

PATH

Pilot Assistance Team Hotline



Pilots Helping Pilots

“... it is possible that pilots are not fully aware of the effect that stress has on them; and even when they are aware of these effects, a variety of internal and external pressures make it less likely that a pilot will report or seek help for symptoms [e.g., due to fear of losing face in the eyes of other pilots, of being perceived as less reliable or of being removed from flight status]. They are often counseled by colleagues to avoid mental health care at all costs.”

—James Young, NASA

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction | 3 |
| Signs and Symptoms of Stress | 4 |
| Five Benefits of Stress | 4 |
| How to Manage Stress | 6 |
| Choosing a Counselor | 7 |
| Understanding Anxiety | 8 |
| Depression | 9 |
| Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) | 10 |
| Four Fundamental Facts of PTSD | 10 |
| Dealing with PTSD | 10 |
| Understanding and Preventing Suicide | 11 |
| Warning Signs of Suicide | 11 |
| Talking about Suicide | 11 |
| Signs of Substance Abuse | 13 |
| Other Supportive Programs | 13 |
| Pilot Assistance Program | 13 |
| HIMS | 13 |
| Critical Incident Response Program (CIRP) Group | 14 |
| Professional Standards Group | 14 |
| Aeromedical Group | 14 |
| FDX MEC Aeromedical | 14 |
| Bereavement | 15 |
| PATH | 15 |

Introduction

In September 2015, the Aerospace Medical Association (AsMA) recommended that “greater attention be given to mental health issues by aeromedical examiners and by the aviation community in general, especially to the more common mental health conditions and life stressors that can affect pilots and flight performance. (Dr. Kris Belland, president of AsMA, 2015.)

AsMA also noted that *approaches (to helping pilots with mental health issues) that provide a “safe zone” for reporting and discussing mental health issues would enhance aviation safety and optimize pilot mental health while minimizing career jeopardy and the stigma of mental health assistance.*

Aviation safety is enhanced if pilots can talk about mental health issues in a way that minimizes any jeopardy to their career and avoids the stigma of mental health assistance. **FDX ALPA** has decided to broaden our “pilots helping pilots” model to include helping pilots who are experiencing any type of “nonphysical” issue that might be affecting fitness for flying. We are calling our program **Pilot Assistance Team Hotline (PATH)**. A group of your fellow pilots have volunteered and been trained to man a 24/7 phone line to provide information, assistance, and referrals. You do not have to give your name if you call, and no records will be kept beyond the date your particular issue is resolved.

Pilots helping pilots is now recognized as one of the most effective ways to address the reluctance of pilots to seek mental health help. *Even the military is instituting a system of “buddy care” for such things as suicide prevention, backed up by medical and chaplain resources. However, it still remains that “the major problem is persuading someone to ask for assistance in the mental health area* [Aviation Medicine Advisory Services].” We hope **PATH** can make asking for assistance an easier process for FedEx pilots.

► Pilots helping pilots is now recognized as one of the most effective ways to address the reluctance of pilots to seek mental health help.

Our volunteers are trained to help you sort through whatever you might be experiencing in the way of psychological, physiological, or chronic stress and family issues—without jeopardy to your career. Our volunteers are not counselors or mental health professionals, but they can refer you to a counselor, if needed. They have a wealth of information and resources to help you make the next step in seeking information and assistance.

Signs and Symptoms of Stress

Everyone reacts to stress differently, and each body sends out its different set of red flags. Some people may not even feel the physical or emotional warning signs until hours or days of stressful activities.

But when you do notice a stiff back or that you are snapping at your friends, pay attention to the signs and listen to what your body is telling you. While the adrenaline rush after acing that presentation to the board is something to enjoy, the warning signs of stress are not anything to take lightly or ignore. By noticing how you respond to stress, you can manage it better and in healthy ways, which will help your body correct itself, reducing the high cost and care of chronic, long-term health problems.

