situations.

This self-evaluation form is a valuable way of looking at your own suitability for a mission assignment. People with the appropriate profile (high scores) are likely to find teamwork far easier and more rewarding and hence their mission experience more successful. If your scores are particularly low, it could be that you are not suited to a mission environment.

You are advised to consider this self-evaluation form very carefully along with all the other information you have, before accepting a mission assignment. Normally, this exercise will have been carried out well beforehand. But where this has not been possible, and your total score is below average, you should seriously consider changing the existing arrangements.

If you have access to a Staff Counsellor’s Office or Staff Welfare Officer, questions arising from using this form should be discussed with them.
MISSION READINESS — A SELF-EVALUATION
Under each of the following categories (a through k), choose the statement which best applies to you, circling the number to the left. When you have finished, follow the instructions on page 19.

PERSONAL MANAGEMENT SKILLS
Factor a. Positive attitudes (initiative, self-esteem, confidence)
   1) I feel I have little control over what happens to me.
   2) I know and respect my personal needs.
   3) I am self-confident.
   4) I have the initiative, energy and capacity to accomplish what I set out to do.
   5) I can recognize my strengths and weaknesses, know and respect my own limitations and learn from my mistakes.

Factor b. Adaptability, flexibility
   1) Change is disruptive; I avoid it if possible.
   2) I try to limit changes in my environment and life patterns.
   3) Changes are inevitable and I accept them.
   4) Change can bring improvement; I believe change can be a positive force.
   5) I embrace change as a source of renewal; I promote change.

Factor c. Responsibility
   1) I prefer situations of limited responsibility where I am not accountable for final outcomes.
   2) I take responsibility for what I am assigned to do.
   3) I try to participate in the definition of my responsibilities.
   4) I exercise my judgement in situations where my responsibility has not been defined.
   5) I accept responsibility for all actions and decisions in which I have participated.

Factor d. Analytical thinking
   1) Following my own instincts always serves me well.
   2) I can see issues from other perspectives, but it’s difficult to know what to believe.
3) I will consider the views and opinions of others before I form an opinion and I can revise my position in the light of new information.
4) I can identify pertinent information and resources and seek them out.
5) I am able to structure and process multiple sources of information to evaluate situations, solve problems and make decisions.

WORKPLACE SKILLS
Factor e. Leadership
1) I have no particular desire to lead, nor skill in leading.
2) I attempt to lead occasionally without much success.
3) I am occasionally successful in leading, largely by luck.
4) I know what situations are appropriate for my leadership style.
5) I can adjust my leadership style to the situation at hand.

Factor f. Decision-making
1) I tend to go with the flow of events.
2) I express my point of view in decisions affecting me.
3) I am decisive about things that affect me.
4) I express my point of view in decisions affecting other people.
5) I feel confident making decisions that affect other people.

Factor g. Organization
1) I often find myself unable to fulfil my commitments.
2) I know it’s important to organize myself, but it’s often very hard to do.
3) I know how to use and structure my time well.
4) I can set realistic goals and priorities in work and my personal life.
5) I can plan and manage time, money and human resources to achieve goals.
MISSION READINESS

Factor h. Teamwork
1) I find teamwork situations inefficient and full of conflict.
2) I usually prefer to work alone.
3) I respect the thoughts and opinions of others in a team situation.
4) I work for group decision-making and support the outcome.
5) I am most productive in team situations.

SOCIAL SKILLS

Factor i. Communication
1) I don’t feel comfortable talking about my experiences, or expressing my opinions and beliefs to others.
2) It is a real effort for me to express myself but I try.
3) I feel comfortable talking to small groups of people I know (colleagues, family etc.)
4) I can talk to larger, unfamiliar audiences.
5) I actively seek opportunities to express myself.

Factor j. Networking
1) I tend to work independently
2) Support and information from others would probably be good sometimes, but I don’t know how to go about finding it.
3) I know where and when to look for information and advice.
4) I can maintain a network of persons for information, advice and support.
5) I believe the most effective work is accomplished through networks.

Factor k. Public relations
1) I have no particular interest or talent in meeting the public.
2) I am able to express my ideas clearly — in writing, orally or both.
3) I can participate in a public relations campaign.
4) I feel I can contribute a lot to a public relations effort.
5) I feel confident leading a public relations campaign.
SUMMARY SHEET SELF-EVALUATION

Instructions
Transfer the number circled in each category to the list below. Add them up to obtain your total score. To interpret your results, refer to the guidelines at the bottom of the page.

