



# Peer Support Team Newsletter

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Peer Support Teams are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Serve – Protect – Support - Surpass

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## Stress: The Stressometer

What kind of stressometer do you have? Stress gets a bad rap. But according to Craig N. Sawchuk, Ph.D., a psychologist at Mayo Clinic, stress doesn't always deserve the negative connotation. "Stress helps to motivate us," he says. "It helps us to get things done. It helps power us through various things." For example, a looming deadline at work can give you the challenge you need to focus. But like all things in life, too much of a good thing can be a problem. When stress builds up, it can damage health, relationships and quality of life. How do you know when you've hit your limit? Everyone has an internal alarm that goes off when stress becomes too much. According to Dr. Sawchuk, there are 4 types of alarms that make up your "stressometer." Figuring out which type you have can narrow down which stress management strategies might work for you.

**Physical** - If you have a physical stressometer, you feel it — you guessed it — in your body. Headaches, stomach problems, muscle tension and sleep disruptions are common signs and symptoms. The way you move, eat and sleep can help your body feel more at ease, even when life gets hectic. Try these tips:

- Exercise in a way you enjoy, whether it's line dancing or simple yoga poses. Eat colorful plates of fruit, vegetables and whole grains. Drink plenty of water. Avoid substances that can disrupt sleep, like nicotine, caffeine and alcohol. Establish a consistent sleep pattern.

**Emotional** - Does chaos make you edgy and irritable? If you snap at your partner for forgetting to start the dishwasher, ask yourself whether stress is affecting your mood. Relaxation strategies can be helpful for calming an emotional stressometer. Yoga, massage, calming music, and focused breathing exercises can take the edge off when emotions run hot.

**Cognitive** - Racing thoughts, worry, and difficulty concentrating are hallmark signs of stress that shows up in the way you think. Reframing stressors in a more flexible light is one strategy for turning those thoughts around. Unexpected road construction has you running late for work? Remind yourself it's likely your boss will understand. Plus, it gives you an opportunity to catch up on your favorite podcast. You can also jot down worries in a notebook. Sometimes being able to journal the worries — writing them down in ways to challenge ourselves to look at things more flexibly — can be helpful.

**Behavioral** - Sometimes when stress picks up, so do bad habits. Having a little too much to drink, skipping breakfast, and even withdrawing from others are red flags for people with a stressometer that impacts their behavior. Asking for support from loved ones can pull you out of a slump. Having an accountability buddy to share meal plans, exercise with or even just check in with can be a strong motivator to stay on the right track. What if stress has you canceling plans and turning off your phone? Dr. Sawchuk says, "If we find that we're withdrawing more, then it's important for us to pay attention to that and to set goals of reaching out to others in our lives."

The bottom line "Stress is part of being alive," says Dr. Sawchuk. "But if you find that your mood or stress levels are getting to the point where they get in the way of being able to take care of normal things...those are good times to reach out."

### Occupational World of LE Officers

Remaining mindful that even initially cooperative persons may become violent with an intention to harm is a component of every officer’s psychological reality. It does not matter what gender, whether a person is young or elderly, verbal or silent, intoxicated or sober, all can become a threat. This compels police officers to live in an occupational world of *assumption of possible threat*. It is much different than most other workers, who live in an occupational world of *assumption of safety*. It is the psychological assumption of safety that is shattered when bad things happen in historically safe work environments. The same is true for historically safe non-work environments (JAD).

### Six Tips for Better Parenting

- (1) Avoid physical punishment. Spanking or hitting a child has consistently been shown to cause several long-term negative outcomes, including low self-esteem and lack of personal confidence.
- (2) Limit screen-time. Avoid the use of electronic devices as a substitute for parenting time. Encourage exercise and physical activity.
- (3) Set reasonable rules and boundaries. Remain consistent in their development and application.
- (4) Encourage positive interests and associated independent behavior.
- (5) Model appropriate behavior. Parents are role models. Children will mimic parental behavior.
- (6) Avoid guilt or frightening children into behavior compliance. Such attempts to influence or control child behavior frequently leads to long-term negative outcomes that can last a lifetime.



“ a belief in a supernatural source of evil is not necessary; men alone are quite capable of every wickedness. ”

Joseph Conrad (1857-1924) *Under Western Eyes*

### Useful Phrases to Ease or Shut Down Conflict

According to psychologist Reena B. Patel, there are seven useful phrases to ease or stop conflict.

- (1) I hear you, but this is how I see it.
- (2) I understand where you are coming from, but I think differently.
- (3) I am feeling this way about this situation. It may be different from how you are seeing it.
- (4) How can we get on the same page about this?
- (5) I am open to hearing you out, but I also want to share where I am coming from.
- (6) Let's take a minute to regroup and talk when we are calm and have had a minute to think about what we want to say next.
- (7) I want to see your side too. Help me understand your point of view.

From: <https://www.reenabpatel.com>

### On the Science Scene

#### The Sun: Our nearest star

The sun is a G-type main sequence star informally known as a *yellow dwarf*, although its light is actually white. It is about 4.6 billion years old, older but roughly the same age as the earth. The sun is massive. It comprises over 99.8% of the mass of our solar system. It’s also hot. However, the sun does not burn at a single temperature. This is because the sun is comprised of multiple layers. The hottest part of the sun is its center *core*, where nuclear fusion (hydrogen to helium) takes place. The temperature of the core exceeds 27 million degrees F. Moving outward from the core, the *radiative* and *convective* zones produce temperatures of about 12.6 and 3.6 million degrees F respectively. The coolest part of the sun is its visible surface (photosphere)...a mere 9,500 to 10,000 degrees F. The sun’s *corona*, its outermost layer, is hotter than its surface. The corona’s temperature, due to several complex factors, ranges from 1.8 to 5.4 million degrees F. The sun will burn for about another 5 billion years, then swell to become a *red giant* star, a transformation that will likely extinguish any remaining life on earth. Ref: <http://sciencenotes.org>