

Signs of Stress, Burnout & Trauma — Know Your Baseline

For you, your partner, and your crew

Stress after hard calls is normal. What matters is **change from your normal, how long it lasts, and whether it's getting worse.**

In yourself

Body: trouble sleeping (or sleeping all the time) · constant fatigue · headaches, stomach trouble · getting sick more · racing heart, jumpiness **Mind:** replaying calls · nightmares · trouble focusing · mistakes, forgetfulness · dread about going to work · feeling numb **Emotions:** short fuse · guilt or shame ("I should have...") · sadness or emptiness · anxiety · feeling hopeless, trapped, or like a burden **Behavior:** pulling away from family, friends, crew · more alcohol or pills · risk-taking · skipping things you used to enjoy · calling in or avoiding work

In a partner or family member

- Quiet, distant, "there but not there"
- Out-of-character anger or irritability
- Not sleeping — or sleeping all day
- Drinking more
- Won't talk about work (or can't stop)
- Withdrawing from kids, friends, hobbies

In a crew member

- Changes in performance, attendance, or appearance
- Withdrawing from the group; jokes turn dark or bitter
- Obvious stress after a particular call that doesn't ease
- More alcohol, more conflicts, more days off

Burnout vs. traumatic stress vs. depression (very short version)

- **Burnout:** exhaustion, cynicism, feeling ineffective — usually tied to workload, staffing, culture.
- **Traumatic stress/PTSD symptoms:** intrusive memories, nightmares, avoidance, being on edge, after trauma exposure.
- **Depression/anxiety:** low mood, loss of interest, worry — may or may not be job-related. They overlap. You don't need to figure out which one it is — a professional can help with that.



Warning signs that need action now

- Talking about wanting to die, disappear, or being a burden
- Hopelessness ("nothing will ever get better")
- Looking up ways to hurt themselves
- Giving away belongings, saying goodbye
- Sudden calm after a long low period
- Heavy drinking plus access to means (including firearms)

Do this: stay with them · ask directly *"Are you thinking about suicide?"* · **call or text 988** (Veterans: 988 then 1) · **call 911 if there's immediate danger** · help put firearms/medications out of reach.

What helps

Talk to someone you trust · peer support · counseling with someone who knows first-responder work · sleep, food, movement · cut back on alcohol · protect time with people who aren't the job.

Safe Call Now (206) 459-3020 · Call/text 988 · Text HOME to 741741 · Law enforcement: COPLINE 1-800-267-5463 · Emergency: 911