

UNRESOLVED STRESS

The tones drop at 1:49 AM.

"House on fire. Fully involved. 1256 Main Street."

You've been asleep, but now you're instantly awake.

Various organs and glands dump adrenalin, cortisol, norepinephrine, and at least twenty other hormones and neurochemicals into your bloodstream. Much of what you do during those next few minutes happens due to muscle memory.

You've done this a thousand times.

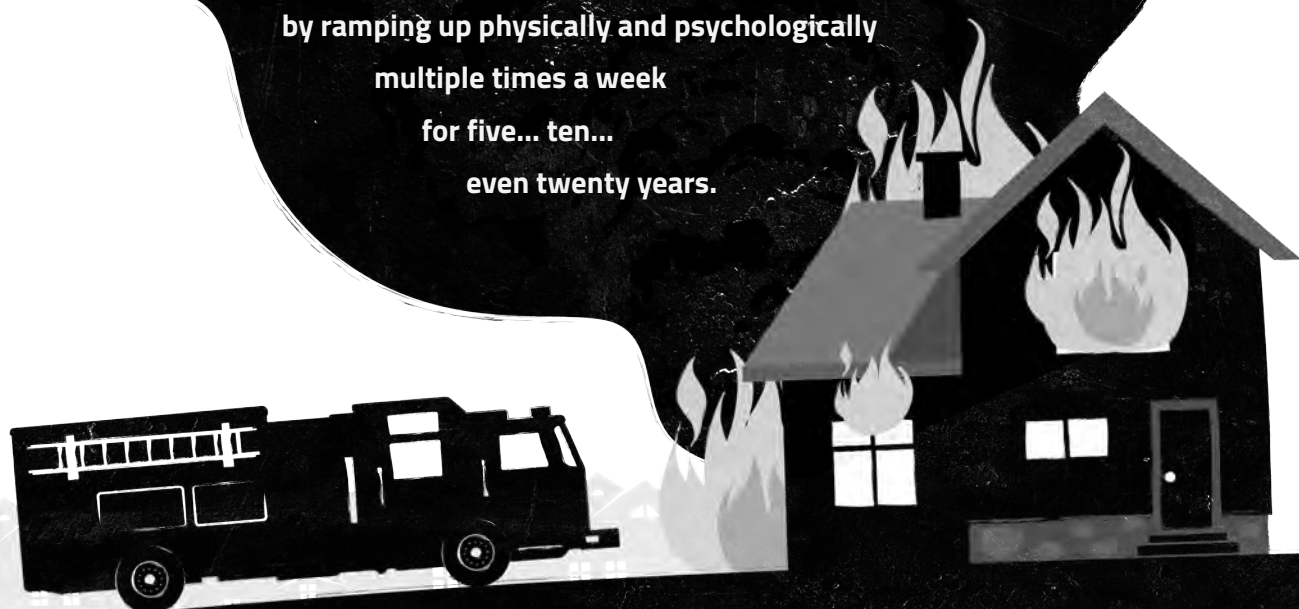
You're well-trained, well-equipped, experienced, called, and wired to do this.

You've anticipated just about every contingency.

Except for the ones you couldn't anticipate – the experiences that, for some reason, you couldn't predict. Or the ones you did, but had no way to know how they'd hit you on a deeper emotional level than others.

Or maybe it's just the cumulative toll taken by ramping up physically and psychologically multiple times a week

for five... ten... even twenty years.



STRESS *that can* **BLINDSIDE** YOU

Stressful events or work conditions can hit you suddenly and have an immediate profound effect, or they can sneak up on you over a period of years. In either case, if not properly addressed, they could sideline you indefinitely. Check any boxes from the list below that describe your life as a first responder.

- ☐ Having no control over the volume of calls
- ☐ Interrupted sleep due to high call tempo
- ☐ Having to continue responding to calls after an especially disturbing call
- ☐ Many years of first responder service
- ☐ Long periods of overtime requirements
- ☐ Being in a situation where you feel helpless in the face of overwhelming demands, such as a prolonged, failed rescue
- ☐ When a partner or peer is seriously injured or killed in the line of duty
- ☐ Suicide of a partner or peer
- ☐ Being at serious risk, such as dealing with armed suspects or running out of air in a working fire
- ☐ Responding to a call for a victim who is known to the responder
- ☐ Witnessing horrifying things, such as dismembered bodies or severe wounds
- ☐ Experiencing the death of a child while on duty
- ☐ Having to inform the family of someone who has died
- ☐ Making a treatment mistake that leads to someone's worsening condition or death
- ☐ Feeling unappreciated by command, coworkers, public
- ☐ Being given new specialty or command responsibilities
- ☐ Moving to a new station or area of responsibility; department reorganization
- ☐ Job or position insecurity
- ☐ Interpersonal conflicts with coworkers, command.
- ☐ Working without the full support of administration, or when command questions your actions in an investigation