Signs and Symptoms of STRESS

- Headaches, muscle tension, neck or back pain
- Upset stomach
- Dry mouth
- Chest pains, rapid heartbeat
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite or overeating “comfort foods”
- Increased frequency of colds
- Lack of concentration or focus
- Memory problems or forgetfulness
- Jitters
- Irritability
- Short temper
- Anxiety

Five Benefits of Stress

Are you feeling overwhelmed, tired, anxious or frustrated? Everyone encounters stressful circumstances most every day. Stress is a natural reaction of your mind and body to external demands, and the good news is that stress provides an invitation to improve your life. Stress is actually essential to life. It is excessive or unresolved stress that may have negative consequences.

Several studies rank “airline pilot” as one of the most stressful jobs. But there is also good news about stress! Below are five perhaps surprising ways stress can actually help you, and increase the satisfaction of your life:

1. Gets your attention

Noticing stress in your life serves as a warning sign—a waving, glowing red flashing light that something in your life may not be working

its best. How do you first recognize stress in your life? You may experience symptoms of stress physically, emotionally or behaviorally. Some people first recognize stress when they detect a headache or backache. For others, they may easily become impatient, snappy, and snippy. Experiencing excessive stress can get your attention by unveiling a number of issues; including lack of life balance, unhealthy relationships, or deteriorating health problems, to name a few.

2. Reveals core needs

One person's experience of stress may be very different than another person's. This is because as individuals we have different core needs. When these needs are not met, stress soon follows. Therefore when you recognize your core needs are not being met in one way, you can choose a different way to get them met.

3. Readjust expectations

We are always having expectations—lots of expectations. Some we are consciously aware of, many others we are not. Expectations are always there in the background of our daily experiences, and they are a common source of stress in our lives. They frequently create emotional distress, relationship conflicts, misunderstandings, and many other repeated problems.

4. Remind of personal responsibility

Stressful experiences serve as reminders of what you can and cannot control. Other people—whether family, friends or co-workers—you are probably keenly aware you cannot control. Their actions can disappoint us, betray us, or discourage us on a regular basis if we allow them to. We have no control over what another person ultimately does, only of our response to them. This kind of stress serves as a distinctive reminder to take personal responsibility for our choices.

5. Leads to growth

Life is never stagnating, and this is a good thing. Change is constant. It is constant in relationships, in the environment, and in the work force. The burden of stress resulting from change is common in our culture today. As leadership expert and motivational speaker John Maxwell puts it, "Change always involves growth." Through the growing pains of adjusting to aging and to navigating through other life transitions, experiencing some degree of stress is normal. Through disappointments, loss, and the fact that we live in an uncertain world, stress is normal as well.

PATH HOTLINE
866-FDX-ALPA

How to Manage Stress

Understand how you experience stress. How do you know when you are stressed? How are your thoughts or behaviors different from times when you do not feel stressed?

Identify your sources of stress. What events or situations trigger stressful feelings? Are they related to your children, family, health, financial decisions, work, relationships, or something else?

Learn your own stress signals. You may have a hard time concentrating or making decisions, feel angry, irritable or out of control, or experience headaches, muscle tension, or a lack of energy. Gauge your stress signals.

Recognize how you deal with stress. Determine if you are using unhealthy behaviors (such as smoking, drinking alcohol, and over/under eating) to cope. Is this a routine behavior, or is it specific to certain events or situations? Do you make unhealthy choices because of feeling rushed and overwhelmed?

Find healthy ways to manage stress. Consider healthy, stress-reducing activities such as meditation, exercising, or talking things out with friends or family. Don't take on too much at once. Focus on changing only one behavior at a time.

Take care of yourself. Eat right, get enough sleep, drink plenty of water and engage in regular physical activity. Ensure you have

MANAGING STRESS

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a healthy mind and body through activities like taking a short walk, going to the gym, or playing sports that will enhance both your physical and mental health. Take regular vacations or other breaks from work. No matter how hectic life gets, make time for yourself!

Reach out for support. Accepting help from supportive friends like PATH peers and family can improve your ability to manage stress. If you continue to feel overwhelmed by stress, you may want to talk to a counselor who can help you better manage stress and change unhealthy behaviors.