SCORE

Factor a. Positive attitudes
Factor b. Adaptability, flexibility
Factor c. Responsibility
Factor d. Analytical thinking
Factor e. Leadership
Factor f. Decision-making
Factor g. Organization
Factor h. Teamwork
Factor i. Communication
Factor j. Networking
Factor k. Public relations

TOTAL SCORE

GUIDELINES FOR INTERPRETING SCORES

A total of 40 and above indicates a high level of compatibility with the profile, while a total of 20 or less indicates a low level of compatibility. Generally speaking, higher scores would be more desirable for mission service.

As you review individual items, you should note your strengths (higher scores) as well as other areas (lower scores) where positive steps can be taken to improve your mission readiness.
In this section we examine the concepts of stress, distress and cumulative stress and offer some advice on basic stress management. Later on we deal with critical incident stress, including recommendations on how to cope in the aftermath of a critical incident.

**STRESS AND DISTRESS**

Stress can be defined as any demand or change that the human system (mind, body and spirit) is required to meet or respond to. Stress is therefore part of everyday life. Blood circulation, walking, eating, talking and even playing are what we call “normal stressors”. Without these and other physical demands on the human system we would not continue to live. The level of stress is evaluated by considering its frequency, duration and intensity. Cumulative stress describes stress which builds up, often unrecognized, over a period of time. However, stress becomes distress when it occurs too often, lasts too long and is too severe.

It is important to note that what is distressful for one person may not necessarily be distressful for another. Your individual perception, i.e. the degree of threat you feel and the amount of control you have over the circumstances, can affect the degree of distress you personally experience. The factors which influence your perception and control of distress are many and varied. They include such things as your past experiences, education, skills, personal philosophy, age, gender, fitness level and self-esteem.

Learning to recognize the early signs of distress is an important factor in stress management. Psychologist Dr Hans Selye* defined a concept called the “General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS),” in which he breaks down the onset of distress into three distinct phases.

**The Alarm Phase**

In the presence of a threatening or dangerous distressor, we react with the “flight or fight” response. This reaction increases adrenalin flow and prepares us to run or to fight. If we respond physically, such as by running or fighting, or even with verbal aggression, much of the stress

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could be dissipated. But in today's world such reactions are rarely appropriate.

The Adaptation Phase
When the distressor continues unresolved, the intensity of the first phase is often lessened, but not lost, and the “adaptation phase” begins. Vital biochemical, physiological, psychological and spiritual resources are spent sustaining the person against the original distressor.

The Exhaustion Phase
After a certain amount of time (depending on the person concerned), as a direct result of the long-term distressors or daily cumulative stressors, a person may begin to show signs of breakdown. A number of physical, mental or behavioural conditions are manifested, as outlined below, all of which may be symptoms of unresolved distress.

**COMMON SYMPTOMS OF DISTRESS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical</th>
<th>Psychological</th>
<th>Behavioural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fatigue</td>
<td>Memory loss</td>
<td>Verbal outburst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back pain</td>
<td>Poor concentration</td>
<td>Increased smoking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headache</td>
<td>Decreased self-esteem</td>
<td>Heavy drinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulcer</td>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>Eating disorders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CUMULATIVE STRESS**

Many people suffer from cumulative stress — stress which builds up over time. This may be the result of severe, long-standing situations or it may be an accumulation of the small daily stresses of everyday life. To manage these as well as other more acute events it is important to learn which distressors affect you personally most of all.

Because of the slow build-up of these stressors, people often fail to recognize the impact on their system. Awareness of the potential danger of these accumulated stressors is a key to effectively managing your stress.
While no one can lead an entirely stress-free life, there are a number of things you can do to minimize the overall effect of all types of stress syndromes. In addition, the healthier and fitter you are, the more capable you will be of dealing with stress.

