

# Enhancing Critical Incident Stress Management Through Mindfulness Practices

Presented by:  
Katie Carlson





# My Background

- Director of Wellness Initiatives at the Marion County Sheriff's Office (Indianapolis, IN) since May of 2021
- Previously served as Public Information Officer at the MCSO beginning in December of 2012
- Coordinator of the MCSO Peer Support Team
- Certified Mindfulness Meditation Teacher (MTT 300)
- Certified Yoga Teacher (RYT 200)



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# Disclaimer

While my work is strongly supported by my employer, the views in this presentation do not necessarily reflect the views of the Marion County Sheriff's Office.

# Overview of CISM

ICISF Founders George S. Everly, Jr., Ph.D., C.T.S. and Jeffrey T. Mitchell, Ph.D., C.T.S.:

"CISM is a comprehensive, integrative, multi-component crisis intervention system. CISM interventions range from the pre-crisis phase through the acute crisis phase, and into the post-crisis phase. it consists of interventions which may be applied to individuals, small functional groups, large groups, families, organizations, and even communities."

Shout out to my teachers, Kimble Richardson and Lindi Holt!

# SAFER-R Model

The SAFER-R Revised Model (Everly, 1995)

**S**tabilize (introduction; meet basic needs; mitigate acute stressors, confidentiality)

**A**cknowledge the crisis (event, reactions)

**F**acilitate understanding (normalization)

**E**ncourage effective coping (mechanisms of action)

**R**ecovery or **R**eferral (facilitate access to continued care)

# Effective Coping Mechanisms

Encourage Effective Coping (Mechanisms of Action) (Everly, 1995):

Meeting Basic Needs, Liaison/ Advocacy, Cathartic Ventilation (Venting), Social Support, Information (Critical Incident Stress Information Sheets), Stress Management, Problem-Solving, Conflict Resolution, Cognitive Reframing, Spiritual Needs, Financial Needs, Reassurance, and Hope

What else?

# Trauma and Movement

Bessel van der Kolk in "The Body Keeps the Score":

"The single most important issue for traumatized people is to find a sense of safety in their own bodies.

Only by getting in touch with your body, by connecting viscerally with your self, can you regain a sense of who you are, your priorities and values. Trauma makes people feel like either some body else, or like no body. In order to overcome trauma, you need help to get back in touch with your body, with yourself."

What are some of your "go to" physical activities?

# What is Mindfulness?

Jon Kabat-Zinn, Founder of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR):

"Mindfulness is the awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally."



# What is Mindfulness?

A Clinician's Guide to Teaching Mindfulness  
by Christiane Wolf, MD, PhD, and J. Greg Serpa, PhD:

Two Ways to Practice Mindfulness:

