



Take Your

Own Pulse

First

By **VALI J. HAWKINS MITCHELL, Ph.D., LMHC**

Emergency managers and business continuity leaders, in addition to their already burgeoning burden of responsibilities taking care of companies and co-workers, need to add one more task. They need to take care of themselves. As unfamiliar as such a concept is within the field of business, it is equally unfamiliar in business continuity and emergency management venues. Often agreed upon by leaders as a “good idea” it is mostly left to chance or is the last part of the plan.

As medical personnel say it, those in the position of helping others must “first take your own pulse” and maintain top-form integrity of mind, body, spirit, and emotions. This helps those in the front

lines, including emergency managers and business continuity leaders, to maintain, model, and advocate for continuity. Self-care is not an either/or choice – either you do your job or take care of yourself. Self-care is not a luxury for those who can afford the time and money to sit in a counseling office. It is a necessary part of managing the complexity of businesses, especially during periods of crisis.

Human resource professionals, who historically were the last bastion of the “soft-side” of business, are now overwhelmed with countless issues including daunting regulatory functions and may not have the time to hand-hold people under duress. And few well-meaning HR leaders have adequate or advanced training in disaster management necessary to deal with the full extent of employee duress under normal circumstances, much less

during the complications of a disaster. It may not be practical to send someone out to an external provider, such as an employee assistance provider (EAP) in the height of an emergency. And what happens if the “soft-side” support people are overwhelmed, lost, or inadequately prepared to manage the daunting concerns that may arise during an emergency? If no one is practicing good self-care now, during a disaster the risks to the company and the threats to continuity rise exponentially.

The need for individuals and organizations to learn to help themselves is growing. Hurricane Katrina showed the world that even with the best of intentions, local, corporate, state, and federal resources were stretched beyond their limits. The phrase “we are on our own” is bandied about in conferences because it is true. We have to learn how to care for ourselves during

times of crisis so we can keep doing our jobs and support our co-workers and corporations.

Emergency and continuity management must take the lead in this non-traditional, non-business charge because learning the comprehensive aspects of self-care methods are necessary to protect financial and human capital. If you or other employees just stay home during the next disaster, practicing only self-care, the risks to the company are immense. If everyone can learn how to work while practicing good self-care, companies will continue to function during periods of crisis or disaster.

The Benefits of a Self Care Protocol are Human and Financial

Over the last two decades, firefighters, law enforcement, and other emergency responders developed current theories and methods for self-care that were based on research of the psychology of combat survivors. Because of the similarities of their occupational hazards, they were able to translate combat survivor and recovery data into specific care protocols that included a variety of interventions for long-term sustainable care and employee retention. Self-care protocols typically included simple and complex strategies of pre-incident training, ongoing peer support, incident management partnerships, and post-incident recovery procedures. Well-documented and adequately researched theories and methods of personnel care protocols for pre-incident, incident management, and post-incident care set the standards for emergency responders. Eventually other industries began to recognize their own risks and drew from these original self-care models in an attempt to serve the financial and human needs of their companies.

Emergency responders have learned to include self-care methods during crisis incidents, such as downtime breaks, verbal support, team support, brief defusing, on-scene chaplains, and trauma counselors. These helped them keep working during periods of crisis. After incidents, many responder groups began to employ a post-debriefing or “lessons learned” procedure with additional self-care educational reminders, downtime, group support protocols, in concert with traditional debrief-

ing models. This helped them remain on the job without burnout, reducing turnover after an event. Even though there was no standardized “magic bullet” model appropriate for all incidents or all issues it became a procedurally accepted process to address post-incident self-care with some sort of intervention. Leaders in the emergency responder field who did their research knew better than to leave pre-and post-incident care and recovery to chance. Long-term competency was at stake, and losing personnel to the ravages of accumulated stress or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder was seen as inhumane and not cost-effective to any organization.

