

LEADERS' MANUAL FOR COMBAT STRESS CONTROL

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PREFACE

This field manual (FM) provides information for all leaders and staff on the control of combat stressors and the prevention of stress casualties. It identifies the leaders' responsibilities for controlling stress and recognizing the effects of stress on their personnel. It reviews Army operational doctrine for war and operations other than war. It identifies likely stressors and recommends actions for leaders to implement for the prevention and management of stress. The manual describes the positive and negative combat stress behavior associated with stress and provides leader actions to minimize battle fatigue risk factors. It provides the many different military branches and disciplines with a common conceptual framework, knowledge base, and vocabulary so they work together toward controlling stress. It provides information on how stressors and the stress process interact to improve or disrupt military performance. It identifies the supporting role of special staffs such as the chaplain and the Judge Advocate General. This manual also identifies the responsibilities of medical personnel for prevention, treatment, and management of battle fatigue and stress-related casualties.

The proponent of this publication is the United States (US) Army Medical Department Center and School (AMEDDC&S). Send comments and recommendations on Department of the Army (DA) Form 2028 directly to Commander, AMEDDC&S, ATTN: HSMC-FCD, Fort Sam Houston, Texas 78234-6123.

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Unless this publication states otherwise, masculine nouns and pronouns do not refer exclusively to men.

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American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. Third Edition, Revised. Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1987.

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF COMBAT STRESS CONTROL

1-1. Introduction

This chapter presents the concept and scope of combat stress control. It reviews historical experiences with stress casualties in different intensities of conflict and looks at the potential stressors in high-tech battles. It lists the responsibilities for combat stress control of all junior (direct) and senior (organizational) leaders, staffs, chaplains, and health care providers. It also discusses the responsibilities of specialized combat stress control/mental health personnel.

NOTE

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

1-2. Combat Stress Control

a. 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 (when properly focused by training, unit cohesion, and leadership) 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.

b. The art of war aims to impose so much stress on the enemy soldiers that they lose their will to fight. Both sides try to do this and at times accept severe stress themselves in order to

inflict greater stress on the enemy. To win, combat stress must be controlled.

c. The word *control* has been chosen deliberately to focus thinking and action within the Army. Since the same word may have contrasting connotations to different people, it is important to make its intended meaning clear. The word *control* is used (rather than the word *management*) to emphasize the active steps which leaders, supporting personnel, and individual soldiers must take to keep stress within the acceptable range. This does not mean that control and management are mutually exclusive terms. Management is, by definition, the exercise of control. Within common usage, however, and especially within Army usage, management has the connotation of being a somewhat detached, number-driven, higher echelon process rather than a direct, inspirational, leadership process.

d. Stress is the body's and mind's process for dealing with uncertain change and danger. Elimination of stress is both impossible and undesirable in either the Army's combat or peacetime missions.

e. The objectives of stress control areas follows:

(1) To keep stress within acceptable limits for mission performance and to achieve the ideal (optimal) level of stress when feasible.

(2) To return stress to acceptable limits when it becomes temporarily disruptive.

(3) To progressively increase tolerance to stress so that soldiers can endure and function under the extreme stress which is unavoidable in combat.

f. How can stress be controlled? Stress is controlled in the same ways other complex processes are controlled.