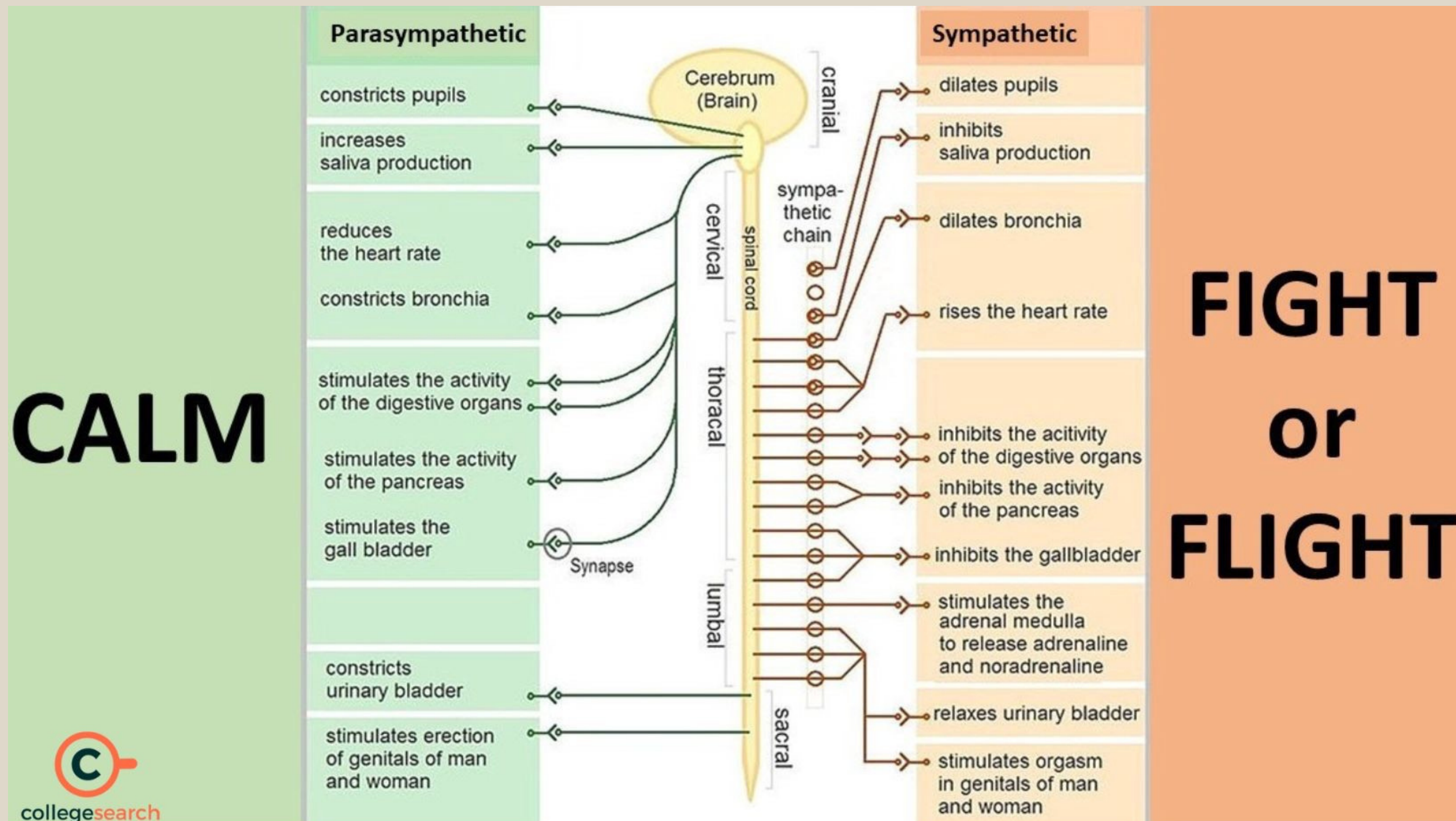
- 1.) Formal Practice, traditionally called "meditation"
- 2.) Informal Practice: Applying mindfulness or compassion to something we are already ready doing in our lives.

# Mindfulness as an Effective Coping Mechanism

In the Introduction to Overcoming Trauma Through Yoga, Bessel van der Kolk states:

"People who are traumatized need to have physical and sensory experiences to unlock their bodies, activate effective flight/fight responses, tolerate their sensations, befriend their inner experiences and cultivate new action patterns."

# Up Regulation and Down Regulation



# Breathwork and Practice

Even Breath:

Inhale for Four Counts, Exhale for Four Counts

Straw Breathing:

Inhale for Four Counts, Exhale for Eight Counts  
(Through Pursed Lips)

4-7-8 Breath:

Inhale for Four Counts, Hold for Seven Counts, Exhale (Through Pursed  
Lips) for Eight Counts



# Meditation and Practice

In this mindful meditation practice, we'll use our breath and bodies as the object of mindfulness. When we notice that our mind has wandered from our object of mindfulness, we just notice it, and with gentle kindness towards ourselves, we'll shift our attention back to the object of mindfulness.

# Mindfulness + CISM at the MCSO

"Wow. That makes a really big difference."

"I never knew I could do that."

"Could you do a meditation with me?"

# Trauma-Informed Mindfulness

[Practitioners] "are supported in shared decision-making, choice, and goal setting to determine the plan of action they need to heal and move forward.

They are supported in cultivating self-advocacy skills."

-SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach

By Invitation or By Request: Dr. Elizabeth Hopper: "It's about putting the power back into the hands of the other person."

# When It Won't Help

Enhancing CISM with Mindfulness practice is not advised when:

- It's not wanted.
- It's not needed.
- In cases of severe trauma.
- In group settings.



# Mindfulness as a Team Practice

By potentially exposing themselves to secondary trauma, Peer Support Team members need to remain mindful of their own self-care, ie. "you can't pour from an empty cup".

Including breath work and mindfulness practices as a part of ongoing Peer Support Team training provides Team members with additional tools to manage their own stress, whether it's personal or related to providing peer support.

Including mindfulness and breath work during Team meetings and ongoing training only takes a few minutes but reinforces the mission of the Team, that it is OK to access resources to support your mental health.

# Conclusion

Including mindful breathing techniques in a SAFER-R is an effective and accessible method of helping an individual process stress and traumatic events, by providing a sense of autonomy over one's physical bodily reactions to stress.

Learning mindful breathing techniques can be easily included in ongoing training for CISM members to manage their own stress, and potentially provide additional aid to individuals in crisis.

# Questions?

## Thank you for attending!

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