

USACHPPM Technical Guide 242

Combat Operational Stress Reactions (COSR) Prevention: Leader Actions



In combat, COSR (previously called "Battle Fatigue") are inevitable, but COSR casualties are not. COSR casualties can be restored to duty quickly if rested close to their units and treated positively. This requires planning and coordination. Leadership plays the key role in preventing COSR casualties.

Good Leadership Counts

- There may be one COSR per three to eight wounded.
- Also comes from seeing, causing suffering of innocents and even enemies
- Highly-trained and cohesive units have the fewest COSR casualties.
- Leader actions speed the return of COSR casualties to duty.
- Failure to act can lead to a COSR casualty's permanent loss to the unit.

Leader Actions to Prevent Combat/Operational Stress Reactions

- | | |
|--|---|
| ▪ Build unit cohesion and unit pride. | ▪ Enforce sleep discipline. |
| ▪ Help soldiers have stable home fronts. | ▪ Plan for personal hygiene. |
| ▪ Keep soldiers physically fit. | ▪ Preserve soldiers' welfare, safety, and health. |
| ▪ Conduct tough, realistic training. | ▪ Reduce uncertainty. |
| ▪ Cross-train in key areas. | ▪ Enforce individual health protection measures. |

Factors Contributing to Combat/Operational Stress Reactions

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| ▪ Domestic worries | ▪ Information vacuum |
| ▪ New personnel | ▪ NBC weapons threat |
| ▪ First time in combat, horrors | ▪ Sleep loss |
| ▪ Casualties | ▪ Physical exhaustion |
| ▪ Lack of mobility | ▪ Dehydration, hunger |
| ▪ Surprise attacks | |
| ▪ Inability to strike back (indirect fire, IEDs) | |

U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine

ATTN: MCHB-TS-H, 5158 Blackhawk Rd, Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD 21010-5403
410-436-4656 or 1-800-222-9698

<http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/dhpw/>

USACHPPM Technical Guide 242

Combat Operational Stress Reactions (COSR) Prevention: Leader Actions



In combat, COSR (previously called "Battle Fatigue") are inevitable, but COSR casualties are not. COSR casualties can be restored to duty quickly if rested close to their units and treated positively. This requires planning and coordination. Leadership plays the key role in preventing COSR casualties.

Good Leadership Counts

- There may be one COSR per three to eight wounded.
- Also comes from seeing, causing suffering of innocents and even enemies
- Highly-trained and cohesive units have the fewest COSR casualties.
- Leader actions speed the return of COSR casualties to duty.
- Failure to act can lead to a COSR casualty's permanent loss to the unit.

Leader Actions to Prevent Combat/Operational Stress Reactions

- | | |
|--|---|
| ▪ Build unit cohesion and unit pride. | ▪ Enforce sleep discipline. |
| ▪ Help soldiers have stable home fronts. | ▪ Plan for personal hygiene. |
| ▪ Keep soldiers physically fit. | ▪ Preserve soldiers' welfare, safety, and health. |
| ▪ Conduct tough, realistic training. | ▪ Reduce uncertainty. |
| ▪ Cross-train in key areas. | ▪ Enforce individual health protection measures. |

Factors Contributing to Combat/Operational Stress Reactions

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| ▪ Domestic worries | ▪ Information vacuum |
| ▪ New personnel | ▪ NBC weapons threat |
| ▪ First time in combat, horrors | ▪ Sleep loss |
| ▪ Casualties | ▪ Physical exhaustion |
| ▪ Lack of mobility | ▪ Dehydration, hunger |
| ▪ Surprise attacks | |
| ▪ Inability to strike back (indirect fire, IEDs) | |

U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine

ATTN: MCHB-TS-H, 5158 Blackhawk Rd, Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD 21010-5403
410-436-4656 or 1-800-222-9698

<http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/dhpw/>

Management of Combat & Operational Stress Reactions (COSR)

DUTY Combat/Operational Stress Reactions (Keep with buddies)

Symptoms: Any amount or kind of combat operational stress reaction symptoms that does not endanger the soldier or others or interfere with the unit's current mission.

Actions: Reassurance of being normal, rest, clean up, feed, sleep, and keep on duty.

REST Combat/Operational Stress Reactions (Rest in parent or support unit)

Symptoms: Warning signs that indicate the soldier is too much of a risk or burden to stay with his or her own buddies.

1. Section cannot provide safe, stable environment for recovery.
2. Soldier is not disruptive or dangerous.
3. No urgent medical evaluation is needed.

Actions: Assign less critical duty in safer area for 6-36 hours of rest and work.

HEAVY Combat/Operational Stress Reaction (Take to aid station or medical company)

Symptoms: Warning signs

1. Soldier is disruptive or potentially dangerous to self, others or the mission.
2. Soldier could need urgent medical treatment for illness or injury.
3. Warning signs do not improve.

Actions:

1. Take to aid station or medical treatment facility.
2. Maintain contact or visit soldier if not returned in hours.
3. Welcome soldier back into unit upon return (65-85 percent return to original unit in 1-3 days; 15-20 percent to some duty in 1-2 weeks).

Additional Leader Resources:

USACHPPM Technical Guide (TG) 240, *Combat Stress Behaviors*.

USACHPPM TG 241, *Combat & Operational Stress Reactions*.

USACHPPM TC#01 Helping a Soldier Buddy in Distress

TC#02 Coping with Stress in SASO

TC#07 Facing the Dead and Injured

TC#08 Coping with Deployment Separation



Management of Combat & Operational Stress Reactions (COSR)

DUTY Combat/Operational Stress Reactions (Keep with buddies)

Symptoms: Any amount or kind of combat operational stress reaction symptoms that does not endanger the soldier or others or interfere with the unit's current mission.

Actions: Reassurance of being normal, rest, clean up, feed, sleep, and keep on duty.

REST Combat/Operational Stress Reactions (Rest in parent or support unit)

Symptoms: Warning signs that indicate the soldier is too much of a risk or burden to stay with his or her own buddies.

1. Section cannot provide safe, stable environment for recovery.
2. Soldier is not disruptive or dangerous.
3. No urgent medical evaluation is needed.

Actions: Assign less critical duty in safer area for 6-36 hours of rest and work.

HEAVY Combat/Operational Stress Reaction (Take to aid station or medical company)

Symptoms: Warning signs

1. Soldier is disruptive or potentially dangerous to self, others or the mission.
2. Soldier could need urgent medical treatment for illness or injury.
3. Warning signs do not improve.

Actions:

1. Take to aid station or medical treatment facility.
2. Maintain contact or visit soldier if not returned in hours.
3. Welcome soldier back into unit upon return (65-85 percent return to original unit in 1-3 days; 15-20 percent to some duty in 1-2 weeks).

Additional Leader Resources:

USACHPPM Technical Guide (TG) 240, *Combat Stress Behaviors*.

USACHPPM TG 241, *Combat & Operational Stress Reactions*.

USACHPPM TC#01 Helping a Soldier Buddy in Distress

TC#02 Coping with Stress in SASO

TC#07 Facing the Dead and Injured

TC#08 Coping with Deployment Separation

