



# Fostering Resilience And Managing Emotions Working with Human Remains



This module was co-developed by the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR) and the Norwegian Armed Forces Joint Medical Service.

Approved for public release; distribution unlimited

Questions or comments can be emailed to the WRAIR:  
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# Fostering Resilience And Managing Emotions

## Working with Human Remains

### Introduction

This module reviews the stress associated with dealing with human remains and what military units may need to consider when required to engage in this task. Just as it is critical to know how to deal with biohazardous material and the proper management of the site, it is also important to know how to handle the emotional strain associated with handling human remains.

The materials in this module provide knowledge about what to expect psychologically from the task of managing human remains, how to be mentally prepared, what mental skills might be useful during the task, and how to facilitate recovery afterwards.

The training module also includes practical exercises. If there is time available for practice, individuals will be asked to look at photos of human remains. They will have to answer task-related questions while practicing the mental skills that are reviewed in the module. This experience will then be debriefed. The goal of this exercise is to increase the individual's confidence in dealing with this unique kind of stressor.

These photos used in the training module need to be included by the instructor. The photos should be of increasing intensity. These photos should not be included in the training manual or in any wide dissemination of the module in order to prevent unnecessary exposure. They should only be inserted in the slide just prior to the training event itself.

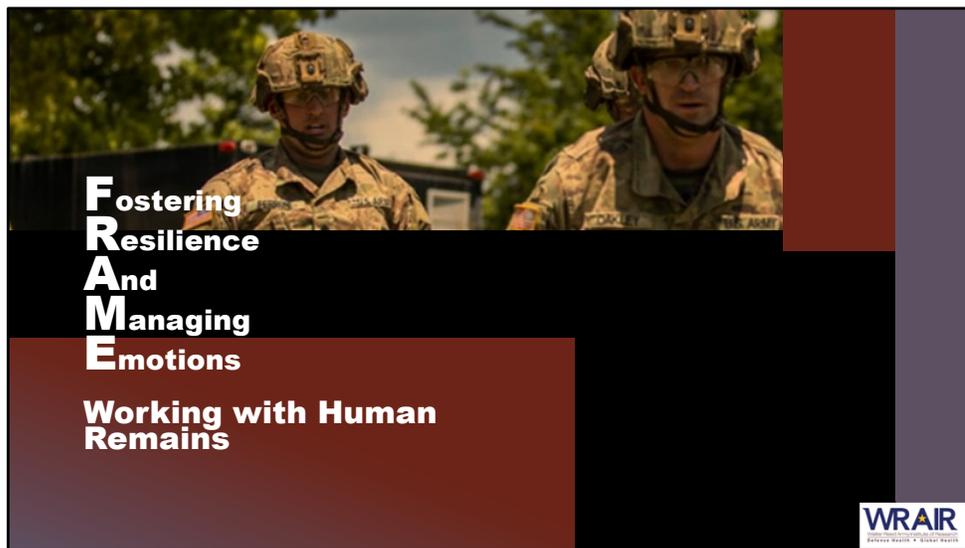
This training is designed for any unit member but may be particularly helpful for those in key positions such as medics, chaplains, and members of leadership teams.

The material was originally co-developed by the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR) and the Norwegian Armed Forces Joint Medical Service as part of a package of operational resilience training modules delivered to Ukrainian Soldiers. Feedback was also provided by the Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences.

This Trainer's Guide for the following training module has been designed to be user-friendly while containing as much information as possible to help you present this module. The following symbols are used throughout.

### Training Module Symbol Guide

Symbol	Represents	Explanation
	Timing	This symbol indicates the amount of time allotted for a given section of the material.
	Target / Intent	This symbol indicates the main function or rationale for a given slide.
<b>1.</b>	Key Point	Numbers are used to indicate the main points that must be addressed in order to meet a given slide's target / intent.
.	Sample Script	Bullets are used to elaborate on key points by providing a potential script that the trainer can use.
<b>[TEXT]</b>	Note to Trainer	Bracketed text indicates a note to the trainer which is not intended to be read aloud. These provide hints on how to present the material and tips to avoid potential issues that may arise within a given topic.
	Multimedia	This symbol indicates the use of supplementary audio/video files. To avoid down-time or technical difficulties, keep an eye out for these and plan accordingly.
	Handouts	This symbol indicates that the participants will use handouts at a given point in the module. To avoid down-time, keep an eye out for these and plan accordingly.
	Exercise	This symbol indicates the start of an exercise or activity. To avoid down-time, keep an eye out for these and plan accordingly.
	Discussion	This symbol indicates opportunity for discussion
	Continue	This symbol indicates that the training material for a given slide continues onto the next page.
	Stop	This symbol indicates that the training material for a given slide ends on this page.



To view the detailed and formatted trainer notes, click on the VIEW option in PowerPoint and then select the “NOTES PAGE” option.

[Soldiers train on battlefield recovery of human remains | Article | The United States Army](#)



**Length of the training 120 minutes**



**Provide introductions**

## 1. Introduce the course and the trainer.

- Good morning/afternoon my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am a \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_.
- Welcome to this module on mental skills for handling human remains.
- This can be a difficult subject but it is valuable to be prepared if you find yourself tasked with managing human remains or if you are responsible for supporting those who are.
- Of course, it is critical to address the biohazards of handling human remains.
- In this training module, however, we are going to focus on the psychological stress associated with the task and what you can do about it.
- It’s hard to know why you might encounter this task but it could happen in the context of combat, humanitarian disasters, training accidents or some other scenario.



- Like many aspects of war, dealing with human remains can challenge soldiers' sense of humanity.
- If you do find yourself having to deal with a scenario involving human remains, you will have the chance to make a meaningful difference in your unit.
  - Treating remains with dignity is an essential way to preserve your humanity and the humanity of your team members
  - Ultimately, this approach will help protect your long-term psychological health and the psychological health of your unit
- This module will review ways to deal with the mental stress associated with this important task so you can support yourself and your teammates effectively

**[FOR MEDICS:** As a medic, you have a special role in helping your unit manage the stress associated with dealing with human remains.]

**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** *This module was co-developed by the Norwegian Armed Forces Joint Medical Service and the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research as part of Operational Resilience Training created for Ukrainian Medics.*

*This module was also reviewed by the Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress at Uniformed Services University for the Health Sciences.*

*If the practical exercises are cut from the training, the training can be completed in about 90 minutes]*



## Goals for Lesson

01

Review common reactions associated with managing human remains

02

Learn mental skills that can reduce the stress of managing human remains

03

Practice mental skills for managing human remains



### Introduce the outline of the module

#### 1. Review objectives.

- In this module, we are going to talk about common reactions for managing human remains
- We are also going to learn mental skills for managing the stress of dealing with human remains
- Please note that this module will may involve graphic photos of human remains
  - We will warn you ahead of time and
  - We will only show you these photos so you can practice specific mental skills (otherwise they won't be included in the training)

**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** *This module purposefully includes a warning regarding graphic images in order to lead by example – demonstrating that it is important to not have unnecessary exposure to these images and also giving service members a chance to prepare themselves mentally and use the skills that will be reviewed in this module.*

*If the training involves practice with human remains – in vivo exposure – this should be stated up front with the same caveat that they will be warned ahead of time and it is to train skill acquisition]*



## Why Learn Mental Skills for Handling Human Remains?

It is normal to have emotional reactions to handling human remains, but these reactions may impede the performance of service members

Employing mental skills can reduce emotional reactions and support functioning



**Discuss reasons for learning mental skills in the context of managing human remains**

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

### 1. Discuss the relevance of the topic

- One of the most difficult stressors in the combat environment that doesn't frequently get talked about is managing human remains.

