



Pacing for Public Health Workers: Using What We've Learned

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We don't get to practice widespread crisis often....so it's no surprise that we need to learn from trial and error

Maladaptive coping (avoidance, obstinance, substance abuse, etc.) is what fellow humans – and we - and usually default to

Lessons From Humanitarian Work

It Is Impossible to Prepare for Complex Emergencies (CEs), but Their Impact Can Be Mitigated: A Perfect Storm

The impact of CE is complicated by the disruption in the fabric of professional, community, and social life.

Anger Is Everywhere and It Masks Other Feelings

Underlying feelings of helplessness, sadness, and fear often expressed in anger

Lessons from Humanitarian Work -1

Self-Awareness Offers Choices

The awareness of one's limits and needs empowers individuals to make informed decisions about what we need to move forward.

Open and Honest – with self, at least

Journaling helps

Talking with others. Or into a recorder

Best to have a good, empathetic listener

Processing is verbal, but public venting on social media won't help

Lessons from Humanitarian Work - 2

CEs Remind Health Professionals About Their Mission and Purpose

When responding to CE, workers get the opportunity to directly contribute to transformative change in the society and health-care system

Peer Support Peer-to-Peer Support is the Support of Choice

Its objective is for peers feel noticed, understood, supported, and validated. It does not substitute for professional assistance in some cases

Lessons from Humanitarian Work - 3

Doubt / Disillusionment / Moral Injury

Risk of disillusionment

- High stakes situations where no good choice is possible
- Rapid responses don't allow time to weigh a decision thoroughly

Feelings of betrayal and anger towards self / leadership

- Rushed pandemic protocols
- Others' responses to national events



Reduce the Potential for Moral Injury

- Seek out others to assist in making difficult choices when possible, and for support about circumstances that cause moral distress
- Peer Support Peer-to-Peer Support is the Support of Choice
- Become more attentive to internal self-talk (turn the “I should have” into a “I did the best that I could have at that time”)
- Take satisfaction in what can be accomplished, however small, under difficult conditions
- Focus on self-forgiveness, acceptance, self-compassion, and internal self-talk (turn the “I should have” into a “I did the best that I could have at that time”)
- Consider spiritual support

Increasing Resilience is a Psychological and Social Support Strategy



Sustain Yourself



- **Take breaks away from workspace**
- **Take a walk, move, stretch**
- **Virtual coffee or lunch with friends or co-workers**
- **Break-it-down Outlook: “One Day at a Time”**
- **Meditate (guided imagery, pray, yoga, breathe, etc.)**
- **Drink water**
- **Get outdoors**
- **Help someone**

