



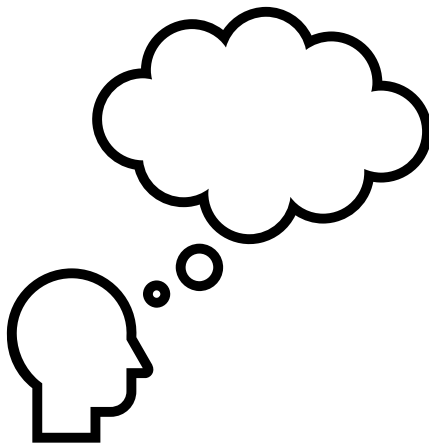
Weathering the Storm

Stress, Burnout, and Resilience for Snowfighters

Before we get started...



Mindfulness: Self check in



Learning Goals

Recognize

common signs of stress and burnout in ourselves and others

Understand

how chronic stress can affect mental, emotional, and physical well-being

Identify

practical strategies for managing stress and recovering during busy times

Apply

resilience skills to support wellbeing during winter operations

Recognize

when more support may be needed and the value of reaching out early

Taking Care of the Person Behind the Plow

When you think about snow season, what's the toughest part for you personally?

- Sleep
- Schedule
- Long hours
- Other drivers
- Time away from family
- Physical exhaustion
- Stress
- All of the above

This Job Asks a Lot of You

Physical Demands	Mental Demands	Social Demands
Cold	Staying focused	Hours alone
Long shifts	Pressure and responsibility	Missing family activities
Sitting for long periods	Unpredictable conditions	Unpredictable schedules
Disrupted sleep and fatigue	Difficult drivers, near misses, or accidents	Limited opportunity to connect

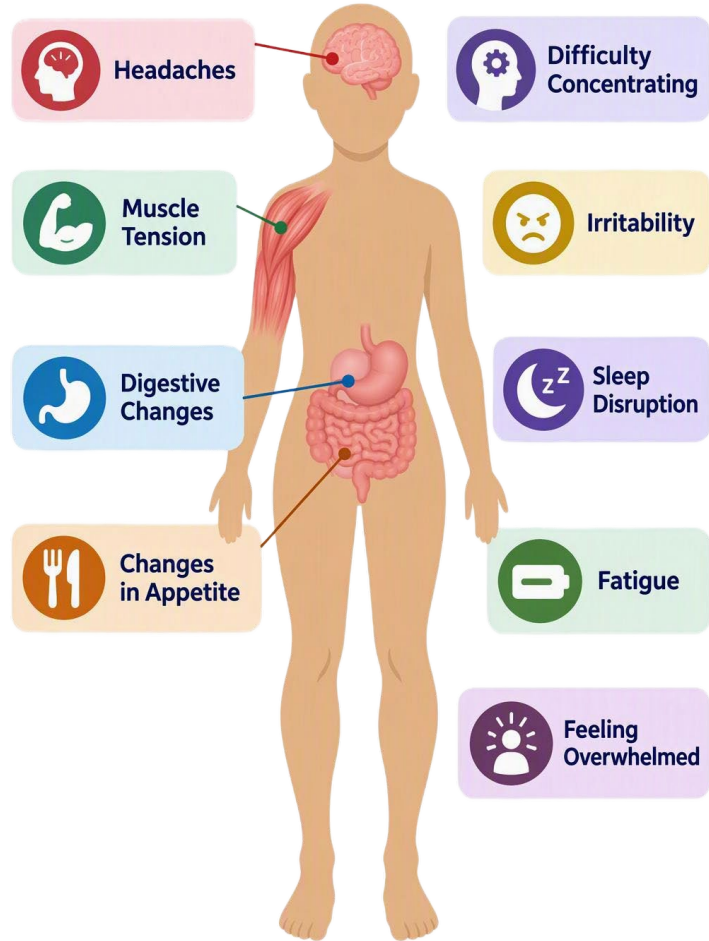
Stress Isn't Always Bad

Acute Stress

- Short-term
- Helps us respond
- Increases alertness
- Helpful in challenging situations

Chronic Stress

- Our stress response doesn't get enough time to shut off and recover
- That's when wear and tear can start to build up



