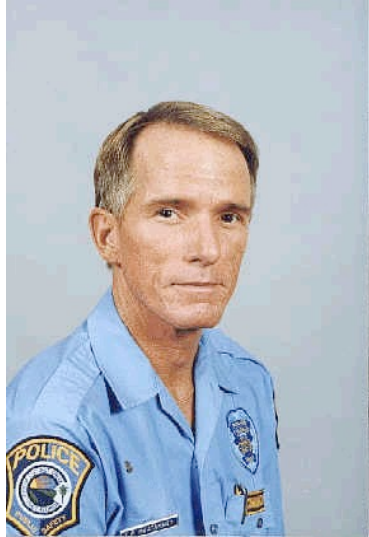


INTRODUCTION -

By T.P. McAtamney

Founder of Headsets911



Welcome! I'm glad you are reading this book. After twelve years at the console of a medium-sized Public Safety Department, and now after about four years teaching "Stress and the Dispatcher" Seminars all across the country, I realized that if I wanted to reach as many dispatchers as possible with this important training I would need to put the seminar into some kind of "book form". This would be especially important for those of you who couldn't attend our training in person.

As you will see as you read along I take stress management seriously - so seriously it seems that all I do is study the subject - least my wife thinks so. I guess you could say I'm a little bit "nuts" about stress.

There is a good reason for that. I need to know about this subject more than anyone I know. But more important because I wouldn't want to tell you about how to manage stress if didn't "practice what I preach". So you can be assured that everything you read in this book is what I personally use to manage my own stress, so I know it works!

For the most part everything you will read here comes from my experience as a dispatcher and from literally years of studying the subject

in depth and then, most importantly, putting what I have learned to practice in my own life.

Like I said I've read a lot of different books on the subject of stress. In fact, in college most of my elective classes were in the area of psychology, counseling, and other such subjects, although my major was Mass Communications. So I really got interested in the behavioral sciences long before Headsets911. I have always been fascinated by the way people "tick", and let me tell you it is an ongoing learning experience.

Also in writing this book I was trying very hard not to write just "another book" on stress and just put the name "Dispatcher" on it for to make it sell. There are a ton of books you can read on stress management and all of them are good and I highly suggest you afford yourself the opportunity to read up on this subject as much as you can. It doesn't matter whether or not you make dispatching a career; believe me you just can't know enough about this subject. The more you know the better you will be able to cope, not only with dispatch but with life too.

Along the way I will also try to communicate my philosophy on stress, on the job of 911 Dispatching, as well as a few thoughts on life in general. Maybe by a little sharing on my part you can gain something you can use for yourself.

The reason I want to be so candid to you about me is that I want you to understand that no matter what kind of stress you are facing, or have experience, I understand it. I've have been you are at and I know how hard it is to maintain your sanity sometimes at the Console. I also know that we are all human and we have things in life that happen to all of us and I will share some of my experience in that realm as well.

Stress and the Dispatcher – Surviving the Console

For instance, back in 1999, while still a dispatcher I lost my Mother to cancer at the same time my wife contracted cancer. If you have had a family member with cancer I'm sure you can agree that it is stressful and very tiring. No, it wasn't easy and honestly I didn't really deal with it too well at the time. I tried to balance both the job and these trying personal issues, but I ended up just burying myself in work, volunteering extra shifts, and overtime so I could keep my mind off of what was happening at home.

Well you really can't burn a candle at both ends so after my Mother passed away I crashed and burned – literally. In fact, I literally had a heart attack. I had to learn the hard way. The good news you won't have to go through what I did if you pay attention to what I will tell you.

I will tell you that it was surprising to a lot of people who knew me at the time, that I could be as affected as I was because I had been teaching adult classes and co-pastoring at my Church, and was actually one of the first "On-line" counselors on the Internet. I had written hundreds of published about a couple of hundred meditational essays on different subjects, and taught on them as well. So people thought I had all the answers.

But I can tell you it is always easy to "heal others" than it is to "heal yourself". Yeah those times were hard, but I learned first hand what it was like to work one of the most stressful jobs on earth while at the same time have a personal life seemingly on the edge of ruin. I really learned what worked and didn't work for me when it came to stress management. I also learned knowing effective stress management is essential to survival, not just in your job, but also in life itself.

Now I've shared all this with you for one reason. It is simply because I believe that you need to know where I'm coming from and what I'm all about. I also know that some of you who are reading this book are really struggling right now. Maybe it's problems at home or at the center you work at, and it may be a combination of both. I know that it can be hard just to get up some mornings. I know what it is like to have a "burning stomach" and a pounding heart. I know what it is to feel completely alone and discouraged. I've been there.

Sure I had friends and good supervisors who tried to be there, but there was little else to keep me going, except a strong will to get through it no matter what. But for a while I was really treading water!

Through my experiences I came to be a real believer in the "peer" concept when it comes to stress management – in other words, I am big on dispatchers caring for dispatchers. In fact, that is how I view what I do now. Sure I get paid to speak to you all, but that is truly not why I do it. If I could I would do it for free. I really feel that it is vitally important that dispatchers help dispatchers. That is the real success of Critical Incident Stress Management, in that it employs "peer counseling".

So by saying I believe in the peer concept I mean that even if we have no one else, we still have each other. This is the one constant I noticed though my career that dispatchers for the most part support one another and understood one another. In fact the number one comment I get from attendees of my seminar that "He knows what we go through".

Yes I do, "I've been there, and done that" as it is said. Because I do understand you will find yourself nodding your head throughout this

book. You might not agree with some of my principles or philosophy, but that is OK too. I'm not always right, and thank God I'm still learning. My real motive is an honest mission to "minister" to you and help you in any way I can. That's the truth.

So here we go! I hope you gain some really good information from what I going to share with you. Hopefully you can keep this book with you in your locker and refer to it when the going gets tough or when you feel alone and thinking "No one understands what I am going through."

If that is the case I will have done what I set out to do.

I know that we like to get to the point, or even more so to have the point extended and explained so that we can analyze and understand the meaning to the fullest. We don't like long-winded explanations; I guess it's just the "investigator" in every dispatcher. Like Joe Friday from the old TV show "Dragnet", "Just the facts Man!" So lets get on with the facts of Dispatcher Stress!