



## NAEMT Mental Health Resilience Officer Course

---

### Building Emotional Awareness

Four steps help build emotional awareness. The amount of focus and time an individual must spend on each of these steps will vary. In some cases, an individual may be very aware in one area, and lacking in another. Identifying these steps will help reinforce areas that are well in hand and highlight areas where work can be done.

#### Step 1: Explore the stressors you encounter.

- Be intentional about setting aside uninterrupted time to consider what stressors exist in your personal and work life.
- Seek counsel from those in your support system. Often stressors may not be obvious to an individual, but those around them may have insight into the stress they witness that person encountering.
- It may be helpful to write down stressors, so that you can further explore your response to those stressors in the next step.

#### Step 2: Examine your response to the stressors in your life, emotionally and physically.

- Feelings occur on a continuum, and often as an individual becomes more stressed their ability to cope decreases and feeling intensify. It can be helpful to examine how intense your feelings are towards a stressor when determining how large of a role it plays in your overall stress load.
- Below are a few examples of feelings that may be encountered when presented with a stressor. Feelings are listed in order of intensity.
  - Annoyance → Anger → Rage
  - Boredom → Disgust → Loathing
  - Concern → Sadness → Grief
  - Apprehension → Fear → Terror
- **Example:** A paramedic shows up to work and notices that the previous crew left their empty coffee cups in the cupholder of the ambulance. Normally this would be a simple annoyance to that individual. But in this case, he sees the trash and proceeds to curse and yell at his off going colleagues and pushes one as they try to calm him down. This is an example of how reduced coping has led to an intensification of feelings in response to stress, beyond what would be considered an appropriate response.
- In some cases, stressors may produce intense physical feelings, out of proportion with the stressor being presented. Nausea, vomiting and fatigue may be seen in response to intense stress when reduced coping is present.



## NAEMT Mental Health Resilience Officer Course

---

### Step 3: Understand how others react and respond to you.

- Take note of how relationships in your life change. If you see people pulling back, asking if you are ok, or otherwise changing their behavior, consider openly asking if they feel your behavior has changed.
- If you note a colleague is in distress and you are compelled to pull back or feel that your relationship is drifting, try to have safe and open communication with that individual. Make sure that any feedback provided is actionable and constructive.

### Step 4: Practice mindfulness techniques.

- Mindfulness is intentional reflection on the current moment, and honest examination of one's feelings in that moment.
- Mindfulness is difficult to achieve in the moment as there is no shortage of distractions in public safety. Employers can help promote mindfulness by designating areas that are quiet and peaceful, for employees to reflect when they have downtime, or when they need to take a moment.
- Individuals can help themselves with mindfulness by practicing it often, even when not acutely stressed.
- Breathing exercises, guided imagery and meditation techniques are helpful for achieving mindfulness.
- It is important to avoid the desire to judge, rationalize, or justify feelings in the moment – the goal is reflection and acknowledgement of the feelings, and examination of what led to those feelings.
- There are many free and paid resources online which provide mindfulness information and techniques.