



ENSURING PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY IN THE EOC: THE ROLE OF THE SAFETY OFFICER

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INTRODUCTION

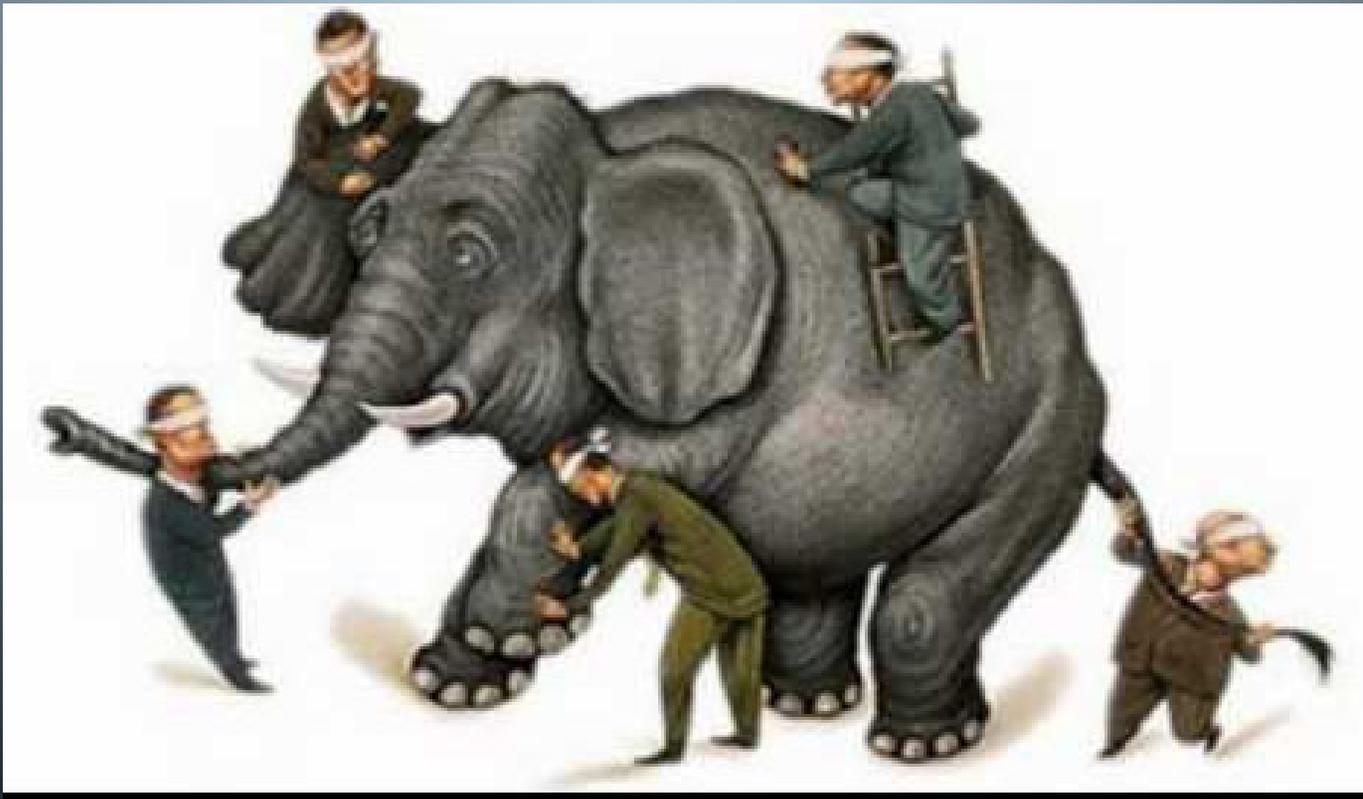


Image Source: PharmLinked.Com (2020)



**“AN EOC IS A STRESSFUL
PLACE”**

IMAGE SOURCE: EDMONTON JOURNAL (2018)



HORSE RIVER FIRE, 2016

Image Source: Global News (2016)

GENERAL ADAPTATION SYNDROME (SELYE)