**[ASK as a rhetorical question]** Why is learning mental skills for managing human remains important?

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- It is common to have negative reactions to sensory impressions that come with handling human remains.
- These reactions are normal but can interfere with your ability to perform the task.

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- Mental skills for managing human remains can be effective in reducing negative reactions and increasing performance.

**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** *Service members spend a lot of time practicing combat maneuvers, this gives them a sense of control and agency. Similarly, it is helpful to train in how to manage the stress of handling human remains.*]



## What can you expect from the environment when managing human remains?



<https://cryptome.org/eyeball/mort/mort-eyeball.htm>



### Set expectations from the environment when managing human remains

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

#### 1. Sensory impressions

- Managing human remains occurs within a larger physical environment.
- It can be helpful to be prepared for what you and your service members might encounter.
- Let's talk about what you might come across.

**[ASK]** What can you expect from the environment when managing human remains

**[DISCUSS:** Allow for brief discussion, then continue]

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- You may encounter disturbing sights.
- Remains can be mutilated, sometimes with only bits and pieces remaining.
- Or remains can look relatively undamaged.

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- You might also encounter strong smells.
  - These smells may be from decomposing remains, or
  - Other smells may include burnt flesh, defecation, and the smell of blood.

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- Managing human remains may involve touching the remains and moving them



- And perhaps hearing sounds that corpses can make when being moved and gasses escape
- This is a natural phenomenon but can be unsettling if you aren't expecting it.

## 2 Other environmental factors

### **[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- The environment can be chaotic.
- The task can also involve risk to health due to bio-hazards, booby-trapped remains and insecure/collapsing structures.

### **[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- The environment can also be emotionally charged
- There may be members of the community nearby who may be wailing, angry or trying to get to the remains

### **[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- The degree of decomposition will be determined by temperature and climate, and how long it's been.
- Another stressor is encountering scavengers and carrion feeders.
- Handling human remains can be perceived as grim, unsettling or eerie due to the nature of the task
- Employing mental skills while conducting the task can help reduce negative reactions.
- We're going to cover these techniques later in this module.
- First, though, we're going to focus on what else you can expect



## Possible Thoughts

- “This could have been me”
- “These remains remind me of someone I know”
- “This is so gross”
- “I hate this task”
- “I’m never going to be the same”
- “The world is a horrible place”
  
- “They got what they deserved”
- “They don’t deserve to be buried”



**Discuss thoughts that might arise while managing human remains**

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

1. Describe how service members can have a range of different thoughts while managing human remains

**[ASK]** What might a service member be thinking if they are tasked with handling human remains?

**[DISCUSS:** Allow for a few responses and then continue]

- Service member may have many possible thoughts including

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

– “This could have been me”

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

– “These remains remind me of someone I know”

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

– “This is so gross”

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

– “I hate this task”

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

– “I’m never going to be the same”

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

– “The world is a horrible place”



- Other thoughts may depend on the circumstances.  
For example, if service members are dealing with the remains of adversaries, they may think:

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

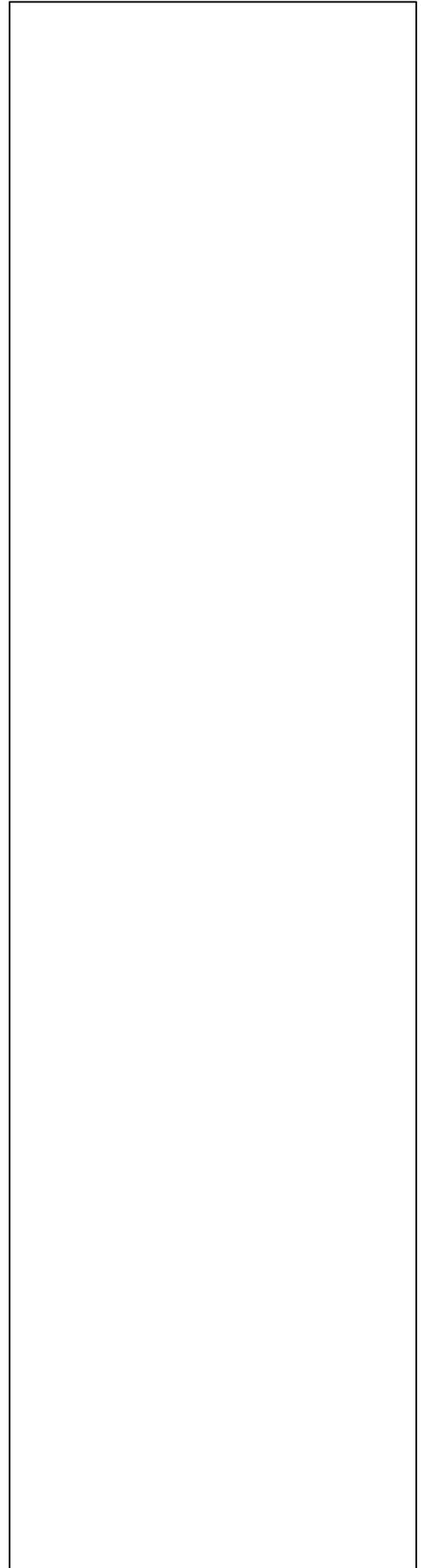
- “They got what they deserved”

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- “They don’t deserve to be buried”

**[ASK]** Do any of these thoughts surprise you?

**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** Briefly allow for response and note the possible positive thoughts as well. Keep discussion focused on the thoughts listed here, then advance to the next slide]



## Possible Emotions

Disgust	Afraid	Numb
Nauseous	Shaky	Faint or light-headed
Angry	Revengeful	Grief
Horrified	Disillusioned	Hopeless
Exhausted	Fed-up	Unsure



**Discuss feelings that might arise while managing human remains**

1. Describe how service members can have a range of different feelings while managing human remains

**[ASK]** What might a service member be feeling if they encounter the reality of handling human remains?

**[DISCUSS:** Allow for a few responses and then continue]

- Service members may have many lots of possible feelings including

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- “Disgust”, “Afraid” or “Numb”
- “Nauseous”, “Shaky” or “Faint or Light-headed”
- “Angry”, “Revengeful”, “Grief”
- “Horrified”, “Disillusioned” or “Hopeless”
- “Exhausted”, “Fed up” or “Unsure”

- Sometimes the thoughts and feelings connect with one another and become particularly powerful.