Other trades and occupations began to get on board with the idea of self-care as they began paying attention to the measurable impact of crisis on business and people. Leaders in other occupations began seeing the risks within their services. Banks were robbed at gunpoint, journalists reported heinous tragedies with dead babies, clergy responded to unthinkable disasters, security officers broke up fights and were murdered, and trades people were being pulled into recovery work that seemed more like field combat than a “day job.”

Unthinkable tsunamis, massive earthquakes, fires, mudslides, and hurricanes in recent years had influence on organizations that were already on board with the need for long-term self-care protocols for responders. Clear evidence and experiences beyond table-talk drills and theory showed that self-care before, during, and after events was good business and a compassionate, intelligent recovery strategy.

When the world appeared to be simpler, there were simple formulas to organize people and their care needs. A healthy person who had simple stress would do some simple relaxation techniques and feel better. They would go to an external support provider for help during an abnormal issue, such as a disaster, for more care. It was assumed that healthy people would simply bounce back from any crisis, no matter the level. Planning strategies remained simple with a sense that “it won’t happen to us,” and if it does we can send people to “others” to take care of it.

As the awareness of risks has grown so has the awareness of how to manage. Planners are now seeing and including a larger realm of possible threats and also

expanding the image of victims that also includes planners and responders. Most top professional conferences in emergency and disaster management now include at least one speaker or workshop on the “people side” of disaster. However, the industry is still lagging in providing self-care protocol education. And as industry standards and expectations rise in parallel to real-time disasters, stress management for planners and responders must match the demand. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services states, “Having an organizational structure and plan that builds in stress prevention can mitigate potential stress overload for staff. While these efforts may be time-consuming on the front end, the long-term benefits of reduced employee turnover and avoidance of thorny personnel issues, as well as increased productivity and program cohesion are well worth the efforts.”

Examples of Industries Now Developing Self-Care Protocols Supply Chain Providers

Rodeway trucking company reported savings of millions of dollars by changing the way they think of self-care management. They are one of many companies that now recognize health care and mental health care costs can dramatically decrease when individuals are encouraged to take some ownership in their own well being and provide training and educational materials as well as human support toward that end. Studies by the American Institute for Preventive Medicine reported savings in health care costs are dramatic when employees are provided with even minimal self-care techniques. They report examples of the daunting costs of mental health care can range between 150 percent to 300 percent higher than other health care services.

Journalists

There are emerging new guidelines for journalists and reporters who respond to disasters. Kevin Kawamoto, Ph.D. is a former faculty member at the University of Washington in Seattle who was affiliated with the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma for many years. He stated, “The importance of self-care in the workplace cannot be overemphasized, even in organizations where the type of work being

done is not seemingly stressful.” Although the primary concern of most programs in this field is to strengthen the occupation of journalism, Joe Hight, president of the Dart Center Executive Committee, has developed a set of self-care tips for journalists who cover trauma. This profession is beginning to recognize the payoffs for self-care.

Clergy

Even the occupation of clergy is developing internal self-care models that acknowledge there is more to self-care than prayer and sacred service. In 2004, the Church World Service began a program of Spiritual and Emotional Care Resource (SECR) services. Traditionally clergy and chaplains are a regular and constant provider of mental health and spiritual support to first responders and have taken their full measure of tragedy. Leaders in this field also have recognized the payoffs and the need to take care of the emotional needs of workers.

Building Trades

According the Laborers Health and Safety Fund of North America, an estimated 18,000 to 35,000 helped in the emergency effort at the World Trade Center in New York City. Most of these were members of the building trades. An alarming 19 percent have been diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), over twice the rate seen in the general population. LHSFNA reported that 56 percent reported psychological problems that warranted additional counseling. Another 40 percent of those reporting psychological problems identified some symptoms of PTSD. These individuals were directed toward a post-9/11 Mental Health project called Project Liberty that continued to 2004. It was recognized that all these combat survivors deserved to have their emotional needs addressed.

Banking

In 1983, the United States federal government mandated that banks develop and maintain disaster recovery plans. In 1993, after the first World Trade Center bombing, weak recovery plans were scrutinized. Disaster recovery companies now report that a significant amount of their interventions have been directed toward banking.