Choosing a Counselor

There are several types of professionals who provide counseling:

- **Clinical Social Worker or Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW):** Most states have a license that must be obtained to use the title “clinical social worker.” LCSWs must have a master’s degree from an accredited school of social work.
- **Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC):** These professionals must possess at least a master’s degree from an accredited university in a field related to counseling, and a state license.
- **Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT):** The requirements are roughly the same as for the licensed professional counselor.
- **Psychiatrist:** Psychiatrists are physicians who have chosen to specialize in treating mental health. Generally, they do psychotherapy, which is “talk therapy,” and frequently augment it with prescribed medications (pharmaceuticals). They are the only subgroup of mental health professionals allowed to prescribe and all are MDs or DOs. While pilots may not be required to seek a psychiatrist for most types of treatment, the FAA does require evaluations by psychiatrists for certain medical conditions.
- **Psychologist:** Psychology is divided into several different branches, but the psychologists with whom you might interact are generally going to be those who specialize in counseling psychology or testing psychology. In the United States and Canada, to be called a “psychologist,” one must have a PhD or PsyD, and requires a license to practice. Others may call themselves “psychology counselors” but this can be misleading, as such practitioners are not at the doctorate level. In other countries, a “psychologist” may be able to practice with a master’s degree.

Contact PATH for assistance for resources best for you!

Call **1-866-FDX-ALPA** or
901-752-8749 (the MEC office)

All calls to PATH are confidential.

Understanding Anxiety

Helpful questions to ask when trying to find a counselor include:

- Where did you get your counseling degree?
- What, exactly, is the title of your degree?
- How long have you been in practice? (It is generally a good idea to find an experienced counselor.)
- What kind of problems are you most experienced in?
- Are there any issues you will not work with?
- Are you familiar with pilots and the rules of the FAA with respect to pilot mental health? (Not many counselors are familiar with FAA rules, so don't count one out just because of unfamiliarity with the FARs. We at ALPA can advise you on how to educate the counselor on these issues. AMAS is an excellent and free resource—303-341-4435 or aviationmedicine.com.)

Everyone experiences anxiety. However, when feelings of intense fear and distress are overwhelming and prevent us from doing everyday things, an anxiety disorder may be the cause.

Anxiety disorders are characterized by excessive fear or anxiety that is difficult to control and negatively and substantially impacts daily functioning.

Fear refers to the emotional response to a real or perceived threat, while anxiety is the anticipation of a future threat. These disorders can range from specific fears (called phobias), such as the fear of flying or public speaking, to more generalized feelings of worry and tension.

Anxiety Disorders vary in severity and may or may not be medically disqualifying depending on the severity and treatment required. Anxiety disorders include disorders that share features of excessive fear and anxiety and related behavioral disturbances. Specific anxiety disorders include generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, separation anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder (social phobia), and others.

Personality Disorders

generally appear in childhood and persist to adulthood. Certain disorders, if manifest by overt acts (behaviors that deviate markedly from expectations in one's culture), may be permanently disqualifying for FAA certification. Those conditions are different from anxious states or reactions with anxiety symptoms.

Emotional symptoms can include: feelings of dread, being tense and jumpy, restlessness or irritability, and anticipating the worst and being watchful for signs of danger.

Physical symptoms can include: pounding or racing heart, upset stomach, sweating, tremors, headaches, fatigue, and insomnia.

Treatment: As each anxiety disorder has a different set of symptoms, the types of treatment that a mental health professional may suggest can also vary. But there are common types of treatment that are used: psychotherapy, medications, and complementary health approaches.

ANXIETY CAN BE MANAGED!

Depression

Depression is more than feeling “blue”: Depression is a mood disorder that causes you to feel sad or hopeless for an extended period. It is important to know the difference between clinical depression and having the blues. Depression is an illness that robs one of the meaning of life. Depression is not about being weak, and it is not about just feeling low or having a few bad days.

A depressive disorder is an illness that involves the body, mood, and thoughts. It affects the way someone eats and sleeps, the way they feel about themselves, and the way they think about things. A depressive disorder is not the same as a passing blue mood. It is not a sign of personal weakness or a condition that can be willed or wished away. People with a depressive illness cannot merely “pull themselves together” and get better.