**STRESS MINIMIZERS**

- Identify the major stress factors in your life
- Learn to be assertive but not aggressive
- Learn how to manage your time well
- Make sure to get all the sleep you need
- Exercise at least three times a week for endurance and strength
- Eat a well-balanced diet related to your activity level
- Avoid excessive use of alcohol, caffeine and nicotine
- Know and practice your philosophical approach to life
- Accept creative challenges
- Use your free time constructively
- Learn the healing value of relaxation and meditation

**CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS**

Less familiar than cumulative stress and more difficult to deal with is “critical incident stress” — the reaction to a critical incident.

**Critical incidents**

A critical incident (CI) is defined as an event out of the range of normal experience — one which is sudden and unexpected, makes you lose control, involves the perception of a threat to life and can include elements of physical or emotional loss.

Critical incidents include natural disasters, multiple-casualty accidents, sexual or other types of assault, death of a child, hostage-taking, suicide, traumatic death in family, duty-related death of a co-worker and war-related civilian deaths.
Examples of critical incidents
Outbreak of hostilities: Pinned down in a crossfire situation by rifle, rocket and mortar, you are trapped in house with limited food, no fresh water and no heat or light for almost four days.

Evacuation: You are caught in the middle of a civil war. Eventually you are evacuated to a safe place, but not before witnessing several people being brutally beaten or shot.

Peacekeeping mission: Some on your team are attacked in a hotel lobby. Everyone is robbed, three are badly beaten and one woman is beaten and raped.

On a project: Humanitarian workers involved in a disease-prevention project are hit by a severe tropical storm. Many locals are killed and several team members are injured.

Although a critical incident may occur at any time, anywhere, there are certain occupational groups that are at an increased risk of exposure to traumatic events. These include firefighters, emergency health-care workers, police officers, search and rescue personnel, disaster relief and humanitarian aid workers, and United Nations peacekeepers, staff members, observers and monitors.

Critical incident stress — the facts
The unusually strong physical and emotional reactions experienced in the face of a critical incident are referred to as critical incident stress (CIS). A strong reaction is normal. The person(s) involved perhaps cannot function properly either during the CI or afterwards. Few people remain unaffected by a critical incident, although reactions may differ. Some reactions are immediate. Some may occur days, weeks or even years later.

The severity of reactions depends on various factors relating to both the incident and the individual:

The incident
suddenness
intensity
duration
available social support

The individual
past experience
personal loss
perception of threat
personal ability to cope
IMMEDIATE REACTIONS TO A CRITICAL INCIDENT

PHYSICAL
nausea
muscle tremors
sweating
dizziness
chills
increased heart rate
increased blood pressure
hyperventilation (fast, deep breathing)

MENTAL
confusion
difficulty making decisions
impaired thinking
memory loss
difficulty in problem-solving
difficulty doing simple arithmetic
difficulty remembering names of things

EMOTIONAL
anxiety
anger
fear
irritability
guilt
overwhelmed feeling
grief
hopelessness
DELAYED REACTIONS TO A CRITICAL INCIDENT

PHYSICAL
fatigue
heightened startle reflex (overreaction at a sudden noise or movement)
increased use/misuse of drink and drugs
sleeping problems such as:
- can’t fall asleep
- nightmares
- night sweating
- restlessness
- waking up early
- difficulty waking up

MENTAL
decreased attention span
poor concentration
memory problems
flashback (re-experiencing what happened)

EMOTIONAL
fluctuating moods
feeling abandoned
resentment
feeling of alienation
withdrawal
numbness
depression
Stress Management

All the reactions described on the previous pages are normal symptoms experienced by normal people following an abnormal event. These symptoms can temporarily interfere with a person’s ability to cope at work or at home. For the majority of people most symptoms will diminish in intensity and frequency within a few days or weeks. Research suggests that the following coping mechanisms may be helpful:

During the critical incident
* recognize the signs of critical incident stress
* maintain a positive attitude
* try to control your breathing — slow, regular
* focus on the task in hand
* stay in contact with others by talking
* look after yourself — food, water, clothing, rest
* if exposure is prolonged, take breaks and rotate tasks.

Afterwards
* talk about the event — what you saw, heard, smelt, did
* talk about your reactions, particularly how you felt
* practice stress-management techniques such as:
  - deep-breathing exercises
  - progressive relaxation
  - meditation and/or prayer
  - physical activity
  - music, reading
* use humour — making jokes can make it easier to accept what has happened
* attend specially designed group sessions (see next page)
Professional help
A number of specialist group techniques have been developed by professionals to assist emergency services personnel, such as ambulance drivers and firefighters, to deal with critical incident stress. You are strongly advised to attend the sessions available at your mission station.