A majority of that work is focused on data control due to financial security issues in the industry, but there are also current attentions directed to improving the protection of human capital. With the real risk of violent robberies and escalating domestic crimes reported in the workplace, the banking industry is coming to understand that employees who feel safe and secure are capable of better outcomes on all levels, including work. Large-scale studies on the relationship between employee safety and office design in banking have led to architectural re-designs and environmental changes that provide measurable statistical improvement in safety and self-care for bank tellers that protects capital and human investments.

Fire Services

Research continues to suggest that state-of-the-art self-care programs for emergency responders continue to promote pre-incident education about critical incident stress and self-care. Self-care models introduced during initial training are more prone to ensure that individuals develop long-term strategies for coping with stress. Studies show that educational programs should continue throughout the career to maintain maximum value.

Is Preparing your Company for Self-Care in Disaster Worth It? Money Speaks

1. Think about and then calculate the costs of the last time you had to manage the strong emotions of an employee under “normal” work stress circumstances. How many hours of your time at what rate per hour did this take? What were the total costs to your company to manage this “normal” incident?

2. Now consider the costs of managing an “abnormal” incident. Include the costs of your time (your hourly salary times the number of hours spent), your supervisor’s time, the CEO’s time, HR time, other consultants, employees, medical/mental health services, EAP costs, etc. Estimate how much of this cost could have been prevented by pre-incident emotional

continuity and self-care training. See the graphic below for a template to arrive at these costs.

3. Finally, consider the more complicated factors associated with a disaster or emergency situation. Add the costs of sick time, vacation time, replacement workers, transportation, data loss, loss of sales, decreased productivity, etc. Add in a certain percent of employees who quit, a certain percent who died, add months of decreased productivity, new facilities, etc. Estimate how much of this cost could

	Your Hourly Salary	Hours Dealing With a Spin	=	
	x		=	
Number of People Affected by the Spin	x	Hourly Salary	x	Hours Dealing with a Spin
			+	
			=	
	Boss's Hourly Salary	Hours Listening to You / Dealing with the Spin	+	
			x	=
			+	
FICA / Taxes	+	Consultations	+	Revenue Lost from Customers
			=	
Public Relations Costs	+	Training Dollars Required	+	Health Care Costs
			=	
Other Costs for Your Industry	+	Other Costs for Your Industry	+	Other Costs for Your Industry
			=	
			=	
			=	Total Cost of an Emotional Spin
				\$

© 2005 Vali Hawkins Mitchell
From *Emotional Terrors in the Workplace: Protecting Your Business' Bottom Line*

Calculating the Costs of an Emotional Spin

have been prevented by pre-incident emotional continuity and self-care training so employees knew how to handle these events, had drilled for these events, and had learned that their company could help take care of them before, during, and after a disaster.

Do The Math

1. Have your auditors measure the financial risks to your company of a disaster in which 50 percent of employees stay home for two weeks to practice self-care, 25 percent quit, and productivity falls 50 percent over the following six months. (Or use any other numbers that make sense for your company in the event of a disaster.)

2. Figure the costs of training all employees on basic workplace self-care before, during, and after disasters. Add drilling time, your salary, training materials, etc.



If you could postulate that training employees in a workplace self-care disaster plan could cut half the costs of Scenario 1, would the cost of Scenario 2 save your company money?

What Do You Need To Start?

Develop a customized, industry-specific minimum criteria for any self-care protocol you may implement. Take into account your industry standards, performance needs, regulatory concerns, human issues, and develop a self-care plan that is at the very minimum:

1. Inclusive for all strata, not just provided or managed by one domain
2. Supportive of bottom-line demands with evolving compassion
3. Based upon field tested techniques
4. Hopeful, understandable, simple, and accessible to all
5. Able to anticipate a full scope of risks from small to catastrophic while avoiding extremes of paranoia or denial
6. Humane and pragmatic

7. Culturally, ethnically, familial, and socially sensitive
8. Encouraging of connections and supportive of infrastructure
9. Inclusive of business appropriate detachment and neutrality techniques
10. Representative of the big-picture and the small-detail
11. Open to technical procedures as well as to creative responses
12. Reflective of real risks, real situations, and real people
13. Flexible and evolving as information and research increase

Start With A Mind-Set That Practice Will Be Required To Improve Skills

First responders drill unceasingly. Top athletes drill competencies. Musicians play scales endlessly. Anyone interested in expertise in any topic will need to practice beginning, intermediate, and eventually advanced skills constantly challenging themselves to push their own

limits. Fluency means taking basic skills and advancing them to the level of success that can be used in multiple situations.