**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** Highlight some of the feelings, including the “fed up” item – where a service member reaches their saturation point. Keep discussion focused on the feelings listed here, then advance to the next slide]



## Unexpected Triggers

Some experiences may bother you more than others

- Anticipate this effect
- Remind yourself this can happen
- Use mental skills



### Define unexpected triggers (the lock and key effect)

#### 1. Explain that some experiences may bother service members more than others

- Sometimes the thoughts and emotions are so intense that they breakthrough and suddenly throw you off course
- You might not be able to anticipate what those are
  - It may be the dead remind you of someone
  - Something about the task may strikes a chord in your personal life (e.g., small child, dog)
  - It may be that you are having a difficult day and are more susceptible to what you are experiencing.
- When a particular event gets through your mental defenses, it can be like a key fitting into a lock.

**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** *There are typically 2 types of reactions to handling human remains*

*(1) Those that will be experienced by the majority of personnel such as reactions to the remains of children, torture victims, and pregnant women.*

*(2) Idiosyncratic reactions that are unlikely to have been predicted or prevented (the lock and key effect).]*

#### 2. Anticipate this impact and use mental skills

- It can be helpful to anticipate this effect.





**Practicing  
mental skills  
can provide  
you with  
mental armor**



**Talk about building a “mental armor”**

**1. Introduce the concept of a mental armor**

- We all have some innate ability to distance ourselves from the stress of handling human remains
- We are now going to review skills that will help strengthen this mental armor
- Using mental skills that you will learn in this module can help reduce the negative impact of handling human remains.



## Divide the Task into Three Phases



**Introduce the three phases associated with handling human remains: before, during, and after.**

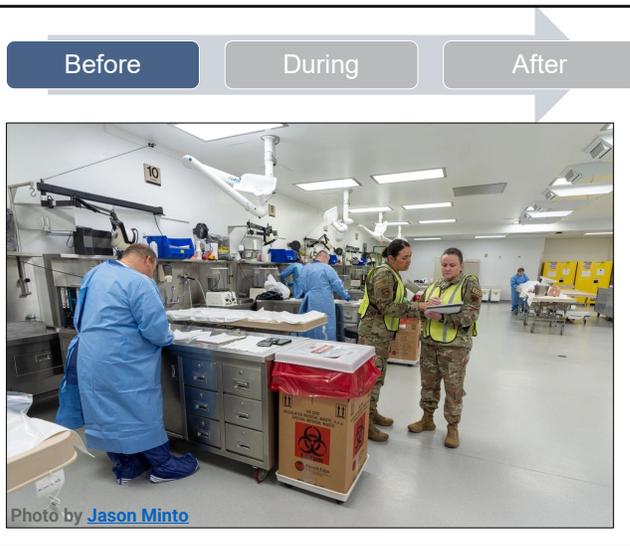
1. There are three phases associated with handling human remains: before, during, and after.

- We are going to talk about mental skills that can be used before, during, and after handling human remains.
- In the before phase, it's important to prepare mentally and emotionally
- During the task, service members can focus on staying anchored using mental skills.
- After the task, it's important to recognize, recover, and regroup.

**[FOR MEDICS/LEADERS:** Each phase of the task provides an opportunity for Medics/Leaders to support unit members in navigating this challenging task]

- Now let's talk about each of the phases in some detail.





<https://www.dvidshub.net/image/8743130/afmao-completes-masfat-training-exercise>



## Introduce “before” mental skills

### 1. Remember training and procedures

- Before you are tasked with managing human remains, you will have
  - the training for how to address it from a tactical perspective
  - personal protective equipment (PPE)
  - A secured site

**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** *Sometimes there are concerns that the remains will be contaminated. This is not likely to be true but may be a concern that service members have. If you the class appears uncertain, you can ask them to raise their hand if they have concerns about contamination. From there, you can reassure them about the unlikely risk of contamination given tactical training and personal protective equipment*]



Before      During      After

Get the G2

- Seek information
- Recognize there will be a limit to the information available
- Learn what you can

**Questions to Consider**

- Background and circumstances**
- Type of casualties (own forces, enemy, civilians, children)**
- Condition of remains**
- Operational context**



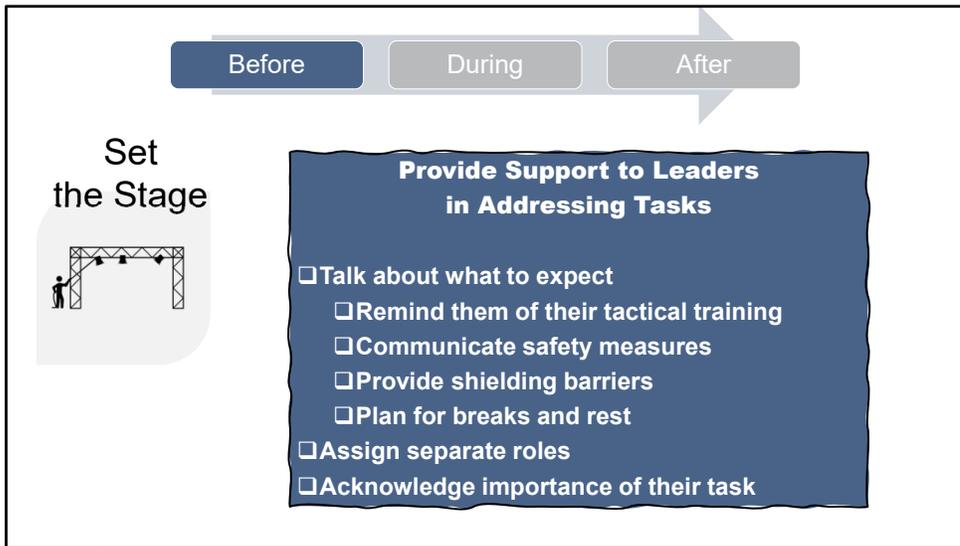
## Describe “before the task” skills: Get the G2

### 1. Seek information about the situation

- In the before phase, it’s important to prepare yourself and your service members for what you will be seeing and doing, taking time constraints and access to information into account.
- It is better to be prepared for the worst and not have to face it than to be ill prepared.
- Get information about:
  - The background and circumstances (e.g., killed by artillery shelling, small arms fire fight, fire).
  - Types of casualties (e.g., Enemy service members? Own troops? Civilians? Children?)
  - Condition of remains (Badly injured? Recently deceased or decomposed?)
  - The operational context in which you will be performing the task
    - For example, will it be during ongoing combat maneuvers?
    - During an operational pause?
    - In a safe area?
    - Will there be friends or families of deceased there?)