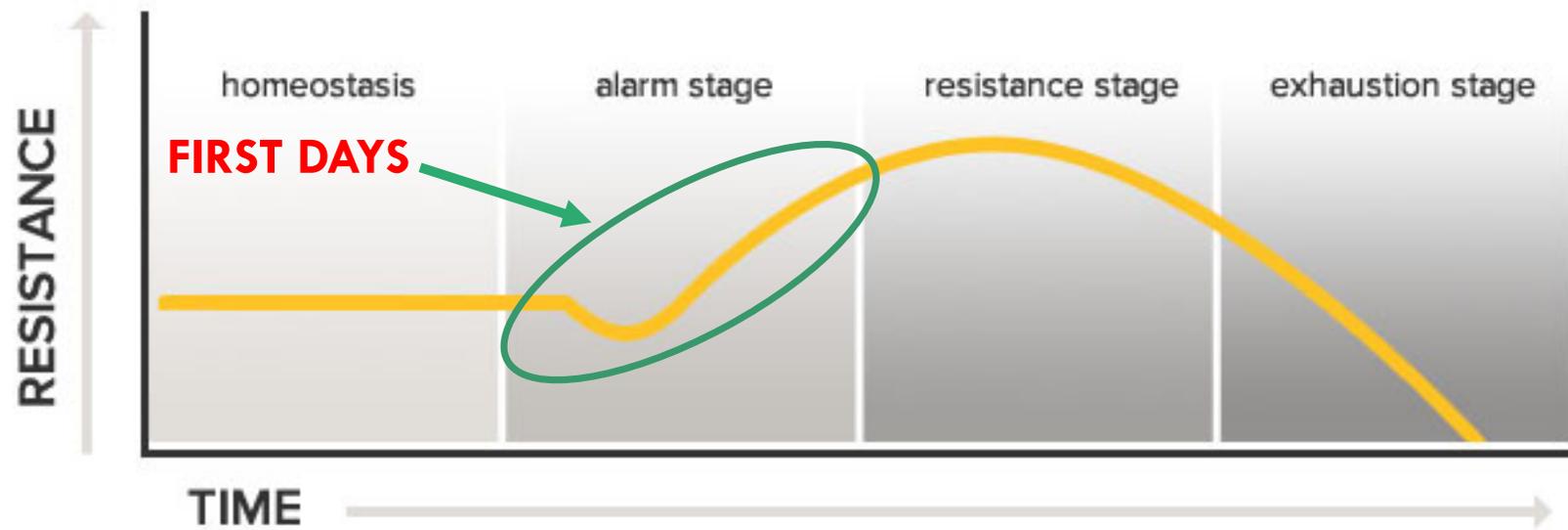
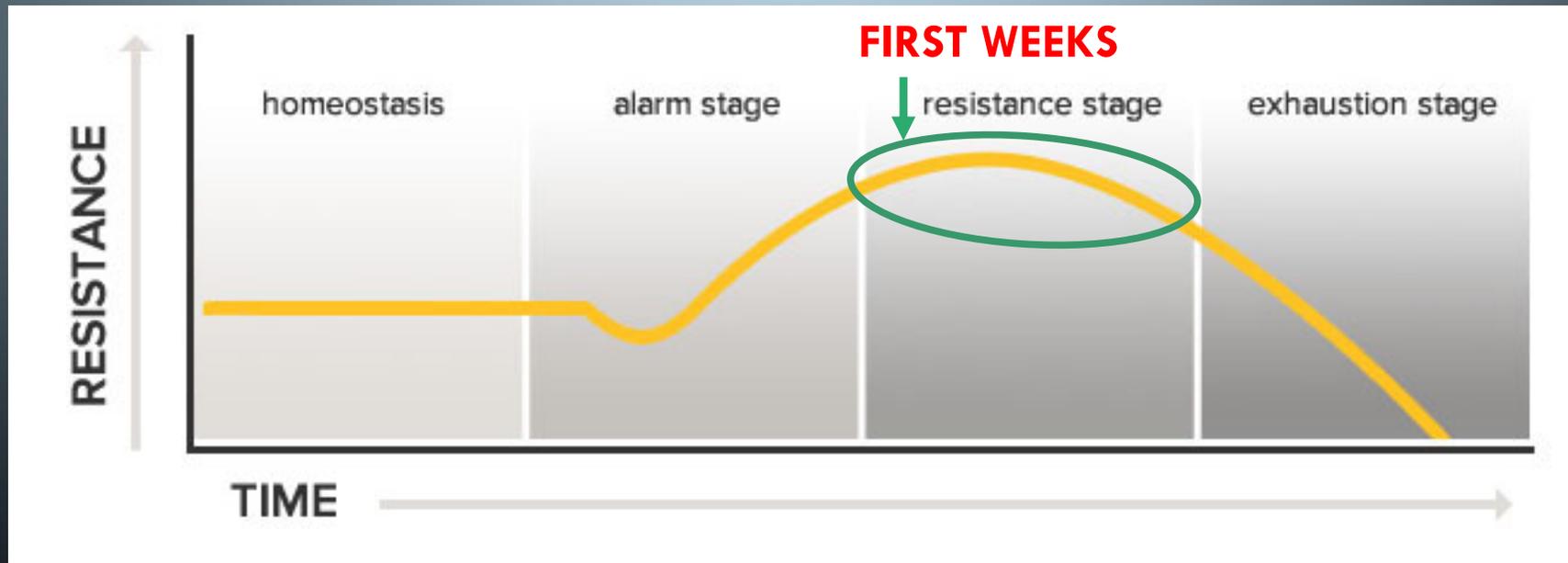