The nature of crisis is that each crisis has a unique texture, lifespan, and developmental process that changes from hour to hour. Crisis is like a moving, living, breathing, changing energy that demands fluidity to maintain stable balance. Anyone who has experienced a crisis or disaster knows that hour one is vastly different from hour 24 or 72. Self-care fluency requires procedures that actually work in motion. Methods need to be flexible, mobile, fluid, and interchangeable. Self-care is about continuity for sustainable futures, and the future belongs to those are adaptable. Self-care, like the crisis itself, may need to reinvent itself on a regular basis to stay mobile. What may work on day one may very well be useless for day 12. The crisis will be different, and so the self-care methods will need to be different. Practicing for fluency means testing self-care techniques during all emergency drills.

PROVIDING

bigbyte.cc

**Disaster Recovery Solutions • Business Continuity Planning
HIPAA Compliant Services**

<p>Data Storage/Back Up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tape Storage in Bank Vaults • Technical Support/Managed Services • Scheduled and "Upon Request" Data Back Ups • Mainframe & Open Solutions 	<p>Flexible Space:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From a Single "U" to Custom Space • Move-In Workstations • Hot, Warm & Cold Sites
---	---

www.bigbyte.cc • info@bigbyte.cc • (505) 255-5422

How Can You Tell If You Need A Self-Care Plan For Yourself Or Your Team?

1. What are the current consequences for disasters? What would it take to develop a self-care plan?

- ◆ What are the predictable financial consequences of not having a self-care model in place?
- ◆ Are all members prepared emotionally to help themselves and capable of helping others?
- ◆ Does everyone have enough tools to manage all ranges and levels of emotional situations?
- ◆ Has everyone drilled and rehearsed for crisis incidents, minor to catastrophic?
- ◆ Do you or your team have special needs members?
- ◆ Does everyone know what to expect emotionally in case of a disaster?
- ◆ Have your team members developed system-wide intervention strategies for all strata?
- ◆ Does anyone on your team have any specialized emotional continuity management training, skills, or other self-care procedures training?
- ◆ How will you or your people know when external help is required?
- ◆ Are your team members willing to call in outsiders for emotional support?
- ◆ What local, regional and national resources are available to all members?
- ◆ Are your HR, EAP, and team managers, employees, or consultants field trained in real-time disasters and trained in trauma management?
- ◆ Do your external consultants understand your people, customers, and mission?
- ◆ Will your consultants come into a disaster zone immediately?
- ◆ Have you prepared a way to screen and manage voluntary crisis "helpers" who may show up to your crisis without appropriate credentials and experience?
- ◆ Is your administration creating cooperative partnerships with other emergency response agencies prior to a disaster or crisis?

2. What are the risks if the team cannot balance self-care with work?

- ◆ What are the predictable emotional outcomes from a disaster?
- ◆ If your leaders are gone, who assumes the responsibility for emotional care and recovery?
- ◆ How well does administration support self-care?
- ◆ How completely have plans been incorporated so far?
- ◆ How well supported and extensive are the opportunities to the practice and drill for emotional emergencies?
- ◆ Is there ongoing advanced training for all employees and managers in emotional crisis management?

- ◆ How willing is the administration to provide up to date pamphlets, books, literature, posters, media education, and other hard-copy information on self-care procedures and techniques?
- ◆ Do all personnel know what they should do in an emergency that includes self-care pre/during and post crisis?
- ◆ Has your organization spent more making sure its database survives a disaster than making sure its employees show up during and after a disaster? How much would it cost to recreate a database? How much would it cost to retrain and rehire a workforce?