Critical incident stress defusing
This is a group meeting of all involved in the critical incident. It takes place directly after the event to give everyone the chance to talk about what happened and to discuss their feelings and reactions with others who were there. This session is usually led by someone who has received basic training, possibly a colleague. During the meeting there is a chance to learn more about the specialized support services which exist at your particular mission and to schedule further sessions.

Critical incident stress debriefing (CISD)
Usually taking place 48 to 72 hours after the critical incident, this more specialized session is led by someone with extensive training, usually part of a critical incident stress team. The purpose is not to provide formal counselling, but to give all involved a further opportunity to discuss their thoughts and reactions openly in a safe environment.

Recovering from critical incident stress
The recovery period will vary greatly from person to person. In most cases the above-mentioned symptoms will begin to ease off within a few days or weeks. If the symptoms persist and interfere with normal functioning, it would be wise to seek professional help as soon as possible to hasten the recovery process and to avoid further accumulation of stress.

As mentioned earlier in connection with cumulative stress, some basic coping mechanisms have been identified which will help you through the recovery period.

*Do:
expect the incident to bother you
remind yourself that your reactions are normal
**STRESS MANAGEMENT**

- spend time with family, friends and colleagues
- maintain a balanced diet with minimum caffeine and sugar
- exercise daily on a moderate basis
- take time for leisure activities
- learn as much as possible about critical incident stress
- talk to trusted family, friends, counsellor
- minimize use of alcohol and drugs
- treat yourself especially well

*Don’t:*
- think you’re going crazy
- try to resist recurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks
- withdraw from family, friends, colleagues
- think you are the only one who has been affected
- drink alcohol excessively
- abuse medication
- have unrealistic expectations for recovery — it takes time

Suggestions for family and friends:
- listen carefully
- spent time with the affected person
- offer your assistance and listening ear
- reassure them that they are safe and normal
- help them with routine tasks like cleaning, cooking and caring for the family
- allow them some private time
- don’t take their anger (or other feelings) personally
- tell them you are sorry such an event has happened and you want to understand and assist them
- call for help or support as soon as you feel you need it
Critical incidents cannot be predicted, nor can critical incident stress or post-traumatic stress disorder always be prevented. However, your ability to cope will increase if you are fit and healthy.

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Critical incident stress is a major factor in the development of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). However, the onset of PTSD can often be prevented by proper preparation plus the use of defusing and debriefing (CISD) sessions and individual counselling after the critical incident has taken place.

PTSD is a medical diagnosis made according to specific criteria by medical professionals. It can include chronic symptoms of critical incident stress that interfere with work and social life long after the event.

**TO HELP STAY HEALTHY REMEMBER:**

S — Sensible eating
T — Take time to enjoy life
R — Rest and relaxation
E — Exercise and education (about CIS)
S — Social support (family, friends)
S — Satisfying expressions of spirituality and sexuality

Critical incidents cannot be predicted, nor can critical incident stress or post-traumatic stress disorder always be prevented. However, your ability to cope will increase if you are fit and healthy.
The Special Stresses of Mission Assignment

Going on a mission assignment causes particular stresses on you, your spouse and your family. During this time, i.e. the deployment cycle, there are a number of factors which may exacerbate the stress levels experienced.

Individual
health
ability to cope
previous experience
attitude to the assignment
self-confidence
organizing abilities
sense of security within the family and/or relationship

Separation
available preparation time
previous experience of separation
attitude of family towards assignment
important family events during separation
confidence in support available to family

Deployment
nature of mission (particularly if ambiguous)
length of mission (especially if uncertain)
ease or difficulty of communication
geographical location
living and working conditions
confidence in training and leadership
## The Special Stresses of Mission Assignment

### The Emotional Cycle of Deployment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Time-frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-deployment</td>
<td>anticipation of loss</td>
<td>1-6 weeks before departure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>detachment and withdrawal</td>
<td>last week before departure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During deployment</td>
<td>emotional disorganization</td>
<td>first 6 weeks of deployment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>recovery and stabilization</td>
<td>variable duration (between stages 3 and 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>anticipation of homecoming</td>
<td>last 6 weeks of deployment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-deployment</td>
<td>renegotiation of relationships</td>
<td>first 6 weeks home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reintegration and stabilization</td>
<td>6-12 weeks after return home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the above table illustrates, the emotional cycle of deployment stress begins from the moment the proposed assignment is discussed. While reactions will vary from person to person and from family to family, reading through the list will help you to understand the situation from all perspectives and to recognize some of your responses as entirely normal.