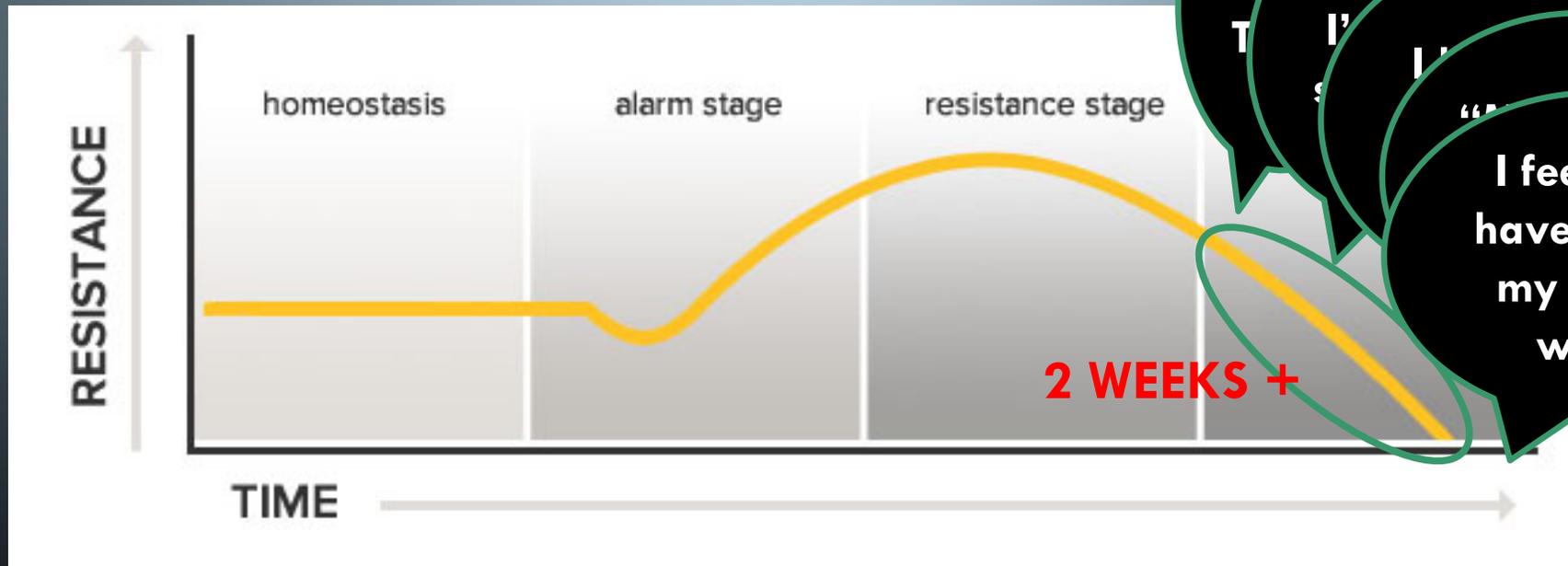


Image Source: CBC News (2020)

GENERAL ADAPTATION SYNDROME (SELYE)



GENERAL ADAPTATION SYNDROME (SELYE)





WHAT MAKES THE EOC STRESSFUL?