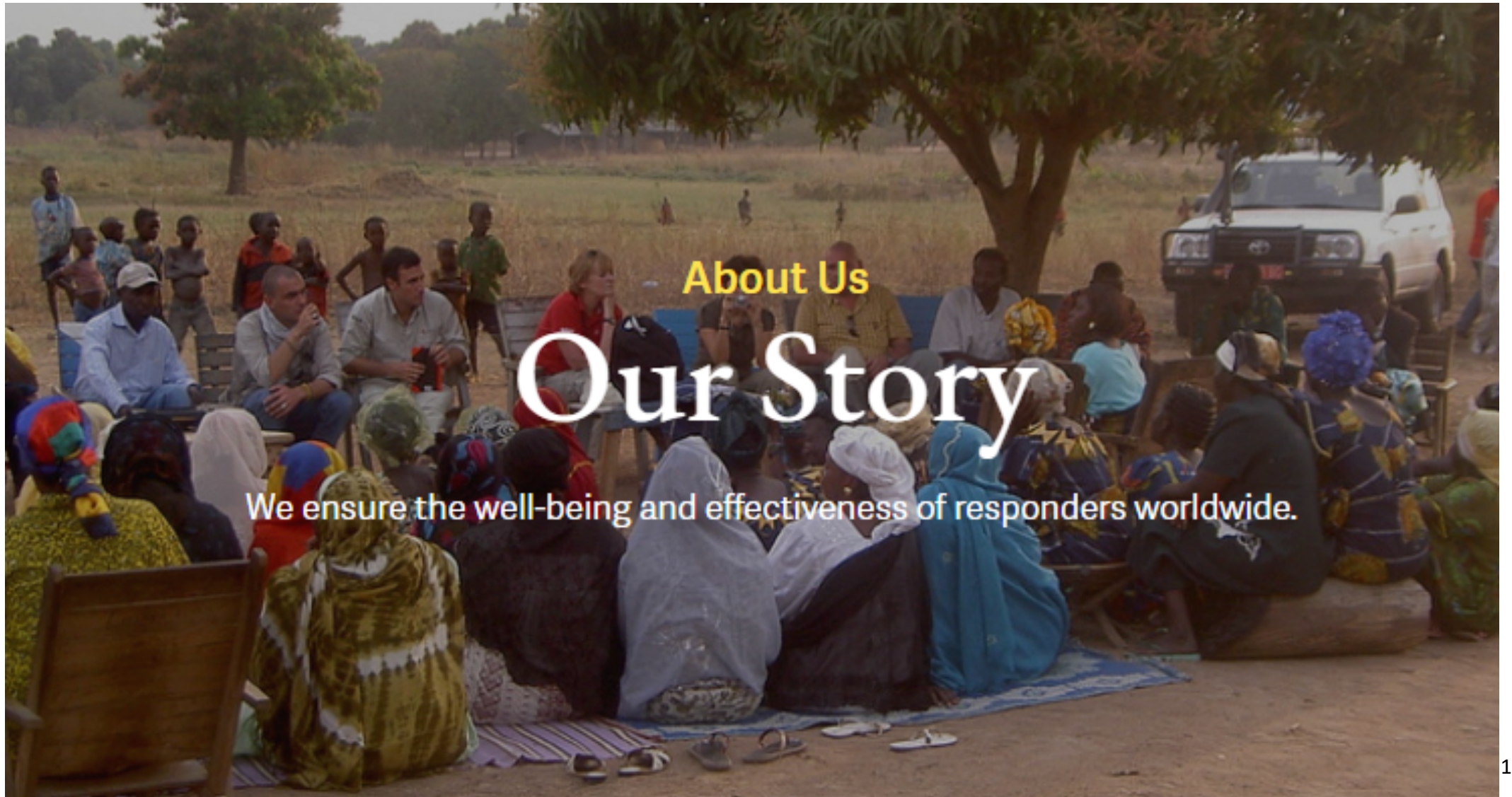
The Resilience Challenge

Maladaptive coping (avoidance, obstinance, substance abuse, etc.) is what fellow humans – and we - and usually default to.

All beings are inclined to routine and familiar conditions

When stressed – ESPECIALLY! - we seek comfort and ease

Resilience is a discipline: resilient behavior is often not appealing, especially if changing routines is involved at first



The Good and Bad News About Resilience

The good news: we know a lot about resilience thanks to advances in brain research

The bad news: you have to do something

Resilience is a discipline: resilient behavior is often not appealing, especially at first

“Be resilient. Go do something. That’s important.”

Make pacing yourself and your colleagues a priority

Make a plan

Be specific

Build in accountability



Resources to help you focus on your overall health

1

Wellbeing Program

2

Health Benefits

3

Employee Assistance Program



Responding to the Psychological Needs of Health Workers During Pandemic: Ten Lessons From Humanitarian Work

Elena Cherepanov, PhD

July 2021 [Concepts in Disaster Medicine](#)

Factors That Affect Emergency Responder Wellbeing: Considerations for Public Health Responders

April 2021 [Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness](#)

Moral Injury: effect on mental health and implications for treatment.

March 17, 2021 [The Lancet](#)

[Headington Institute](http://www.headington-institute.org) www.headington-institute.org

Citations



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