3. What are the financial benefits to your company of having a self-care model in effect?

- ◆ Can you do the math?

Steps to Creating an Excellent Self-Care Practice

Business continuity and emergency managers are often so busy caring and planning for others that they forget the first rule of emergency responders: "Take your own pulse first." Creating a self-care manual is a tool that helps emergency managers and business continuity planners remain well connected and in their strength during normal work times and under duress. This small, self-managed manual is a handwritten collection of procedures, ideas, reminders, memos, concepts, and techniques that lead to personal emotional continuity that can be a reminder under stress. Substantial research shows that writing enhances the immune system and provides significant physical and health benefits. Feedback from reading personal penmanship, small muscles used, eye-hand coordination, and mental stimulation involved in manual writing is the first self-care methodology.

Purchase an inexpensive notebook, lined paper in a binder, a memo pad, legal pad, a set of 3x5 cards, a tablet, or an expensive fancy journal and find a way to organize and collect the key units of the manual until personal self-care fluency is achieved. The paper doesn't matter, nor does the pen or pencil or marker. Add poetry and art, or make it technical and plain. Journal entries or references to very personal, sensitive, and private information are not recommended. Creating a self-care manual on a computer is not appropriate because in a crisis situation a laptop may not have battery or electrical support, where a handwritten journal

can be tossed into a go-bag. Self-care experts can generate countless volumes or master files, journals, or notebooks filled with of key concepts and self-care tools. They transfer a short-list of their favorite quick-fix reminders to a pocket or purse notebook that is portable. This keeps the manual an ongoing process that changes and develops with the author. The newest ideas move with the owner.

Novice: Steps to Self-Care

Before you start your manual you may want to review the following list to estimate your readiness to emotionally manage a crisis. Ask these questions:

Do I have beginning, intermediate, or advanced readiness to:

- ◆ Deal with whatever comes up before, during, and long after a crisis
- ◆ Be an inspiration to those I am around or just take care of me
- ◆ Find personal inspiration on a moment's notice
- ◆ Help set the tone of hope during a crisis – be hopeful and promote hope
- ◆ Be an emotional continuity leader
- ◆ Set the standards for awareness
- ◆ Be responsible for financial and human capital continuity
- ◆ Arrive at the scene with a well conceived care plan
- ◆ Be a key player
- ◆ Plan ahead on how to care for my own loved ones in a crisis
- ◆ Be neither ignorant nor dangerously resistant
- ◆ Know my risks for post traumatic stress disorder
- ◆ Be poetic, creative, soulful, aware, and emotionally awake
- ◆ Stand up to the pressure of limited thinkers who call self-care silly, meaningless, too expensive, frivolous, or less important than software
- ◆ Remain diplomatic, charming, engaging, hopeful, serious, persistent, and pleasant and avoid becoming discouraged and cranky
- ◆ Do adequate research to support myself and others
- ◆ Learn key elements for conflict resolution
- ◆ Take personal accountability
- ◆ Consider my full ranges of choices
- ◆ Neither over-react or under-react to risk potentials
- ◆ Be elementally vital and not just disappear into the shadows
- ◆ Give it my all and not just random, sporadic attention
- ◆ Follow rules, maintain ethics, and use regulations with creative genius
- ◆ See myself in a leadership role for peacemaking and strive against chaos

- ◆ Be reality driven and avoid bullet-proof thinking
- ◆ Know the changes that are going on around me
- ◆ See how my work is changing me
- ◆ Develop my self-care manual my way and advocate for others
- ◆ Know my mission and core values and reflect them
- ◆ Appreciate the power and opportunity of emotional wake-up calls
- ◆ Advocate for the end of exclusive domain of self-care
- ◆ Push for cross strata education rather than domain-controlled environments
- ◆ Create wonderful celebrations for myself and others
- ◆ Take my emotional temperature on a regular basis
- ◆ At the end of the day be able to say: "Disaster shmaster! It's a good thing we've already anticipated, planned, practiced, and drilled for something like this!"