**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** *Common sources of information include intelligence reports, general and social media*]





## Describe “before the task” skills: Set the Stage

### 1. Talk with team members about what to expect

- Leaders won't likely know best practices in handling with the mental strain of managing human remains
- It may be helpful for leaders to know that you have this training and can support them either
  - directly through working with unit members or
  - indirectly through advising them on best practices to maintain readiness
- Whether it's you or the leader, start with setting the stage so that service members aren't unnecessarily surprised by what they encounter
  - Talk about what to expect and their tasks
  - Remind them of their tactical training
  - Communicate safety measures that are in place
    - Ensuring the security of the site (such as clearing any booby-traps and unexploded ordnance)
    - Maintaining personal safety in the environment (such as using personal protective gear)
    - Shoring up structures
  - Explain the shielding barriers to prevent unnecessary exposure to human remains
  - Establish plan for breaks and rest (such as 1 hour on, 15 minutes off)



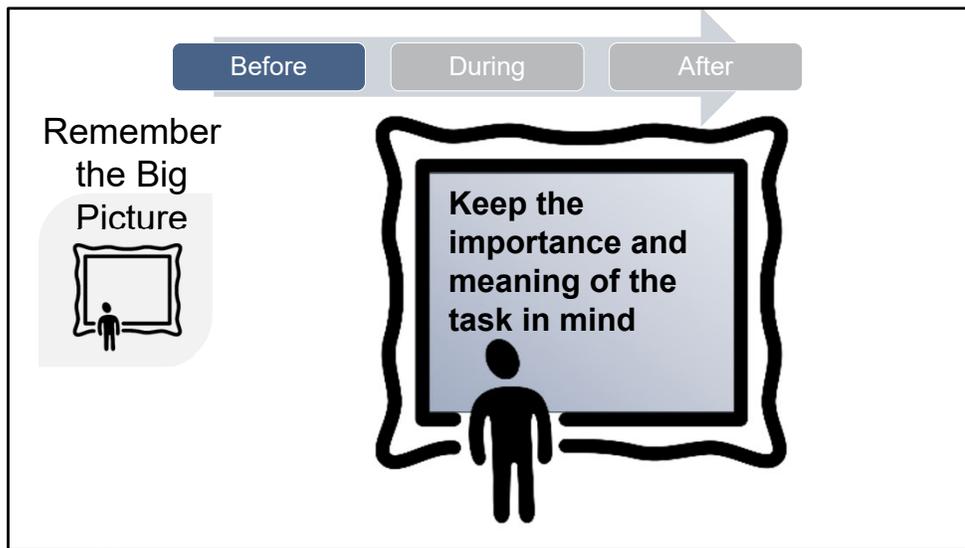
## 2. Assign team members different roles

- Ensure there are separate roles for the various tasks
- Divide up personnel into different roles
  - managing personal effects,
  - managing the remains,
  - managing the emotional reactions of those around them (like members of the community or family),
  - monitoring how long service members have been doing the task without a break
- Ideally, service members who are responsible for managing human remains are not the same service members who are responsible for reviewing the personal effects of the dead.
  - Service members who need to examine personal effects are advised to do so remote from, and preferably without having seen, the human remains.
  - If your job requires you to collect personal effects from the remains for identification, intelligence or other official purposes, do not let yourself look closely at or read those personal effects.

## 3. Acknowledge importance of task

- Acknowledge the importance of the task
- The key is to share information with the team, and fortify yourself and the team for what you may encounter.





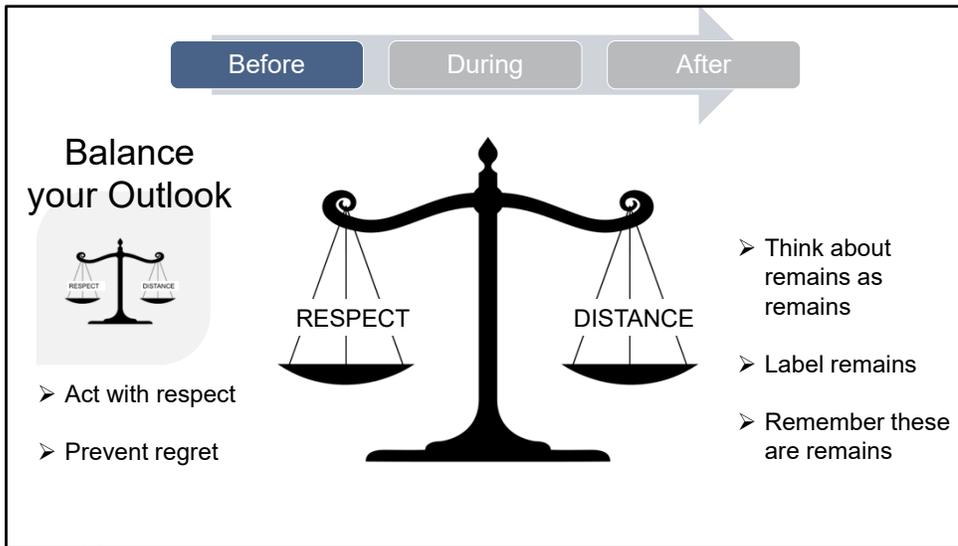
## Describe "before the task" skills: Remember the Big Picture

### 1. Remember the importance and meaning of the tasks

- Talk about and remind yourselves of the importance and value of what you are doing.
- Remember that you are helping the deceased to receive a respectful burial (even if in some cases, it might be a rushed and mass burial)
- Even if the dead belong to the enemy, treating their remains with a measure of respect will help YOU maintain your humanity in a stressful and taxing situation
- In some cases, your work will help identify the fallen so that their family and friends know that their loved ones have died, rather than struggle with uncertainty
- This knowledge can give family and friends some closure and help them in their grieving process
- By collecting or burying the remains of those who have died, you are providing a safer, healthier environment for those individuals still living

<https://thenounproject.com/icon/the-big-picture-30209/>





[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Balanced\\_scale\\_of\\_Justice.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Balanced_scale_of_Justice.svg)



**Describe “before the task” skills: Keeping balanced**

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

### 1. Establish a balanced outlook regarding respect

- You will want to establish an outlook that balances between respect and distance on the one hand and objectifying the remains (thinking of the remains as simply remains, not people) on the other hand
- How do you do this?

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- Treat the remains respectfully
- Do not desecrate or take souvenirs from the remains; those are criminal acts
- Treat the remains (of both friends and enemies) with a measure of respect
- It will help you maintain your own humanity while performing this demanding task
- The remains no longer care what you do to them, but you will be impacted by your own actions
- This way, you can prevent regret later

### 2. Maintain psychological distance

- Still, you will want to maintain your psychological distance
- You can do this in a few ways

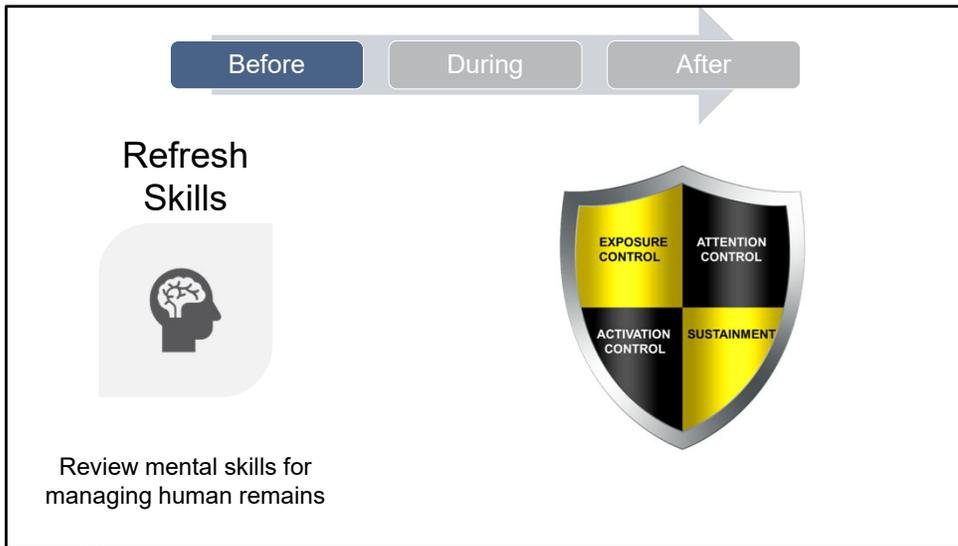


### **[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- Think about the remains like remains (rather than people)
- Label the bodies as remains (like "remains #1") rather than using phrases that identify them as specific people (like "the guy in the blue shirt")
- Repeat to yourself that these are remains, not people
- It's ok to objectify the remains. Objectifying means thinking of the remains as objects

