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# Winter 2013 Disaster Behavioral Health Newsletter

Maine Department of Health and Human Services

Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention

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# Maine DBH Newsletter

**Winter 2013**

Happy Holidays! The AdCare Team would like to extend warm holiday joy and comfort to you and your family. We hope you are able to spend this special time of year around those you love enjoying laughter and eggnog!

Check below for news & updates as well information about our upcoming Skills for Psychological Recovery trainings listed at the end of the newsletter!



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## RESOURCES & UPDATES

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## Caring for Yourself in the Face of Difficult Work

Your empathy for others helps you work as a Disaster Behavioral Health Volunteer. It is important to take good care of your feelings by monitoring how you use them. The most resilient workers are those that know how to turn their feelings off when they go on duty, but on again when they go off duty. This is not denial, it is a coping strategy. It is a way to get maximum protection while working (feelings switched off) and maximum support while resting (feelings switched on).

Our work can be overwhelming. Our challenge is to maintain our resilience, so we can keep doing the work with care, energy and compassion.

10 things to do each day:

- |                              |                         |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Get enough sleep          | 6. Get enough to eat    |
| 2. Vary the work that you do | 7. Some light exercise  |
| 3. Do something pleasurable  | 8. Learn from mistakes  |
| 4. Pray, meditate, relax     | 9. Share a private joke |
| 5. Focus on what you do well | 10. Support a colleague |

How to become better at switching on and off feelings:

1. Make this a conscious process. Talk to yourself as you switch.
2. Use images that make you feel safe, protected, connected and cared for.
3. Develop rituals that help you switch as you start and stop work.
4. Breathe deeply and slowly to calm yourself when

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starting a tough job.



## Southern Maine Regional Resource Center for Health Emergency Preparedness (SMRRC)

### December SMRRC Regional Healthcare Coalition Meeting

December 12, 2013, 8:00AM-12:00PM

The Inn at Brunswick Station, Brunswick, ME

We encourage all Mental/Behavioral Health and Substance Abuse agencies and staff to go to <http://www.smrrc.org> to register for the Coalition meetings and provide input on planning issues that impact your programs and services.

Vigilant Guard Exercise Southern Maine Regional Resource Healthcare Coalition was involved in several aspects of the Vigilant Guard Exercise. The following are exercise events we directly participated in and or our healthcare agencies completed.

- A mass Point of Dispensing (POD) drill at the Topsham Fairgrounds as part of the Cities Readiness Initiative (CRI), and the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) mass dispensing initiative. This included using pharmacy students to help run the POD and local high school students as patients. Disaster Behavioral Health Volunteers were an active part of this drill as well. The drill was a huge success. (photo above)
- A Flu clinic exercise at Portland City Hall that simulated a POD/SNS mass prophylaxis center. This location saw about 60 patients and required involvement of several interpreters. It was run by Portland Public Health Department and the new Cumberland County Medical Reserve Corps participated as a support.
- A simulated collapsed building provided an exercise opportunity for Parkview and Midcoast



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near by "rubble pile". This exercise event was also used to simulate ICS command change and leadership changes.

- Lincoln County Healthcare at Miles Hospital in Damariscotta had a simulated mass casualty bus accident and caused a surge of contaminated patients to their ED. This included some post scene decontamination run in conjunction with the hospital's decontamination team and the Lincoln County Emergency Management Agency.
- SMRRC hosted a table top drill with patient surge and communications test with Sacopee Valley Health Center in Porter, a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) that does primary care in the York County area.
- Maine Medical Center had it's first functional exercise with their hospital emergency response team (HERT), decontaminating patients with an emergency department surge.
- All SMRRC Regional Healthcare Coalition partners participated in a regional emergency communications drill, including New Hampshire medical partners.