If you experience any of these symptoms for more than two weeks, you should contact your doctor. And you should seek help immediately if you feel you can “no longer take it” or feel like ending your life and suicide is the only option.

Depression is treatable. The good news is depression is treatable! Sadly, most people do not recognize this and the symptoms of depression can keep someone from seeking treatment. Depression is nothing to be ashamed of—it is an illness that, without treatment, can last for weeks, months, or years. Appropriate treatment, however, can help most people who suffer from depression.

7 SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

1. Feeling empty, lonely, and isolated
2. Feeling hopeless or worthless
3. Lacking an interest in activities
4. Feeling mentally and physically tired
5. Finding it difficult to make decisions
6. Experiencing physical pain that does not respond to treatment
7. Having a greatly reduced or increased appetite

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

PTS D is characterized as the development of debilitating symptoms following exposure to a traumatic or dangerous event. PTSD was first identified because of symptoms experienced by soldiers and those in war; however, other traumatic events have also been shown to give rise to PTSD.

Four Fundamental Facts of PTSD

1. A Time of trauma: There has been exposure to actual or threatened traumatic event—physically or psychologically—that resulted in intense emotional response of fear, helplessness or horror. Trauma or a crisis may describe the effect of a tornado, a plane crash, a murder down the street, school shootings, auto accidents, an unexpected death, assault, abuse, or any other awful event that has impacted you significantly.

2. Unwelcome memories: There is persistent reexperiencing of the event. The individual has intrusive thoughts, images and/or disturbing dreams that recall the traumatic event. There may be a sense that the event is reoccurring, as in illusions or flashbacks. Any reminders of the traumatic event are distressing, are avoiding anything symbolic of the event are priority.

3. Always alert: It is common to be always alert, yet unable to concentrate; or to be hypervigilant, or always “on the lookout” to protect yourself from danger. Constant worry, anxiety, becoming easily startled and even panic attacks may be common. Therefore, falling asleep and staying asleep can be a daily distress. Rage, extreme irritability, and intense agitation are also symptoms of intense hyperarousal.

4. Duration and disruption: PTSD disrupts the functioning of those affected by it, interfering with the daily tasks and needs. It hinders interests in typical pleasurable activities and events. Symptom must be present for more than one month, and the disturbance must cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

Dealing with PTSD

Educate yourself—learn the symptoms of PTSD and identify the triggers and warning signs of your case. Knowledge and acceptance is the first step in recovery.

Reduce stress—find one or many anxiety reducing techniques: praying, meditation, exercising, yoga, deep breathing; or spending time with close friends and family.

Manage behaviors—practice anger control and conflict resolution skills.

Practice patience—learn to forgive yourself. Learn new things. Set short- and long-term goals. Acknowledge your accomplishments. Count your victories in the battle of PTSD recovery in incremental steps.

Seek support and professional treatment—such as counseling for direction and support in making choices and learning of helpful services. The goal of treatment is to reduce the emotional and physical symptoms, to improve daily functioning, and to help the person better cope with the event that triggered the disorder. PTSD requires professional treatment.

Understanding and Preventing Suicide

The World Health Organization estimates that approximately one million people die each year from suicide. To those not in the grips of suicidal depression and despair it is difficult to understand what drives so many individuals to take their own lives, but a suicidal person is in so much pain that he or she can see no other option.

Warning Signs of Suicide

Major warning signs for suicide include talking about killing or harming oneself, talking or writing a lot about death or dying, and seeking out things that could be used in a suicide attempt, such as weapons and drugs. These signals are even more dangerous if the person has a mood disorder such as depression or bipolar disorder, suffers from alcohol dependence, has previously attempted suicide, or has a family history of suicide.

► Asking someone if they are contemplating hurting themselves will not provoke a suicide, and may save a person's life.

A subtler but equally dangerous warning sign of suicide is hopelessness. Studies have found that hopelessness is a strong predictor of suicide. Other warning signs that point to a suicidal mind frame include dramatic mood swings or sudden personality changes, such as going from outgoing to withdrawn or well-behaved to rebellious. A suicidal person may also lose interest in day-to-day activities,

neglect their appearance, and show big changes in eating or sleeping habits.