Intermediate: Steps to Self-Care

As you prepare your self-care manual, the following list should begin the standard of the very minimum of requirements for intermediate fluency by including:

- ◆ Customized, occupation/industry specific self-care models
- ◆ Criteria to recognize healthy, dysfunctional, pathological, and emotional terrorism responses
- ◆ Signs and symptoms of extreme stress and PTSD
- ◆ Ethical standards
- ◆ Resource lists for credentialed and field tested trauma specialists
- ◆ Private and public sources of help
- ◆ Phone numbers of personal support systems with alternatives
- ◆ A personalized model that suits uniqueness
- ◆ Assessment of legitimate and potential risks for trauma and violence
- ◆ Steps to meaningfulness that tilt statistics toward success
- ◆ Management methods for dealing with emotional toxicity
- ◆ Self-care techniques that range from simple to complex
- ◆ Techniques that self-serve without harming others
- ◆ Techniques to manage the "envelope factor" of crisis
- ◆ Pre-incident, incident, and post-incident plans
- ◆ Anti-resistance methods
- ◆ Function and role information with clear descriptions
- ◆ Key bottom-line concerns
- ◆ Corporate mottos, icons, quotations, cartoons, or quips
- ◆ Evolved self-care manual

Advanced: Steps to Self-Care Fluency

A self-care manual reflects the author of the manual to support personal self-care fluency. The following is a sample of what might be included in an advanced-level self-care manual:

- ◆ Breathing and relaxation techniques
- ◆ Favorite books and movies
- ◆ Humorous ideas and friends' phone numbers
- ◆ List of my favorite things
- ◆ Local 12-step meetings
- ◆ Memories of good times
- ◆ My counselor or 12-step sponsor's phone number
- ◆ People, places, and things that remind me of safety and joy
- ◆ Personal spiritual practices
- ◆ Phone numbers for emergency help
- ◆ Photos of loved ones
- ◆ Poetry
- ◆ The go-bag list:
 - The 5-minute list
 - The 30-minute list
 - The 1-hour list
 - The 2-hour list
 - The 24-hour list
 - The 48-hour list
 - The 72-hour list
- ◆ Visions for the future

Conclusion

Neglecting to include self-care as a part of formal business disaster training and pre- or post-intervention strategies remains a dangerous trend that continues to put many industries and individuals at risk.

There has been more attention directed to self-care methods in recent years but the topic remains either a one-item notation in planning documents or a small appendix to a business disaster plan. Placing human factor and self-care information in the control of a single domain – generally psychology, counselors, social workers, clergy, or HR – is also an outdated method. Companies will spend billions of dollars hiring consultants and developing large programs, schemes, and partnerships to create back-up systems for computer technology and data recovery and then hand all the human-factor control over to one well-intentioned but beleaguered and often under trained human resources professional.

Business continuity and emergency planners are in a unique position to help companies survive disasters, and a crucial part of this is by providing emotional continuity to employees. If the emotional self-care of employees is not addressed for eventualities such as terrorism, natural disasters, and threats of pandemics, companies remain at risk and everyone will truly be "on their own" in emergencies.



◆
Vali J. Hawkins Mitchell, Ph.D., LMHC, is a certified traumatologist, licensed counselor, executive and management coach, author, trainer, public speaker, and artist. She is the author of "Emotional Terrors in The Workplace: Protecting Your Business' Bottom Line." Contact her by phone at (509) 942-0443 or e-mail at vali@owt.com.

When disaster strikes, it's Canvas to the

RESQ

Disaster Recovery Services

When your systems go down you risk losing something more important than profits: your reputation. RES-Q Disaster Recovery services from Canvas Systems provide:

- Custom-configured enterprise level storage, servers & networking
- Quick ship within 24 hours to 7 days
- High availability and data restoration services

Protect your enterprise information assets and ensure business continuity. Visit www.canvassystems.com/RESQ to find out if your existing DR plans measure up.

3025 Northwoods Pkwy
Norcross, GA 30071
1-877-799-8226
www.canvassystems.com/RESQ