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NTTP 1-15M
MCRP 6-11C

Combat Stress



U.S. Marine Corps

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DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
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FOREWORD

1. PURPOSE

Marine Corps Reference Publication (MCRP) 6-11C, *Combat Stress*; Navy Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (NTTP) 1-15M, *Commander's Handbook on Combat Stress*; and Army Field Manual (FM) 90-44/6-22.5, *Combat Stress*, provide the tactics, techniques, and procedures required for small-unit leaders to effectively prevent, identify, and manage combat stress when it occurs in their units/commands.

2. SCOPE

This publication contains essential information about combat and combat-related stress. It describes, in layman's terms, techniques to prevent, identify, and treat harmful combat stress reactions at the lowest level or until professional medical assistance is available. It provides a basic understanding of the causes of stress and describes the preventive actions that can be taken to avoid or reduce its harmful effects. It describes how to identify and manage combat stress symptoms when they appear, and provides techniques to prepare units to handle combat stress reactions when they occur. All small-unit leaders should read this publication.

Unless otherwise stated, whenever the masculine gender is used, both men and women are included.

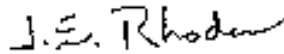
3. SUPERSESSION

FMFM 4-55, *Combat Stress*, dated 13 April 1992.

4. CERTIFICATION

Reviewed and approved this date.

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PREFACE

Combat Stress is the mental, emotional or physical tension, strain, or distress resulting from exposure to combat and combat-related conditions. Controlling combat stress is a command responsibility. In terms of Service members lost from action and reduced performance, combat stress seriously affects mission accomplishment. It is a leader's responsibility to take action to strengthen Service members' tolerance to combat stress and manage it in his or her unit.

Combat stress reactions are the result of exposure to the same conditions during military actions that cause physical injury and disease in battle or its immediate aftermath, and many combat stress reactions occur in persons who are also wounded or ill with disease. Rates of combat stress casualties vary greatly, with higher ratios during lengthy periods of intense combat. In Okinawa 1945, during a peak month of battle, the combat stress casualties among Marine Forces were reported as high as one for every two wounded in action (WIA). Under less lengthy periods, as suggested by data acquired from the Israeli Defense Forces fighting in Lebanon 1982, the ratio of combat stress casualties to WIA in small units can be as high as one to one. In the past, we have generally suffered as many as one battle stress casualty for every three to five WIA in heavy fighting. However, highly trained units with strong leadership and high esprit de corps have fewer combat stress casualties.

While this manual focuses on combat-induced stress reactions, it is important to emphasize that "combat stress" is not restricted only to combat, but may also arise from combat-like conditions present during military operations other than war. In an area of operations characterized by continuous action and high danger, our forces may experience high rates of stress casualties unless small-unit leaders are trained and prepared to manage stress.

This publication is written to inform small-unit leaders of stress characteristics and management techniques in order to *prevent, reduce, identify, and treat* combat stress reactions in the Service member's own unit to the maximum extent possible. A significant part of training is learning to control and cope with stress. Leaders must learn to cope with their own stress and then assist junior personnel in managing their stress. The application of combat stress management techniques helps conserve fighting strength and provides one more step toward achieving success.

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Chapter 1

Combat Stress Identification

1001. INTRODUCTION

The Marine Corps' success as a fighting force is dependent on leadership that maintains a balanced focus between mission accomplishment and troop welfare. The small-unit leader is the key to building and maintaining high unit morale and peak efficiency. He achieves this in part by knowing his troops and understanding their strengths and weaknesses. To maintain that same level of morale and efficiency in combat, the small-unit leader must understand how to recognize, prevent, and even personally contend with reactions to combat stress when it occurs in his unit. If a condition accounted for as many casualties in combat and the condition was at least partially preventable, the prudent combat leader would be interested in knowing more about it. Combat stress reaction(s), also called battle fatigue, is that condition. It has the potential to disable the most courageous Service member and influence the success or failure of a unit in accomplishing its mission.

1002. HISTORY

During the 1942-45 period in the European Theater, there was a ratio of one combat stress casualty for every three WIA. In a month of especially horrible, continuous fighting in Okinawa in 1945, the 6th Marine division had one stress casualty for every 1.8 WIA. However, the airborne divisions in Europe never had more than one for ten WIA, and usually less, even though they experienced very high casualties in some battles.

To accomplish a mission successfully, planners must use some guidelines to estimate losses from combat stress. What are the reasons for the tremendous range between high and low battle stress casualty rates? While the answer to this question is complex, it is clear that better-trained troops have fewer killed and wounded, and proportionally fewer stress casualties. Service members—especially leaders—can learn to recognize the symptoms and prevent or reduce the disruptive effects of combat stress.

1003. REACTIONS TO COMBAT STRESS

Service members exposed to danger experience physical and emotional reactions that are not present under more tranquil circumstances. Some reactions sharpen abilities to survive and win; other reactions may produce disruptive behaviors and threaten individual and unit safety. These adverse behaviors are collectively called *combat stress reaction*. The operative word is “behaviors.” People in combat experience a range of emotions, but their behavior influences immediate safety and mission success.

Combat and combat-related military missions can also impose combinations of heavy physical work; sleep loss; dehydration; poor nutrition; severe noise, vibration, and blast; exposure to heat, cold or wetness; poor hygiene facilities; and perhaps exposure to infectious diseases, toxic fumes or substances. These, in combination with other influences—such as concerns about problems back home—affect the ability to cope with the perception of danger, and diminish the skills needed to accomplish the mission. Environmental stressors often play an important part in causing the adverse or disruptive combat stress reaction behaviors. The leader must work to keep each Service member's perception of danger balanced by the sense that the unit has the means to prevail over it. The leader must keep himself and his unit working at