When we view **STRESS** as a

THREAT

vs

CHALLENGE



our response is



which produces
POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS



our response is



which produces
POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS





SOUL RESILIENCE TRAINING

1. Involve God in the process

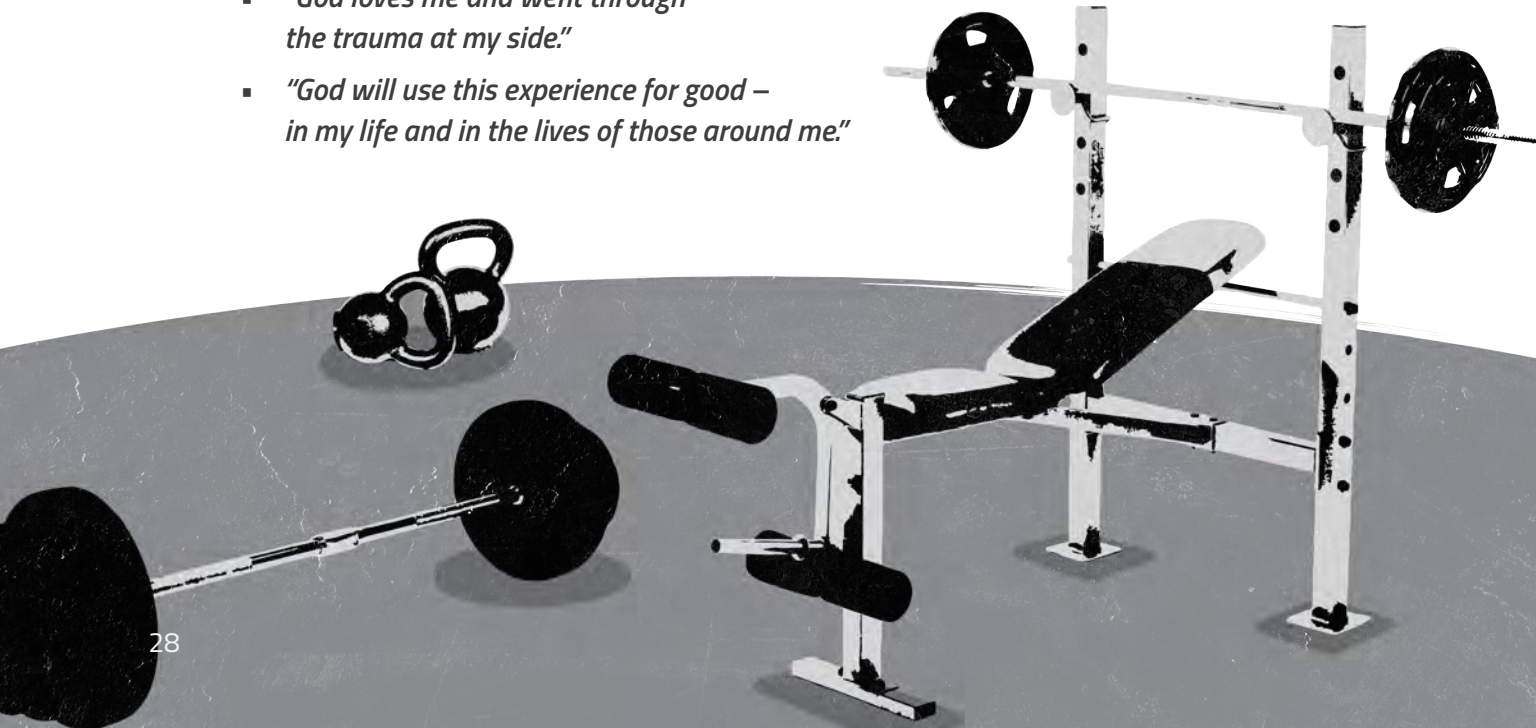
Flip back to Week 1 and look at the symptoms you wrote that concern you the most. Choose three and write them below. Then, think about how you would like to be functioning regarding each symptom within the next three to six months and write out a goal statement for each one. What would you like to see happen? What do you want to see God do?

SYMPTOMS	_____	GOALS	_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____

2. Reframe the trauma

Rehearse the following four facts in your mind, or even out loud, several times a day in order to help reframe your trauma with the right perspective.

- *"I survived. I'm safe."*
- *"Wounds can heal, and mine will."*
- *"God loves me and went through the trauma at my side."*
- *"God will use this experience for good – in my life and in the lives of those around me."*



3. Use grounding techniques

Look at the list of grounding techniques below and underline any that you think would be helpful to you when confronted by “intrusive” symptoms such as panic attacks, undefined distress or dread, daydreams, or nightmares. *You’ll find even more grounding techniques – like **controlled breathing** and **aerobic exercise** – on the **REBOOT Portal**.*

- **TASTE** — *Chew a lemon slice, garlic, ice cube, or popsicle. Can you think of any other things that would either be very pleasant to you or “wake you up?” Remember, you’d have to be able to access them quickly.*
- **SMELL** — *Hold to your nose smelling salts, peppermint, your wife’s favorite perfume, any smells that will help you detect where you currently are. Others? Try to analyze each smell, breathing deeply through your nose.*
- **TOUCH** — *Touch the wall or the carpet you’re standing on with your open palm and describe its texture; hold an ice cube in your hand; stand up and put both of your feet firmly on the ground; pinch yourself; clap your hands. If you’ve lost feeling in your arms or legs, rub them vigorously.*
- **SIGHT** — *Turn on a bright light; take an inventory in your mind of what you see in the room; if someone is with you, remember that person’s name, say it out loud, and tell yourself where you know them from.*
- **HEARING** — *Breathe slowly and deeply from your diaphragm, listening to the air going in and out of your nose and mouth; crank up the volume of whatever music you may be listening to and focus on the lyrics or the notes; play one of your favorite “oldies” from a happier time.*

4. Remember your strengths

List three things about yourself that you would consider strengths, skills, talents or gifts that you possess. Remembering these can help renew your focus and sense of worth.