The post-deployment phase is dealt with in part 4 of this booklet.

THE SPECIAL STRESSES OF MISSION ASSIGNMENT

PRE-DEPLOYMENT

Anticipation of loss

COMMON REACTIONS
fluctuation in energy level and mood
fantasizing
feelings of sadness, anger, excitement, restlessness, anxiety, tension, frustration, resentment, depression

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS
allow yourself to feel and express your full range of emotional responses
encourage all family members to share their feelings
reassure your partner of your love and commitment
involve the whole family in preparing for the separation
create opportunities for warm, lasting memories
try to see the deployment as a challenging opportunity for growth
remember that the deployment is not forever
go through the checklist (pages 8 to 14) with partner

FOR SPOUSE DEPARTING
share honestly all you can about the deployment
choose favourite family photos to take with you
make a list of important family occasions; take cards with you
record audiotapes of yourself reading favourite children’s stories
participate in mission-readiness activities for yourself and your family

FOR SPOUSE STAYING
take photos of your spouse doing routine activities
build a solid support network for yourself
set realistic goals for yourself for the field assignment period
The Special Stresses of Mission Assignment

have concrete, written plans for an unexpected family crisis and/or emergency

Detachment and withdrawal
COMMON REACTIONS
reduced emotional and sexual intimacy
feelings of despair, hopelessness, impatience, numbness

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS
accept your feelings as normal reactions to challenging circumstances and not signs of rejection
communicate as openly and honestly as possible
be patient with yourself, your partner, your children

FOR SPOUSE DEPARTING
complete your packing and preparation early so that the last day and evening can be family time
accept your excitement about the assignment as natural and normal without expecting your family to share your feeling

FOR SPOUSE STAYING
try to take good care of yourself — nutrition, sleep, exercise, hobbies, social support
ignore rumours, try to rely on official sources of information concerning the departure and the assignment

DURING DEPLOYMENT

Emotional disorganization
COMMON REACTIONS
magical thinking (wishful thinking; using charms or rituals)
sleep and appetite disturbances
feelings of relief, guilt, anger, numbness, depression, confusion, disorganization, indecision, loneliness, vulnerability, irritability, aimlessness
GENERAL SUGGESTIONS
communicate — keep in touch about everyday events
and share your feelings to maintain the emotional
bond
date and number your letters so that your spouse
can read them in sequence
try to end phone calls on a positive note — it may be a
long wait before the next call

FOR SPOUSE DEPLOYED
write separate letters to your children periodically
share as much information as you can about your
daily life and work

FOR SPOUSE AT HOME
maintain the healthful, self-care practices you estab-
lished before the departure
participate in a support group, whether formal or informal
help your children to express their feelings, and to stay in touch with
their absent parent

Recovery and stabilization

COMMON REACTIONS
concern that your partner is coping so well that you are no longer
needed
feelings of increased confidence, independence, competence, free-
dom, pride, isolation anxiety, depression

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS
enjoy new skills, freedom and independence
celebrate signs of positive growth in self, partner, children
offer empathy and support to family, friends, colleagues in need

FOR SPOUSE DEPLOYED
maintain regular contact with family — mail (letters, tapes, gifts), phone
calls, faxes, e-mail, Internet, etc.
The Special Stresses of Mission Assignment

participate in formal debriefings following critical incidents
confide in trusted colleagues, clergy
FOR SPOUSE AT HOME
share your feelings of pride and self-confidence, reassuring your partner that you still long for the separation to end
encourage and assist your children to keep the absent parent a vital part of the family
share ideas for care packages with other spouses in support groups

Anticipation of homecoming

COMMON REACTIONS
increased energy and activity
sleep and appetite disturbances
feelings of joy, excitement, anxiety, apprehension, restlessness, impatience