**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** *Note also that the word "body" is used by hospitals but mortuary affairs personnel use the word "remains." Be careful to avoid words like "token" or "symbol" as they can be seen as disrespectful. It may be helpful for some to think of the remains as a mannequin but sticking to the word "remains" is a way to reinforce the main point and be simpler]*





## Describe “before the task” skills: Refresh

### **[SLIDE BUILDS]**

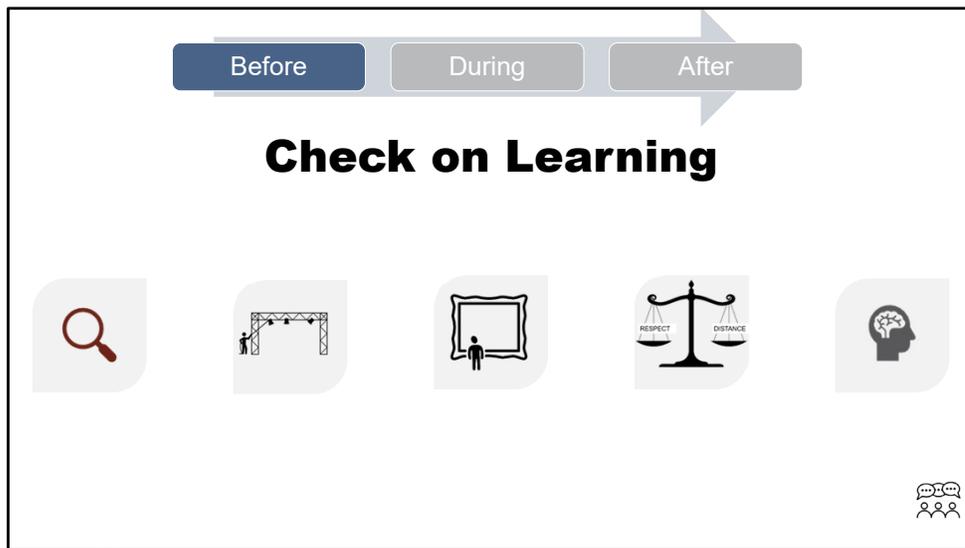
#### 1. Review mental skills for managing human remains

- We are going to be talking about a series of strategies or skills that can help you and other service members mentally when managing human remains

### **[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- If you’ve talked with service members in your unit about these strategies ahead of time
  - you’ll be able to remind them by just naming the strategy,
  - otherwise you can quickly review the strategies for them to keep in mind
- That way, you’ll all have a common language for addressing stress in the heat of the moment





[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Balanced\\_scale\\_of\\_Justice.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Balanced_scale_of_Justice.svg)



### Check on learning for the “before” skills

#### 1. Check on learning

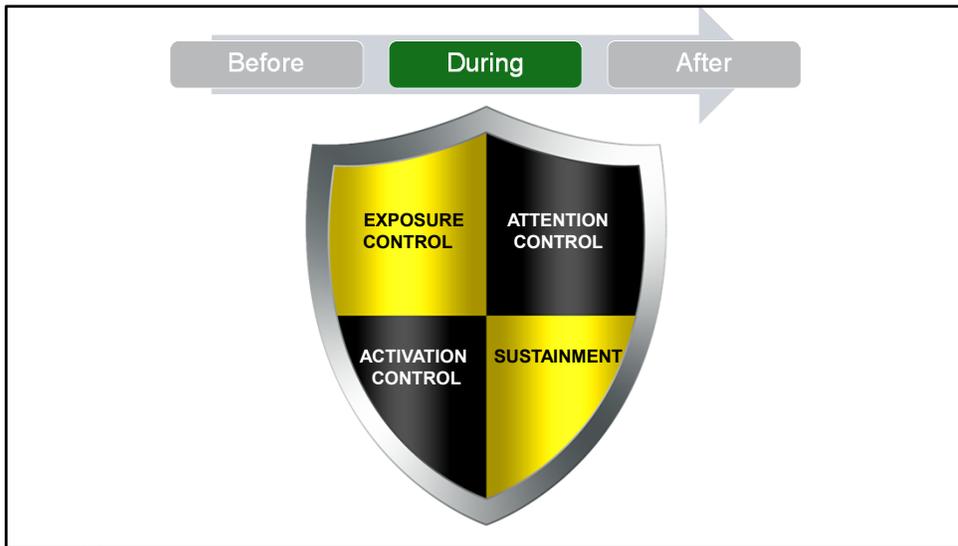
- We’ve covered a few skills for before the mission.

[**ASK**] What’s something you remember?

[**INSTRUCTOR NOTE**: Listen for themes and then fill in any gaps:

- Get the G2 (obtain information if possible)
- Set the Stage (share information and what to expect)
- Remember the big picture (keep the importance of the task top of mind)
- Balance between respect and distance (see the remains as remains, not people – think of the remains like objects]
- Refresh Skills (we’ll cover those in detail next)]



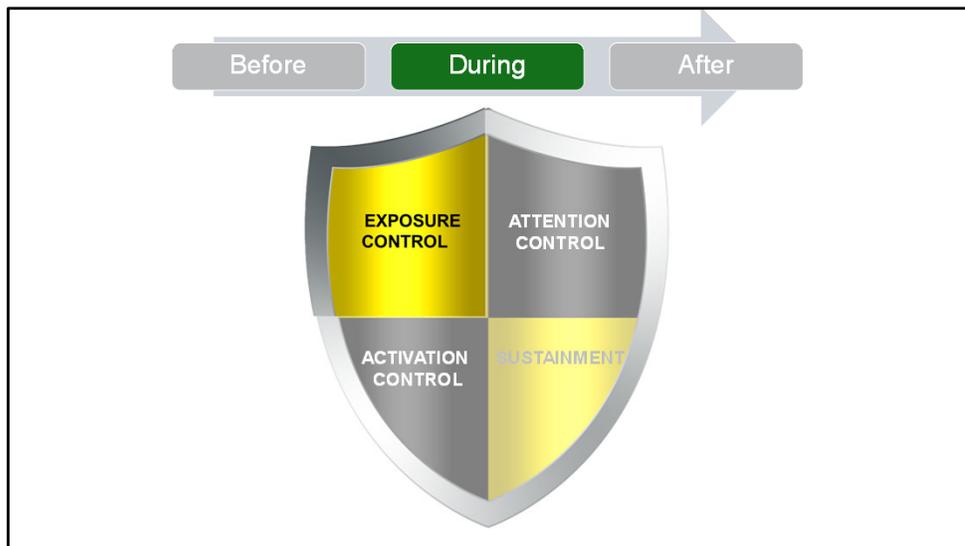


### **Introduce the mental skills for during the task**

#### **1. Introduce four major skills to use during the task**

- There are four primary mental skills that can help during the task of handling human remains
  - Exposure control
  - Attention control
  - Activation control
  - Sustainment