If you spot the warning signs of suicide in someone you care about, you may wonder if it's a good idea to say anything. What if you're wrong? What if the person gets angry? In such situations, it's natural to feel uncomfortable or afraid. But anyone who talks about suicide or shows other warning signs needs immediate help—the sooner the better.

Asking someone if they are contemplating hurting themselves will not provoke a suicide, and may save a person's life. Don't hesitate to ask anyone you are concerned about whether they are suicidal or thinking of harming themselves.

Talking about Suicide

Take any suicidal talk or behavior seriously. It's not just a warning sign that the person is thinking about suicide—**it's a cry for help.** If you believe that a friend or family member is suicidal, you can play a role in suicide prevention by pointing out the alternatives, showing that you care, and getting a mental health professional involved.

The priority should be directing the person to a mental health professional first—the police or 911 if in immediate danger. Getting help fast is a top priority.

Talking to a friend or family member about their suicidal thoughts and feelings can be extremely difficult for anyone. But if you're unsure whether someone is suicidal, the best way to find out is to ask.

You can't make a person suicidal by showing that you care. In fact, giving a suicidal person the opportunity to express his or her feelings can provide relief from loneliness and pent-up negative feelings, and may prevent a suicide attempt. Please call PATH if you need direction.

Ways to start a conversation about suicide:

- I have been feeling concerned about you lately.
- Recently, I have noticed some differences in you and wondered how you are doing.
- I wanted to check in with you because you haven't seemed yourself lately.

What you can say that helps:

- You are not alone in this. I'm here for you.
- You may not believe it now, but the way you're feeling will change.
- I may not be able to understand exactly how you feel, but I care about you and want to help.

When you want to give up, tell yourself you will hold off for just one more day, hour, minute—whatever you can manage.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:

1-800-273-8255

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org



Signs of Substance Abuse

The misuse and abuse of alcohol, over-the-counter medications, illicit drugs, and tobacco affect the health and well-being of millions of Americans. Friends and family may be among the first to recognize the signs of substance abuse. Early recognition increases chances for successful treatment. Substance use disorders include dependence, abuse that leads to problems at home or work, and abuse that causes damage to health.

Warning signs of substance abuse include:

- Increased use over time
- Increased tolerance for the substance
- Difficulty controlling use
- Symptoms of withdrawal
- Preoccupation with the substance, giving up important activities (work, social, family, etc.)
- Continued use even after recognizing problems

Addiction is a complicated problem. It is diverse in its causes and its costs. If describing a person with an addiction was to be simplified, it might be “the intense desire and action of continuing certain behaviors despite the negative consequences.” An addiction controls your life, thoughts, and choices. It is a compulsion that robs you of healthy options for coping with life challenges.

There are many painful and harmful side effects associated with addictions. Often it is your family who pays the price. To get a real perspective of the effects, make a list of all the negative consequences of your continued behavior.

Equally important is to acknowledge the benefits of regaining your life. What are the advantages of no longer being a slave to your addiction? How many ways can you benefit emotionally, physically, financially and more? Unfortunately, many individuals who struggle with addiction cannot see beyond their current distraction and the satisfaction of their dysfunctional coping style. Consider all that you could regain with a new life.

Other Supportive Programs

PILOT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

ALPA’s Pilot Assistance program is an umbrella group that includes HIMS, CIRP, Pro Standards, Aeromedical, Bereavement, and PATH. Pilot Assistance provides guidance and assistance to pilots having difficulty in their professional or personal lives that may affect job performance or professionalism. ALPA is dedicated to promoting its members’ health and welfare, professional performance, and, when necessary, rehabilitation through drug and alcohol intervention.

HIMS

HIMS is an occupational substance abuse treatment program, specific to commercial pilots, that coordinates the identification, treatment, and return-to-work process for affected aviators. It is an industry-wide effort in which managers, pilots, health-care professionals, and the FAA work together to preserve careers and enhance air safety.