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS
share your feelings of apprehension as well as excitement and joy
share your expectations and desires for the homecoming
reassure your partner of your love and commitment
include your children in planning for the homecoming celebration
plan to have some family time with the children before the “honeymoon”

FOR SPOUSE DEPLOYED
relay only officially confirmed information about your return (date, time, location) to your family
participate in preparation for reunion activities (briefings, workshops)

FOR SPOUSE AT HOME
ignore rumours and try to wait patiently for the official date, time and location information for your partner’s return
participate in preparation for reunion activities (briefings, workshops)
RENegotiation of Relationship

Common reactions
- difficulty re-establishing emotional and sexual intimacy
- feelings of excitement, disorganization, resentment, frustration
- grieving over loss of freedom and independence

General suggestions
- communicate openly and honestly — accept your feelings as normal and not a threat to the relationship
- try and be patient with yourself and your partner
- renegotiate your roles and responsibilities — the workload can again be shared, but perhaps in a new way
- celebrate together the personal growth each has achieved during the separation
- continue to participate in a support group/network
- seek professional counselling (clergy, social worker, doctor, psychologist) for continuing signs of critical incident stress or other concerns

Reactions to your return — what you might expect

Knowing and understanding what sort of reactions to expect from yourself, your partner and your family on your return will help make your reunion and reintegration a less stressful, far more enjoyable experience.
HOME COMER’S REACTIONS
you may want to talk about what you saw and did. Others may seem not to want to listen
you may not want to talk about it when others keep asking
you may miss the excitement of the deployment for a while
you may experience a range of emotional reactions such as excitement, disorganization, resentment and frustration
some things may have changed while you were away
roles may have changed in managing basic household chores
face-to-face communication may be hard at first
re-establishing emotional and sexual intimacy may be difficult
children may have grown and may be different in many ways
spouses may have become more independent and learned new coping skills
spouses may have new friends and support systems
you may have changed in your outlook and priorities in life

WHAT SPOUSES MAY EXPECT FROM THE HOME COMER
he/she may —
have changed
feel closed in, having been used to the open spaces of the mission location
be overwhelmed by the noise and confusion of home life
be on a different schedule of sleeping and eating (including jet lag)
wonder if he/she still fits into the family
want to take back all the responsibilities he/she had before he/she left
feel hurt when young children are slow to hug him/her
REACTIONS OF CHILDREN TO THE HOMECOMER
babies less than a year old may not know you and may cry when held
toddlers (1-3 yrs.) may hide from you and be slow to come to you
pre-schoolers (3-5 yrs.) may feel guilty over the separation and be scared
school-age (6-12 yrs.) may want a lot of your time and attention
teenagers (13-18 yrs.) may be moody and appear not to care
any age may feel guilty about not living up to your standards
some may fear your return ("Wait until Mummy/Daddy gets home!")
some may feel torn by loyalties to the spouse who remained

A SUCCESSFUL REUNION — some useful advice
Homecomers
communicate as openly and honestly as possible
support the good things your family has done
take time to talk with your spouse and children
make individual time for each child and your spouse
go slowly when re-establishing your place in the family
be prepared to make adjustments
renegotiate your roles and responsibilities if necessary — the workload
can again be shared but perhaps in a new way
remember that romantic conversation can lead to more enjoyable sex
take time to listen and to talk with loved ones
go easy on partying
continue to participate in a support group/network
seek professional counselling (clergy, social worker, doctor, psychologist) for continuing signs of critical incident stress or other concerns

Spouses
avoid scheduling too many things
go slowly in making adjustments
you and your partner may need time for yourselves

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remind your partner that he/she is still needed in the family
discuss sharing of family chores
stick to your budget until you have had time to talk it through
along with time for your family, make individual time to talk
be patient with yourself and your partner

Reunion with the children
go slowly; adapt to the rules and routines already in place
learn from the way your spouse manages the children
be available to your child with both time and your emotions
let the child set the pace for getting to know you again
delay making changes in rules and routines for a few weeks
expect the family to have changed while you were away
focus on successes with your children — limit your criticisms
encourage children to tell you about what happened while you were away
make individual time for each child and your spouse

REINTEGRATION AND STABILIZATION

Common reactions
feelings of intimacy, closeness, confidence in relationship(s)

General suggestions
relax and enjoy yourself and your family
begin preparation and planning for the next assignment

*Remember
The challenges of separation and reunion provide new opportunities for your relationships — a time to evaluate the changes that have taken place within and between you and your partner, to redefine roles and responsibilities, and to synthesize all the changes into a renewed and rejuvenated relationship.
Part 5: Summary and Appendices

For most people, undertaking a mission assignment is an exciting prospect, a chance to get away from the routine of life into the unknown. Experience has shown us that all too often things do not quite turn out as they had imagined.

