

Combat Stress Control

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Abstract

This article presents the concept and scope of combat stress control. It looks at the potential stressors in battles. It lists the responsibilities for combat stress control of all junior (direct) and senior (organizational) leaders, staffs, and health care providers. It also discusses the responsibilities of specialized combat stress control/ mental health personnel.

Battle fatigue and misconduct stress behaviors are preventable with strong effective leadership.

Controlling combat stress is often the deciding factor-the difference between victory and defeat-in all forms of human conflict. Stressors are a fact of combat and soldiers must face them. It is controlled combat stress that gives soldiers the necessary alertness, strength, and endurance to accomplish their mission. Controlled combat stress can call forth stress reactions of loyalty, selflessness, and heroism. Conversely, uncontrolled combat stress causes erratic or harmful behavior that disrupts or interferes with accomplishment of the unit mission. Uncontrolled combat stress could impair mission performance and may bring disgrace, disaster, and defeat.

The objectives of stress control are:

- To keep stress within acceptable limits for mission performance and to achieve the ideal (optimal) level of stress when feasible.
- To return stress to acceptable limits when it becomes temporarily disruptive.
- To progressively increase tolerance to stress so that soldiers can endure and function under the extreme stress which is unavoidable in combat.

Stress is controlled in these ways:

- Monitor the signs of stress and recognize when and if they change.
- Identify and monitor the causes of stress; that is, the stressors.