

## Stress Management

The WSP Peer Support Team is designed to complement the services provided by the Department Psychologist. Stress management is an ongoing process of dealing with the stress of our everyday lives. It involves making thoughtful choices about your stress: what to keep and what to let go.

Experienced personnel know that emergency service can take its toll on health, marriages, families, and careers. Stress may result in careless or even fatal errors or feelings of numbness, isolation, burn-out, and anger.

You can learn how to manage your stress and enhance your wellness. Components of an effective stress management program include good nutrition, proper exercise, effective relaxation, and maintaining your perspective.

**TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF  
SO YOU CAN  
TAKE CARE OF OTHERS**

The Peer Support Team is comprised of WSP employees selected through a multi-phase process. Team members complete a three-day basic training and two mandatory trainings per year. If you would like to join the team, please contact the Psychologist's office for an application.

*Comments? E-mail Sue Knopes at  
[SKnopes@att.net](mailto:SKnopes@att.net)*

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q. Can I talk about issues other than work?**

**A.** Yes. WSP and the Peer Support Team recognize that job stress, family problems, relationship issues, personal problems, etc., may all have a negative impact on employee's health and well-being. Therefore, we don't limit what issues can be discussed with a Peer Support Team member.

**Q. How do I know I can trust my Peer Support Team member?**

**A.** Peer Support Team members are selected for their experience and personal qualities. Respecting confidentiality is one of the fundamental principles of the Peer Support Team. Violating confidentiality (except when required by WA state law) will result in removal from the Team.

**Q. Will my supervisor or others find out what I told the Peer Support Team member?**

**A.** Under almost all circumstances, no. Both WA state law and the Peer Support Team guidelines are very strict about maintaining confidentiality. The only time a Peer Support Team member will tell anyone other than the Department Psychologist what you have told them is when they are required to do so by state law. That law applies to the following circumstances: danger to self or others and the mandated reporting of abuse of children or vulnerable adults.

**Q. Can Peer Support Team members provide a referral service?**

**A.** At your request we can refer you to additional resources.

Visit our website at: [http://insidewsp/organization/chief/peer\\_support/peer\\_support.htm](http://insidewsp/organization/chief/peer_support/peer_support.htm)

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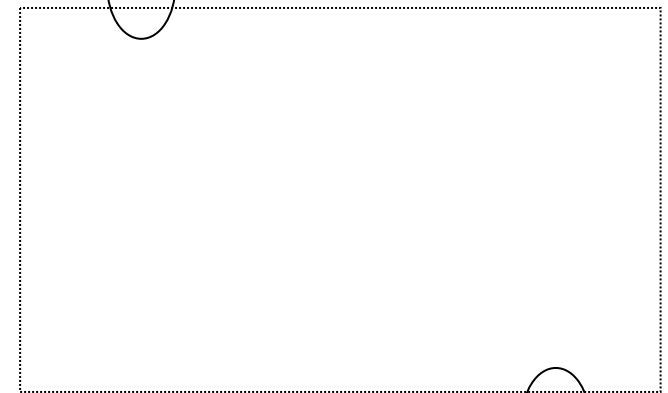


## Peer Support Team

*Informal, Confidential  
Support*

**Team oversight provided by:**

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## Reasons to contact a Peer Support Team member

workplace  
parenting  
loss  
burnout  
separation/divorce  
trauma  
depression  
interpersonal  
anxiety  
family  
health  
alcohol/drug  
domestic violence  
suicide  
budget

### Overview

The Washington State Patrol Peer Support Team is an objective and non-judgmental resource from which employees may voluntarily request support and assistance in working through personal and occupational problems. The Peer Support Team is designed to complement the services provided by the Department Psychologist; the team is not a replacement for professional care.

Peer support provides a way for employees to "talk-out" problems with specially trained co-workers who understand and want to help. Peer Support Team members are trained to use active listening skills, help clarify issues and explore options, support the person through their problem-solving process, and refer to professionals as appropriate.

Peer Support Team members are para-professionals whose primary function is to LISTEN, ASSESS, and (when necessary) REFER to a mental health professional. Team members are selected for their experience and personal qualities. These team members are caring individuals who have a desire to reach out to others. In peer support, the focus is on one individual in a 1:1 support role.

Working for a law enforcement agency has always been a demanding profession. At times, the stress of the job increases to the point where it may be difficult to deal with it alone.

The person who is impacted the hardest in a crisis is generally the person who is alone or one who has experienced several crises. The toll this stress takes on the health and well-being of our employees varies with each individual, but virtually everyone feels the effects. An employee's personal problems, if he/she is not handling them effectively, will undeniably impact their ability to safely and effectively carry out their duties. The Peer Support Team has been designed and trained to help address these issues on an informal and confidential basis.

## Signs & Symptoms of Stress

Common signs of a stress reaction are listed below. These may last a few days, a few weeks, or a few months, depending on the severity of the event.

### Physical

fatigue  
nausea  
muscle tremors  
chest pain  
difficulty breathing  
elevated BP  
rapid heart rate  
weakness  
headaches  
visual problems

### Thinking

confusion  
decreased:  
attention  
decision making  
concentration  
problem solving  
altered alertness  
hyper vigilance  
nightmares  
intrusive images

### Relational

isolated  
resentful  
lonely  
lack of intimacy  
lashing out  
social withdrawal  
intolerant of others  
nagging

### Emotional

anxiety  
guilt  
grief  
denial  
fear  
uncertainty  
depression  
intense anger  
irritability

### Behavioral

change in:  
communication  
sleep  
appetite  
alcohol use  
suspiciousness  
withdrawal  
emotional outbursts  
antisocial acts