Throughout this booklet we have aimed at preparing you for your mission with regard to those areas outside the range of the proposed job — namely family and relationships. We ask you to consider seriously all the points we have raised before you set out, to take the time required for the necessary forward planning as outlined and to be fully aware of all the potential stress factors inherent in an overseas mission assignment.

While no one can foresee the future, it is certainly worth feeling secure knowing that proper preparations have been made to accommodate most eventualities.

Finally, we should like to wish you every success in your forthcoming mission.
APPENDIX A:
WORKSHEET FOR WILLS AND POWERS OF ATTORNEY

In the “Family Welfare” section of the Mission Readiness Checklist, reference is made to wills and powers of attorney. These worksheets will help you and your spouse sort through the necessary details.

1. SELF
Full name: .................................................................
Address: .................................................................
Nationality: .............................................................
Social Security number: ............................................
Date of birth: ............................................................
Residence tel.: ...........................................................
Position/occupation: .................................................
Employer: .................................................................
Address: .................................................................
Business tel.: ............................................................
Fax: .............................. E-mail: ...............................
WORKSHEET FOR WILLS AND POWERS OF ATTORNEY

Name: 
Address: 
Social Security number: 
Date of birth: 
Nationality: 

Name: 
Address: 
Social Security number: 
Date of birth: 
Nationality: 

Name: 
Address: 
Social Security number: 
Date of birth: 
Nationality: 

STANDARD WILL

Name of executor: 
Full address: 
Tel.: 
Fax: 
E-mail: 

Co-executor: 
Full address: 
Tel.: 
Fax: 
E-mail: 

Alternate executor: 
Full address: 
Tel.: 
Fax: 
E-mail: 

Location of original will: 
Location of copies: 

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WORKSHEET FOR WILLS AND POWERS OF ATTORNEY

LIVING WILL
Agent: .................................................................
Address: ............................................................
Tel.: ................................ Fax: ......................... E-mail: ......................
Alternate address: .................................................
Tel.: ................................ Fax: ......................... E-mail: ......................
Location of document: .............................................

HEALTH-CARE POWER OF ATTORNEY
Agent: .................................................................
Address: ............................................................
Tel.: .................................................................
Location of document: .............................................

SPECIAL POWER OF ATTORNEY
Agent: .................................................................
Address: ............................................................
Tel.: ................................ Fax: ......................... E-mail: ......................

GENERAL POWER OF ATTORNEY
Agent: .................................................................
Address: ............................................................
Tel: ................................ Fax: ......................... E-mail: ......................
Location of document: .............................................
APPENDIX B: USING A TWO-WAY RADIO

If your assignment requires you to learn how to use a two-way radio, it is suggested that you obtain a thorough briefing on its operation and maintenance. It is also a useful skill for anyone going on mission.

PHONETIC ALPHABET

When spelling out words or using letters in messages while transmitting or receiving with a radio unit, always use the phonetic alphabet. When transmitting information, always spell out unusual names. Numbers should also be transmitted individually and then as a whole number. For example, vehicle licence number U N S 1 2 is transmitted: U,N,S,1,2, (pause), UNIFORM, NOVEMBER, SIERRA, ONE, TWO.

When using the phonetic alphabet say the letter first followed by its identifier, as follows: ‘A’ - ALPHA, ‘B’ - BRAVO etc.