Overview

Alcoholism and other chemical dependencies are now recognized as part of a disease process. This disease affects commercial pilots

to the same degree that it affects the general population.

The HIMS program was established to provide a system whereby afflicted individuals are treated and successfully returned to the cockpit under the FAA special issuance regulations (14 CFR 67.401).

CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE PROGRAM (CIRP) GROUP

A “critical incident” is any work-related event that has a stressful effect sufficient to overwhelm the usually effective coping skills. ALPA’s CIRP Group is composed of pilots trained in the fine art of listening to lessen the stress reactions that airplane accidents or incidents may have on pilots, accident investigators, and their families.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS GROUP

ALPA’s Professional Standards Group deals primarily with pilot behavior in the workplace to ensure a safe and professional operating environment and is the guardian of ALPA’s Code of Ethics. Pilots trained in peer support handle these problems under strict confidentiality, and make every attempt to resolve conflicts between two parties without management involvement. No written records are kept, and only those parties who are directly involved participate in the conflict resolution.

The program is a cooperative one that includes the involvement of company representatives, pilot peer volunteers, health-care professionals, and FAA medical specialists.

While the program borrows heavily from treatment principles developed in both clinical and industrial settings, it has specific elements that reflect the unique nature of the safety-sensitive airline transportation system.

Successful HIMS-model programs exist in the United States, Canada, and other countries around the world.

AEROMEDICAL GROUP

The Aviation Medicine Advisory Service (AMAS) has been providing aeromedical consultation to the nation’s largest airline union since 1969. Free services are provided to ALPA pilots. AMAS has seven physicians board certified in aerospace medicine and typically one or more fields such as family practice, internal medicine, or occupational medicine. Because of the growing demand to offer services to pilots, friends, and family outside the unions, the group formed Virtual Flight Surgeons Inc. in 1997, working out of the same offices with co-founders Quay Snyder, MD and Keith Martin, MD. The two companies merged in 2010 and continue to offer the nation’s premier aeromedical services as AMAS.

Advocates and allies for the people we represent

AMAS has one singular focus: to represent and protect the aeromedical needs and support the careers of airmen and others in related fields who must maintain medical certification to continue in their jobs. Its unparalleled staff of physicians and case managers have the experience and credibility in the aviation medical profession to give you the best opportunity to stay certified and in the air. They navigate the complex and sometimes overwhelming certification process with expertise and efficiency. No other provider of aeromedical advocacy services has the experience that AMAS provides its customers, and no other provider will.

FDX MEC AEROMEDICAL

The FDX MEC Aeromedical Committee provides members with assistance in

understanding and securing medical benefits contained in the collective bargaining agreement. The committee also coordinates efforts with members and familiarizes them with the capabilities of the Association's Aeromedical Office in obtaining and retaining their FAA medical certification. They are a source of referrals for medically related inquiries, e.g., where to find an AME in a certain geographical area.

BEREAVEMENT

The overall charter of the Bereavement Committee is to provide compassionate assistance after a crewmember's death in any way the surviving family deems fit. Generally, this involves guiding the survivors through the benefits process and preparing them for the many changes that come with this life-changing event. The central document we use is the Surviving Spouse/Beneficiary Guide, which walks the survivor through procedural steps during the first month after a crewmember's death. It is basically an easy-to-read and

understand expanded checklist that helps minimize the feeling that they may be missing an important step.

The first contact from the committee to your family is generally two to three days after a service or within a week of a crewmember's death. We often work directly with a spouse, family member, family friend or your casualty assistant liaison—whichever is most beneficial to your survivor. Those who work on the Bereavement Committee are cross-trained in Critical Incident Response, pilot assistance, and grief counseling.

PATH

The Pilot Assistance Team Hotline (PATH) was established to provide a source of support for pilots during difficult times. PATH is available for pilots seeking physiological, psychological, or medical assistance. Pilot peers are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year to guide their coworkers to all available resources.

To contact any of these committees, please
contact the FDX MEC Office at
901-752-8749 or **866-FDX-ALPA**
fdx.alpa.org

For aeromedical questions, contact AMAS at
303-341-4435 or
www.aviationmedicine.com

