

**USACHPPM Technical Guide 240
Combat Stress Behaviors**



Combat is more stressful than any training can be. The goal of the enemy is to stress and confuse you. Security and support operations can involve heavy stress, even if there is no combat or home front stressor. Mental and physical fitness will help you endure the stress of combat and military operations. Know the signs of combat & operational stress reactions (COSR), what to do for self and others, and when to seek help.

Control Your Stress

- Try to look calm and in control.
- Focus on the mission.
- Follow SOPs.
- Focus on success.
- Breathe deeply and relax.
- Know COSR are normal.
- Keep open communication with your team.
- Gather facts.
- Avoid rumors.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Eat well-balanced meals.
- Maintain personal hygiene.
- Practice quick relaxation techniques.
- Sleep at least 4 hours in each 24-hour period, 6-8 hours if possible.
- Debrief after unusually stressful events.
- Share grief with a friend, a leader, or a chaplain.
- Keep active.
- Welcome new team members.
- Stay physically fit.
- Know and practice self aid/buddy-aid.
- Support each other.
- Set the example of an ethical, moral soldier

Adaptive (Positive) Combat Behaviors

- Unit cohesion
- Loyalty to buddies and leaders
- Identification with unit tradition
- Sense of eliteness
- Sense of mission and purpose
- Alertness, vigilance
- Strength, endurance
- Tolerance to hardship
- Ignoring pain, injury
- Increased faith, confidence
- Courage, heroic acts

U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine
ATTN: MCHB-TS-H, 5158 Blackhawk Rd, Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD 21010-5403
410-436-4656 or 1-800-222-9698
<http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/dhpw>

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Combat Misconduct and Criminal Acts

(Unacceptable Reactions to Combat Stress)

- Mutilating enemy dead
- Not taking prisoners
- Killing enemy prisoners
- Killing noncombatants
- Torture
- Brutality
- Killing animals
- Fighting with allies
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Recklessness, indiscipline
- Looting, pillaging, committing rape
- Fraternization
- Excessive sick call
- Negligent disease, injury
- Shirking, malingering
- Combat refusal
- Self-inflicted wounds
- Threatening/killing own leaders
- AWOL
- Desertion

*Stress cannot justify criminal acts. You and your leaders must **prevent** or **report** them!

Combat Operational Stress Reactions (COSR) ("Battle Fatigue")

- Hyperalertness
- Fear, anxiety, trembling
- Irritability, anger, rage
- Grief, self-doubt, guilt
- Physical stress complaints
- Inattention, carelessness
- Loss of confidence
- Loss of hope and faith
- Depression, insomnia
- Impaired duty performance
- Erratic actions
- Outbursts
- Freezing under fire, immobility
- Terror, panic running under fire
- Total exhaustion, apathy
- Loss of skills and memory
- Impaired speech or muteness
- Impaired vision, touch, hearing
- Weakness and paralysis
- Hallucinations, delusions

Recovery

- Keep command informed.
- No one is immune from developing battle fatigue/combat stress reaction.
- COSR quickly improves with rest, reassurance, good food and water, sleep, hygiene, and productive work.
- If the situation is unsafe, temporarily transfer the soldier to a safer area within or outside the unit.
- If the symptoms could be due to physical injury or illness, have a medic or aid station personnel examine the soldier.
- Welcome recovered soldiers back and expect them to pull their fair share.
- Having one combat stress reaction does not mean you are more likely to have another.



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