According to Dr. Gabor Mate, the most stressful psychological stimuli are:

1. Uncertainty
2. Lack of control
3. Lack of information
4. Conflict

Others may include:

5. Extremes of Activity
6. Atypical Working Hours
7. Environment

Source: G. Mate (2003) *When The Body Says No, Mate, G.*

AFTER THE ACTIVATION: 3 MONTHS +



- Head fog
- Disconnection
- Low mood
- Low energy
- Low motivation
- Weight gain
- Healthy routines still lacking
- Concern for personal resilience

BURNOUT



“A syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterized by three dimensions:

1. Feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion;
2. Increased mental distance from one’s job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one’s job; and
3. Reduced professional efficacy.”

Source: World Health Organization ICD-11 (2019)

PSYCHOLOGICAL HAZARDS

- Pace of work
- Fatigue
- Conflicting demands
- Hours of work
- Work Environment
- Working in conflict with others
- Poor communication
- Role Uncertainty
- Unfairness in policies/mgmt
- Lack of opportunity/growth

Source: Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety (2021)



Image Source: CBC News (2020)



INTERESTING FACTOID:
PURPOSE

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY IS A LEGAL IMPERATIVE

- It Is the Law
- It Is the Right Thing to Do
- It Is the Smart Thing to Do

Source: OH&S (2020) & Shain, M (2010)

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

- WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?
- WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

PASSING THE BUCK



Source: Harvard Health, Harvard University (2020)



WHAT CAN/SHOULD ORGANIZATIONS DO?



1. ORGANIZATIONAL & LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT

In preparation/mitigation:

- Appoint a Safety Officer (Wellness Champion)
- Implement a clear policy
- Model balance & self care



2. CONDUCT AN ASSESSMENT

- What is your baseline?
- Ensure it's confidential
- Ensure it's anonymous

The National Academy of Medicine has many survey tools for burnout.



3. IDENTIFY WORKPLACE HAZARDS



4. IDENTIFY CONTROLS TO PREVENT PSYCHOLOGICAL HARM

A. Give people control and flexibility

- Monitor hours/week worked
- Consider flexible arrangements



4. IDENTIFY CONTROLS TO PREVENT PSYCHOLOGICAL HARM

B. Mitigate uncertainty

- Clearly define duties and responsibilities
- Communicate your objectives and priorities
- BE PRESENT
- Check in with staff regularly



4. IMPLEMENT CONTROLS TO PREVENT PSYCHOLOGICAL HARM

C. Mitigate/Monitor for Conflict

- Identify resources/mutual aid in advance of disaster
- Create a space for focus
- Respectful workplace policy, understood & held accountable



3. IMPLEMENT CONTROLS TO PREVENT PSYCHOLOGICAL HARM

D. Address Environmental Risks

- Encourage movement
- Draw people out & encourage breaks (connection)
- Let nature in (or draw people out)
- Stock kitchen well



3. IMPLEMENT CONTROLS TO PREVENT PSYCHOLOGICAL HARM

E. Acknowledgment, Rewards & High 5's

- Build a space for connection
- Recognition is key



4. ENSURE COMMUNICATION & TRAINING

In prep/mitigation:

- Training for their jobs & refresh often
- Training on psychological risks ahead of response & warning signs
- Organization-wide recognition of policy

In response:

- Information on psychological wellness available throughout EOC (culture)
- Reminders/Safety messages provided during briefings



5. ENSURE OUTSIDE SUPPORTS ARE AVAILABLE

In preparation/ mitigation:

- Identify appropriate MH supports (EAP, psychologists, community supports) for referral

In response:

- Monitor staff (do not counsel unless in crisis)
- Refer as appropriate



6. DOCUMENT & REPORT HAZARDS

- STEMS FROM YOUR POLICY



7. PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION & CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT



THANK YOU

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