Your Body Doesn't Separate Mental and Physical Stress

When Stress Becomes Burnout

Stress

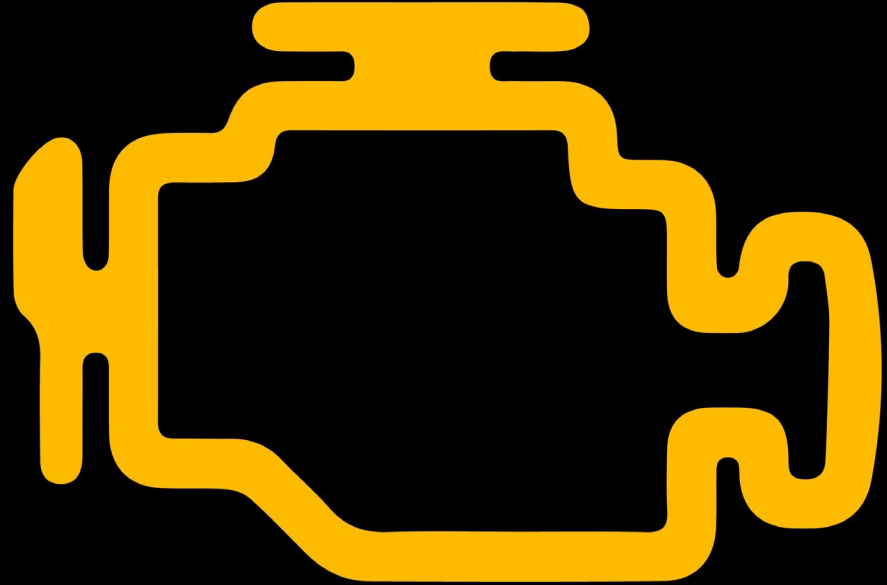
- “I have too much to deal with right now”
- Feeling rushed
- Worry
- Irritability
- Tension
- Hard to shut your brain off

Burnout

- “I’ve been running on empty for too long”
- Exhaustion
- Detachment
- Loss of motivation
- Feeling ineffective
- Caring less

Your Dashboard Warning Lights

What happens when a warning light comes on in your truck?



Personal Warning Signs

Physical	Mental	Emotional	Behavioral
Exhaustion	Difficulty concentrating	Irritability	Withdrawing
Trouble sleeping	Racing thoughts	Feeling numb or checked out	Increased substance use
Headaches/tension	Forgetfulness	Feeling overwhelmed	Losing interest in things
Appetite changes	Negative thinking	Feeling frustrated	Not doing the things that normally help

Snowfighter Scenario

You've worked several storms in a row. You're sleeping 4-5 hours at a time, snapping at family, relying on energy drinks, and feeling exhausted before your shift even starts.

What warning signs are showing up?

- Physical signs
- Emotional signs
- Behavioral signs

Looking Out for Your Crew

You might notice those warning signs in your coworkers, too.

- Check in when someone seems different
- Ask simple questions:
 - “How are you doing?”
 - “You seem stressed lately. Everything okay?”
 - “Need anything?”

Resilience

More than just “toughing it out”

What Resilience Is... And Isn't

Resilience is NOT:

- Never getting stressed
- Handling everything alone
- Ignoring exhaustion
- Pretending you're fine
- Pushing until you crash

Resilience IS:

- Recognizing what's happening
- Responding earlier and recovering
- Maintaining connection
- Using resources when needed
- Developing habits that help you get through tough times



The Snowfighter Resilience Toolkit

What tools can you use?

Tool 1: Protect Sleep and Recovery

Examples:

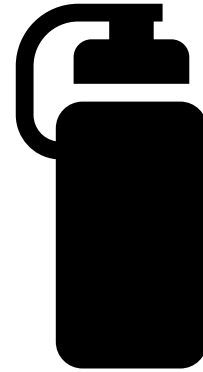
- Dark, cool sleeping environment
- Blackout curtains and/or eye mask
- White noise machine
- Avoid screen time before bed
- Communicate sleep windows to family
- Pay attention to increasing fatigue



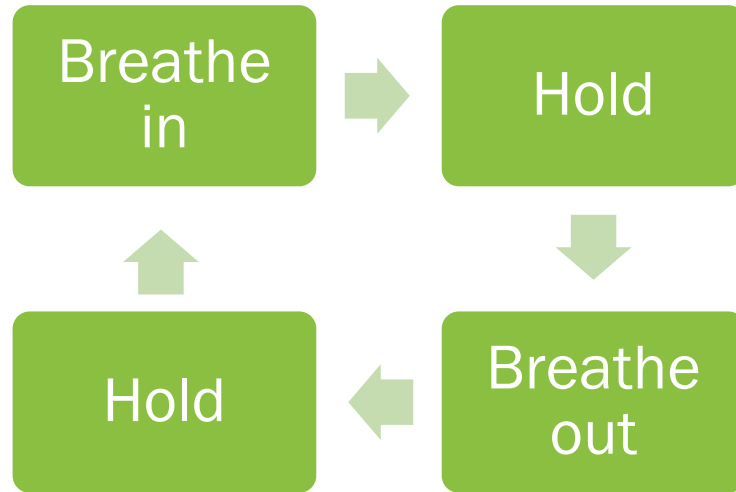
Tool 2: Fuel the Machine

Examples:

- Hydration
- Food that provides energy
- Movement when opportunities arise
- Limiting substances that interfere with recovery



Tool 3: Downshift Your Nervous System



4 seconds each

Another Stress Reset Technique



3 things
you see



3 things
you hear

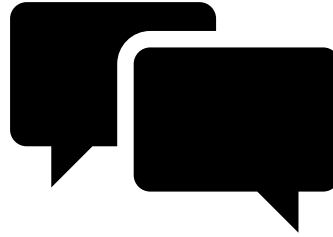


3 body
parts you
move

Tool 4: Stay Connected

Examples:

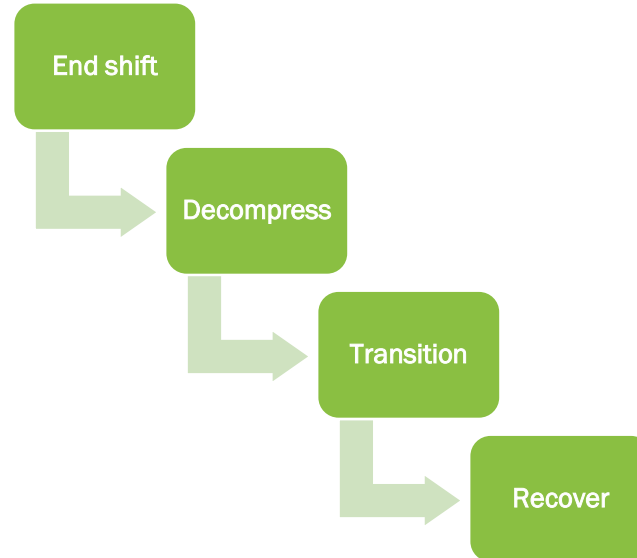
- Call someone after a difficult shift
- Check in with coworkers
- Talk about a near miss instead of carrying it alone
- Maintain contact with family during long snow events when possible
- Have one or two people you can actually be honest with



Tool 5: Transition Out of Work Mode

Examples:

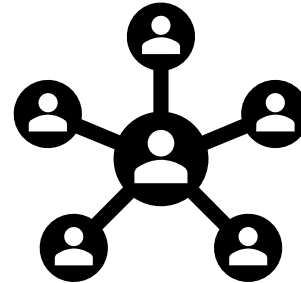
- Five quiet minutes
- Shower and change clothes
- Listen to music
- Stretch
- Talk with someone
- Put the phone away



Know When To Reach Out

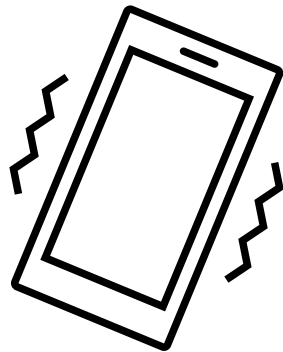
Possible signs:

- Work/home functioning changes
- Relationships are being affected
- Substance use increases
- Withdrawing from people
- You don't feel like yourself
- Coping strategies aren't working anymore



Who To Call

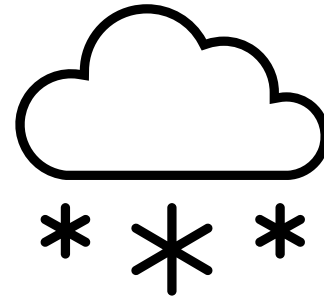
- National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: 988
- Local Community Mental Health Agency
- Primary Care Provider (PCP)
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Insurance Company
- Mental Health Counselor or Therapist



Your Winter Maintenance Plan

This winter I will...

- ☐ Pay attention to my warning signs
- ☐ Use a stress reset technique
- ☐ Protect my sleep by..
- ☐ Stay connected by...
- ☐ Reach out when...
- ☐ Fuel myself by...





**You wouldn't run
equipment all winter
without maintenance
and expect it to perform
at its best.**

We're not that different.

Thank you!

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