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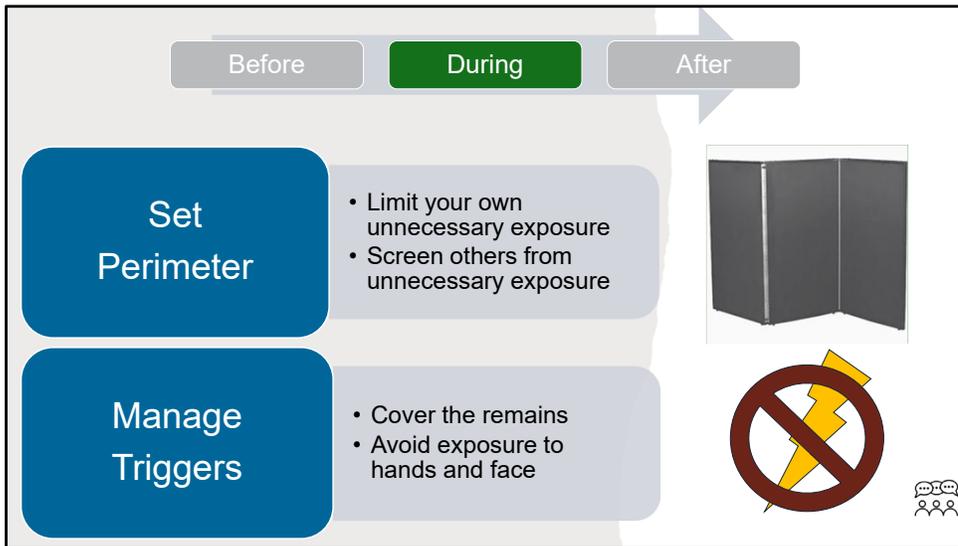


## **Introduce Exposure Control**

### **1. Introduce exposure control**

- It's critical to avoid unnecessary exposures.
- We are going to review two primary ways you can engage in exposure control.





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### Identify methods for exposure control during the mission

#### [SLIDE BUILDS]

#### 1. Set a perimeter to control exposure

#### [CLICK TO ADVANCE]

- The first method for preventing unnecessary exposure is to establish a perimeter.
- That way you can limit unnecessary exposure for yourself
- Be mindful of your accumulated exposure
- Remember that the stress of exposure to remains can accumulate
- One way to minimize your exposure is to be sure to use protective gear such as gloves and masks
- If you choose to mask the odor with disinfectants, menthols, air-fresheners, or deodorants, etc., take care how and which scents are used
  - they can easily become mentally linked to the task, bringing back unwanted memories of the experience for a while thereafter
  - Choose scents unlikely to be commonly encountered later
- Make sure others do not get exposed unless they have a specific task that requires exposure

[ASK] How might you prevent others from being exposed?



**[LISTEN** for themes such as:

- Use screens
- Partitions
- Covers
- Body bags or
- Other barriers to block people from seeing the remains unless it is necessary for their mission]

### 2. Reduce exposure to potential triggers

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- Triggers are when something in the process of dealing with human remains prompts a particularly strong psychological or physiological reaction
- Triggers are normal and there are things that you can do to manage them or reduce their risk
  - If possible, cover the remains
  - Cover the head and hands with cloth, bags or other material
  - Try to avoid looking at the hands and faces of the remains
- The hands and faces of the remains can “break” your objectification of the dead.





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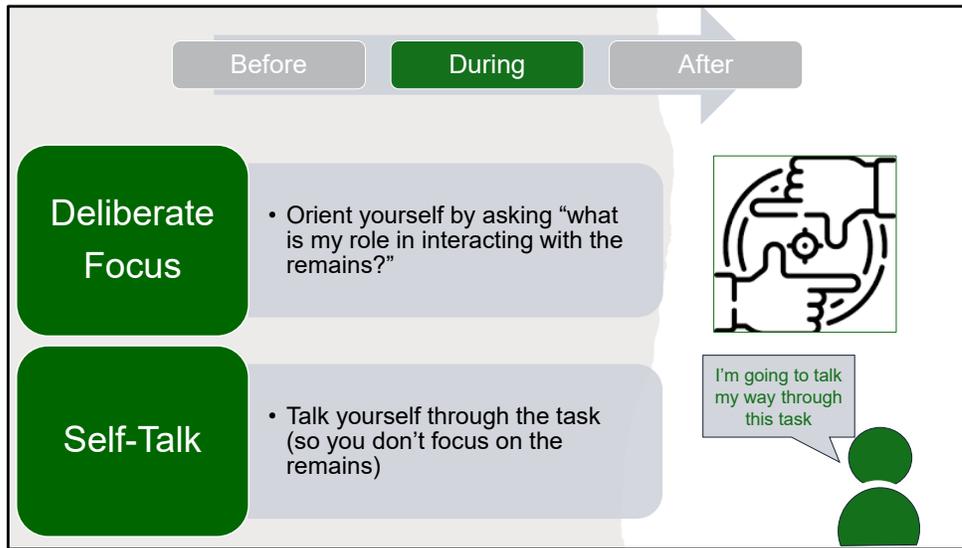


**Introduce the first of four skills: Attention Control**

1. Introduce attention control

- Besides exposure control, attention control is also important
- That's staying in the driver's seat when it comes to where your attention gets focused





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## Identify methods for controlling attention during the mission

### **[SLIDE BUILDS]**

#### 1. Review focusing deliberately

- We're going to review two forms of attentional control.

#### **[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- The first is engaging in deliberate focus
- Orient yourself by asking “What is my role in interacting with the remains?”
- Your interactions with the remains should be relevant for solving the task in front of you and be part of your role
- Otherwise, you should be using perimeter setting to limit your exposure
- You can consider what task you are solving in front of you: whether that's sorting items found on the scene, setting up a barrier, collecting human remains or taking biological samples.
- You can keep your mind occupied by thinking of superficial topics or talking with your battle buddies about superficial topics so that you don't get mentally consumed by the stress inherent in the task
- This distraction should also be deliberate – so that you are orienting your focus where it needs to be



## 2. Use self-talk

- You can also use self-talk to keep yourself focused
- Self-talk is your inner voice that can guide you through tasks or motivate you.