A — ALPHA          N — NOVEMBER
B — BRAVO          O — OSCAR
C — CHARLIE        P — PAPA
D — DELTA          Q — QUEBEC
E — ECHO           R — ROMEO
F — FOXTROT        S — SIERRA
G — GOLF           T — TANGO
H — HOTEL          U — UNIFORM
I — INDIA          V — VICTOR
J — JULIET         W — WHISKEY
K — KILO           X — X-RAY
L — LIMA           Y — YANKEE
M — MIKE           Z — ZULU

All base stations identify themselves with their unique phonetic alphabet name followed by CONTROL: Tango Control, Charlie Control, Foxtrot Control and Sierra Control.
APPENDIX C:
CAR MAINTENANCE — BASIC TROUBLESHOOTING

Life at a peacekeeping mission is often unpredictable. You may find yourself driving all types of vehicles, from manual and automatic to 4-wheel drive and trucks. You should know what to do if your vehicle breaks down. Listed below is a basic trouble-shooting procedure.

1. Check your fuel gauge. Have you run out of petrol?
2. Check the fan belt. Is it broken?
3. Check the battery cables. Are they tightly fastened?
4. Check the spark-plug wires. Are they all firmly connected to the spark plugs?

If you are unfamiliar with any or all of the above, take yourself down to your local garage and ask a mechanic to teach you something about basic troubleshooting. He may also make some useful additions to the list.
APPENDIX D:
PERSONAL HEALTH AND FITNESS FACT SHEET

How healthy do you think you really are? Reviewing this list may make you decide it's time to make some lifestyle changes which could improve your health fitness and overall well-being.

Metabolic rate
Healthier: Generally elevated, more calories consumed in all activities, promotes leaner figure
Less healthy: Generally suppressed, fewer calories consumed per activity, tendency to accumulate more fat

Heart
Healthier: Strong, circulating more blood per beat, lower resting heart rate
Less healthy: Weakened, circulates less blood per beat, requires higher resting heart rate

Blood
Healthier: Decreased cholesterol (fat), triglycerides, blood sugar, insulin, adrenaline, clotting
Less healthy: Increased cholesterol, triglycerides, blood sugar, adrenaline, clotting

Blood vessels
Healthier: Larger, more elastic, less obstructed with fat, freer circulation, lower blood pressure
Less healthy: Constricted, inelastic, clogged with excess fat, reduced circulation, elevated blood pressure

Muscles
Healthier: Stronger, more firm, defined and efficient, tending to burn more calories
Less healthy: Weaker, less toned and efficient, tending to burn fewer calories, less sensitive to insulin

Lungs
Healthier: Expanded capacity for oxygen absorption and waste expulsion
Less healthy: Restricted capacity for oxygen absorption and waste expulsion
PERSONAL HEALTH AND FITNESS FACT SHEET

Bones
Healthier: Stronger, denser and more resilient
Less healthy: Weaker, more porous and brittle

Joints
Healthier: Capable of a wide range of fluid motion
Less healthy: Stiff, restricted, sometimes painful in motion

Body composition
Healthier: Lean, with proportionally more muscle than bone
Less healthy: Fat, with proportionally less muscle than bone

Illness risk
Healthier: Less risk due to healthier lungs, heart, blood vessels and liver, bones, muscle and body composition
Less healthy: Increased risk of diseases of the heart, lungs, blood vessels and liver; of diabetes, stroke, accidents and broken bones.

Mental functioning
Healthier: Alert, clearer-headed and high concentration capacity, less boredom and fatigue
Less healthy: Dull, worried and distracted, increased boredom and fatigue

Emotional outlook
Healthier: More patient, tolerant, relaxed and enthusiastic
Less healthy: Impatient, critical, tense and depressed

Self-esteem
Healthier: More confident with positive appreciation of self
Less healthy: Less certain, more doubtful and self-conscious

Quality of life
Healthier: More active, generating greater vitality and endurance, minimum illness
Less healthy: Inactive, less vitality and endurance, tendency towards illness
APPENDIX E:
LIST OF UN STAFF COUNSELLORS

Staff Counsellor contact numbers:

Geneva:  Staff Counsellor, HQ-UNOG, (41)-22-917-3136
         Social Welfare Office, UNHCR, (41)-22-739-8275

Nairobi: Staff Counsellor, UNEP, (254)-2-62-3278
         Staff Counsellor, UNICEF, (254)-2-62-2066

New York: Staff Counsellor, UNHQ-NYC, (1)-212-963-2530
          Staff Counsellor, UNHQ-NYC, (1)-212-963-7044

Vienna:  Staff Counsellor, IAEA, (43)-1-2060-2-6065
         Staff Counsellor, UNOU/UNIDO, (43)-1-2060-2-5782