### My Definition of Resilience

Written by Dr. Galen Buckwalter, Director of Research  
Headington Institute, November 2011

I have been fortunate to spend the past couple of years researching and thinking deeply about resilience-my own personal resilience and resilience as a psychological characteristic. There is one defining characteristic of resilience that everyone agrees on-resilience is evident when we are confronted with significant trauma and stress. Resilience determines how quickly we get back to

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our steady state , when we must push through the circumstances that challenge our very being. Let's review what happens to the brain and the body when we face situations that require resilience. When you experience an extreme trauma or stressor, your physiology undergoes changes. Beginning in the depths of the brain, neurotransmitters and hormones tell your body that you are undergoing some type of threat. The adrenal glands, on top of your kidneys, get the message and flood your entire body with stress hormones. These hormones affect bodily systems (cardiovascular, digestive, immune, metabolic, inflammatory, renal, etc.) Stress has a huge impact on your brain. Stress hormones move from the downstairs brain to the upstairs brain, where you access memories and think in ways unique to you. If these hormones and chemicals go uncontrolled, they shut down your ability to make good decisions or think about anything other than the immediate threat. If your system stays on high alert, you end up with a brain not thinking clearly and every physiological system on overload. Fortunately, there are natural biological processes that facilitate our recovery from stress. A process called Allostasis attempts to get the physiological systems back to their steady state after the stress response. However, biological and psychological factors can interfere with Allostasis . This is where resilience, a psychological characteristic, can help facilitate the biological process of Allostasis.

There are three core psychological attributes of resilience: strength, meaning/purpose and pleasure. If your personal life is characterized by these traits, you may have the core components needed to build resilience. You feel equipped to

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handle both daily life and those challenging moments. You believe you are contributing to the world in a way that helps others, consistent with what seems most important to you. Whether you believe in a universe controlled by a clearly defined higher power, or participate in the human collective that transcends your personal identity; your source of meaning can help you manage high stress and trauma effectively. And finally, pleasure. It is about deeply enjoying that which enriches and satisfies you. Whether it is poetry or pottery, movies or theater, having experiences that bring you a deep sense of pleasure are essential.

These core attributes must be experienced on both an emotional and cognitive level. Resilience grows from both feelings and engagement in a thought life; bringing you strength, meaning and pleasure. Reading, thinking, working, connecting, writing, conversing- these are just as important as emotional experiences that give you strength, meaning and pleasure. Although, it may be possible to build personal resilience on our own; we must have meaningful interpersonal relationships to build resilience most effectively. Relationships provide both emotional and cognitive opportunities for us to develop strength, meaning and pleasure. This increases our personal resilience more than living alone, in solitude.

So, why are these particular psychological attributes – experienced emotionally and cognitively, alone and in relationships- the key to building a resilient life? Let's review the concept of Allostasis-when our body does not return to a steady state after a stress response is because of psychological reactions. If

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we catastrophize the event and think of nothing else, we keep the stress response from resolving. When we live a resilient life, eventually we may place severe life altering trauma in a context that allows for completing of Allostasis. Our body can heal itself. With strength, we know we can survive. With meaning/purpose, we know there is a reason for us to live another day. With pleasure, we know that we are given the ability to enjoy life deeply. Just as trauma, is a reality in life, so is pleasure. When trauma comes, and the stress of life seems overwhelming, we can still experience strength and purpose. Eventually, pleasure will return. That is resilience.

Here is one final thought: We discussed how stress hormones from the downstairs brain turn off the upstairs brain, where our ability to think and feel resides. Can you guess where such attributes as strength, meaning and pleasure reside? Of course, in the upstairs brain. I suggest that living with strength, meaning and pleasure could build on the areas of our brain that help us recover the next time life goes awry.

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#### ***Get Social with AdCare!***

We launched our digital marketing campaign this fall! You can now connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Foursquare and YouTube. The links are all below - don't forget to like us on Facebook!



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## UPCOMING EVENTS & TRAININGS

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You can always find information on our courses & training offerings on our website: <http://www.mainedisasterbehavioralhealth.com/> or [www.adcareme.org](http://www.adcareme.org) -- But we will also include some course information below!



### **Skills for Psychological Recovery (SPR)**

April 3, 2013 - Waterville

April 4, 2013 - Houlton

**PROGRAM OVERVIEW:** SPR is an evidence informed modular approach to help children, adolescents, adults and families in the weeks and months following disaster and exposure to trauma. This training offers SPR with a skills development approach, useful after the time when Psychological First Aid is utilized. SPR is designed to foster effective coping with

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Thanks for reading our winter newsletter! If you have any questions, please feel free to call us or send over an email.

# Happy Holidays!

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post disaster stresses by utilizing several core skill sets to promote the recovery of survivors, prevent maladaptive behaviors and prioritize a survivor's resilience while focusing on individual needs and capabilities.

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