**[ASK]** How have you used self-talk for other kinds of tasks?

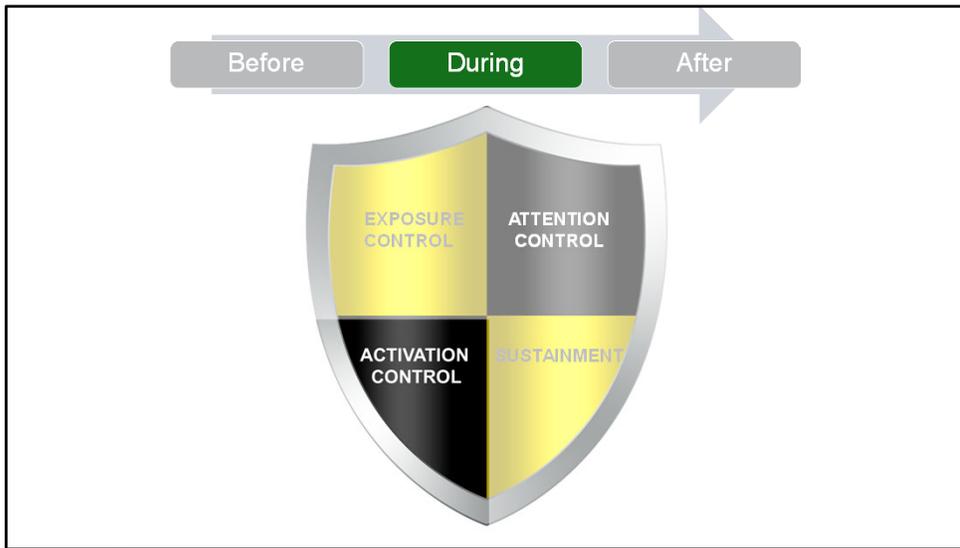
**[DISCUSS]** briefly]

### **[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- In the case of managing human remains, you can try using self-talk to manage your attention so that
  - you don't focus on personalizing the remains
  - you don't get distracted by personal details related to the deceased that don't matter for the task in front of you.
- These kinds of details can become intrusive memories later
- Instead, you can talk yourself through the steps you have to follow or
- Try using motivational phrases like
  - "I've got this"
  - "I'm doing something important"
  - "I'm doing the right thing"
- Use buddy talk to encourage one another with the same kinds of phrases, like
  - "we've got this"
  - "we are doing something important"
  - "we are doing the right thing."

**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** Consider whether the service members are familiar with the skill "What's Important Now" (WIN). WIN has been used in modules on mental skills during combat, and can be integrated into the discussion. Service members can use the term WIN to cue themselves about what to focus on during the present moment. After ensuring they are clear about the task they need to complete, they can remind themselves that what is important now is maintaining their balance and not getting pulled into the details regarding the remains]





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## Introduce Activation Control

### 1. Introduce activation control

- Besides exposure control, it is important to be able to control your activation levels.
- Remember that everyone reacts differently
  - Don't judge your own reactions or the reactions of others
  - Spending your energy criticizing yourself will only make the task harder
  - Accepting your reaction is a good starting point.
  - While you can't control your initial reactions, you can control how you deal with them





<https://www.dvidshub.net/news/308953/iron-soldiers-pave-way-army-footwear>



## Identify methods for activation control during the mission

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

### 1. There are three methods for activation control

- We are going to review three primary ways you can engage in activation control to keep your activation at the right level.
  - Self-monitoring
  - Grounding, and
  - Humor

### 2. Self-monitoring can use Cooper's colors

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- First, monitor your own reactions so you know if you need to take a break – don't try to just "push through" the task
- You can use Cooper's colors
- Cooper's colors offer a short-hand for describing activation in terms of situational awareness. It's used in marksmanship. Some activation is necessary but too much can shut the person down
- Cooper's colors range from
  - white, or low activation,
  - to yellow, orange and red – demonstrating increasing activation, and
  - finally to black, where the person is overwhelmed and can't function



- If you find yourself approach red, you'll know you have gone too far and you need to take a break
- You can also use these colors to check in with your battle buddies to see how they are doing

**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** This picture of Cooper's Colors comes from the iCOVER video. If the service members have already been trained in iCOVER, you can make the link [here](#) and talk about activating levels and the importance of taking a break before you are "in the black."]

### 3. Use a specific type of grounding (feel your feet)

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- While conducting these tasks, stay "grounded" by taking regular "micro-stops" where you focus your attention on the sensation of your feet on the ground.
- This allows you to anchor yourself in the here and now
- Practice right now.
- Stand up and focus on your feet.

**[ASK]** What do you feel?

**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** Allow for responses and then move to next topic]

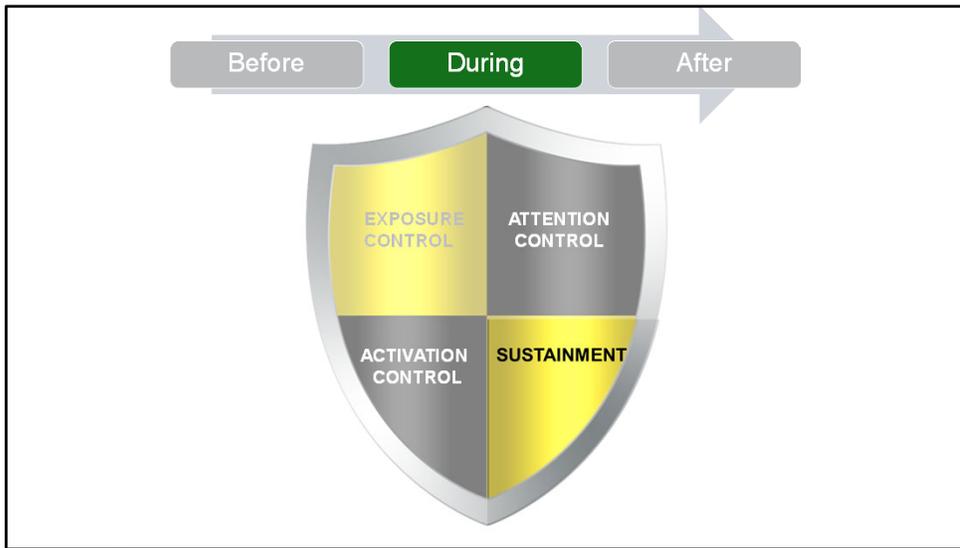
**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** In module 9 or Operational Resilience Training (ORT), we talk about another form of grounding (the 3x3 exercise) but here we are only talking about feeling your feet because using other senses during managing human remains can inadvertently increase individual service member's focus on the human remains]

### 4. Use humor (it doesn't mean disrespect)

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- Humor, even graveyard humor, can be helpful.
- For example, you can point out that it could be worse (it isn't raining or snowing)
- It is unhelpful when it becomes too disrespectful of the human remains or too gross and personal.
- Comments or practical jokes which pick on members of the team are also not helpful
- Try to strike a proper balance.





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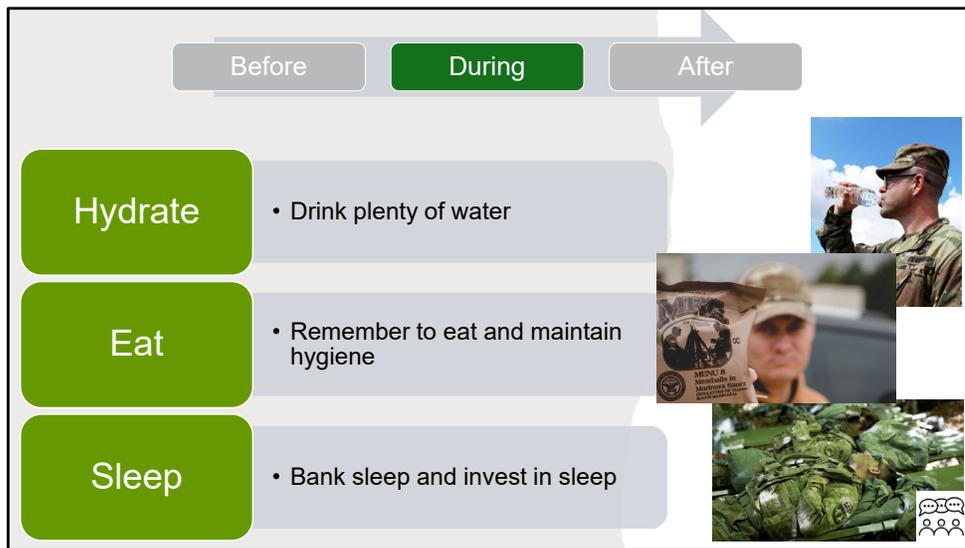


### **Introduce Sustainment**

#### **1. Introduce sustainment**

- During the task, be careful not to deplete yourself





## Identify methods for sustainment during the mission

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

### 1. Review actions to take for sustainment

**[ASK]** What are ways that you can take care of yourself during high stress experiences?

**[DISCUSS briefly]**

- There are five primary things to remember for sustainment. Let's start with these three.

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

### 2. Stay hydrated

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- Drink plenty of fluids
- Drinking water is essential but can be a challenge.
- It is impractical to drink water while maintaining good hygiene because the service member managing human remains should not be touching the water container or their mouth without having cleaned their hands.

**[FOR MEDICS:** As a medic, you should encourage leaders to designate one individual responsible for providing water to each service member hydrated in a hygienic way]

### 3. Remember to eat and maintain hygiene

Water:

[https://www.army.mil/article/225706/water\\_and\\_sports\\_drinks\\_what\\_to\\_drink\\_how\\_much\\_and\\_when](https://www.army.mil/article/225706/water_and_sports_drinks_what_to_drink_how_much_and_when)

Eat:

[https://d1ldvf68ux039x.cloudfront.net/thumbs/photos/2003/6123739/600x375\\_q95.jpg](https://d1ldvf68ux039x.cloudfront.net/thumbs/photos/2003/6123739/600x375_q95.jpg)

Sleep:

<https://wrair.health.mil/portals/87/sleep%20and%20performance.jpg>



- Continue to take breaks to eat (be wary of appetite suppression due to disgust), and maintain good hygiene.
- If possible, try to establish facilities for washing hands, changing clothes, and, showering after the shift.
- If water for cleaning must be rationed, plans should make clear what can be provided and how it should be used and conserved.

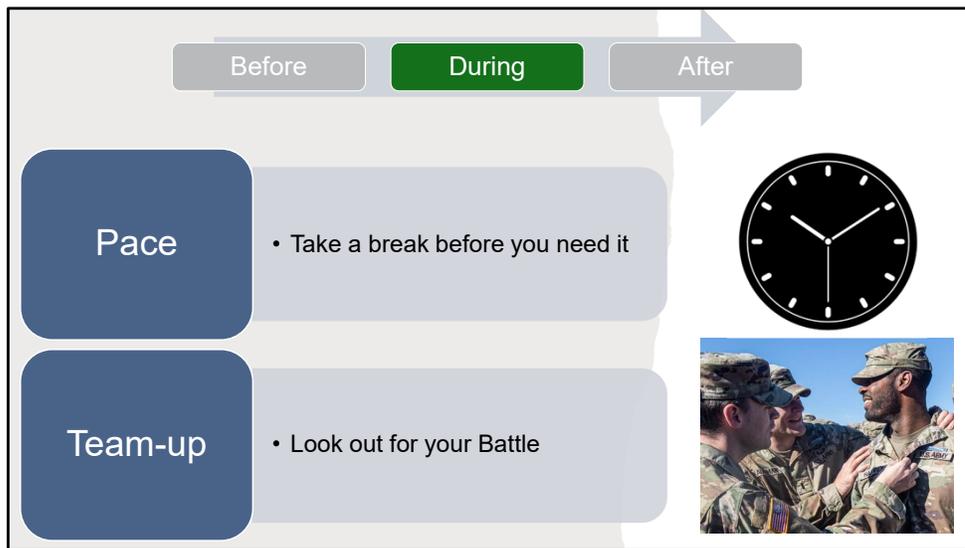
## 4. Manage sleep

### **[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- Adequate levels of sleep are essential for being able to regulate your emotions
- Be sure to invest in your sleep by banking sleep ahead of time or ensuring adequate time for sleep afterwards to help you recover

**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** *As part of Operational Resilience Training [ORT], there is also a module on sleep that talks about the importance of sleep and ways to promote healthy sleep practices, including sleep banking*]





Pace:

<https://thenounproject.com/icon/clock-1053516/>



## Identify methods for sustainment during the mission - Continued

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

### 5. Pace yourself and take breaks before you need them

- There are two more skills that can help with sustainment.

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- To prevent burnout, it's important to pace yourself and the team
- As mentioned earlier, designate a monitor who tracks the amount of exposure each individual has
- If the context allows for it, it may be helpful to plan for breaks.
- For example, you can have the team work with the remains for an hour followed by a 15 minute break (if possible) to prevent burnout
  - Agree on the time frame up front, so service members know what to expect
  - If it's going to be longer, tell them ahead of time
  - Take frequent short breaks away from the immediate area where human remains are being handled
- Don't wait until you (or your service members) are overwhelmed – in the black -- before taking a break.

**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** *If this training is being provided as part of Operational Resilience Training (ORT), you can mention that "Ideally, handling human remains should be performed with a "stress bucket" that is not full." The stress bucket refers to ORT module 3]*



- If you feel that you are becoming overwhelmed, TAKE ACTION before you pass out.
- Do not ignore the stress. Take a break, and do not return to the task before you feel in control again
- If others show signs of distress, remind them to
  - use grounding by focusing on feeling their feet on the ground
  - take a break
  - stay hydrated
  - treat the remains as objects
- Take special care of new unit members, and those with recent changes or special problems back home.
- Talking about superficial topics with battle buddies can help keep them focused without getting mentally consumed by the stress inherent in the task.

**[FOR MEDICS:** As a medic, it's important that you remember to check in with your unit members and leaders.

You might also want to make sure everyone has a change of clothes available for after the task]

## 6. Look out for your battle buddies

### **[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- Remember to team-up. Work in pairs.
- Consider pairing an experienced and inexperienced service member together
- Volunteers also tend to do better than service members assigned to the task
- Be mindful of how your teammates are doing
- Listen not only to what they say but how they say it

**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** *If the service members have been trained in active listening and other communication skills, it may also be helpful to mention they need to listen to tone of voice, and inconsistency between what they say and how they say it]*

- Help your battle buddies by reminding them to focus on the task.

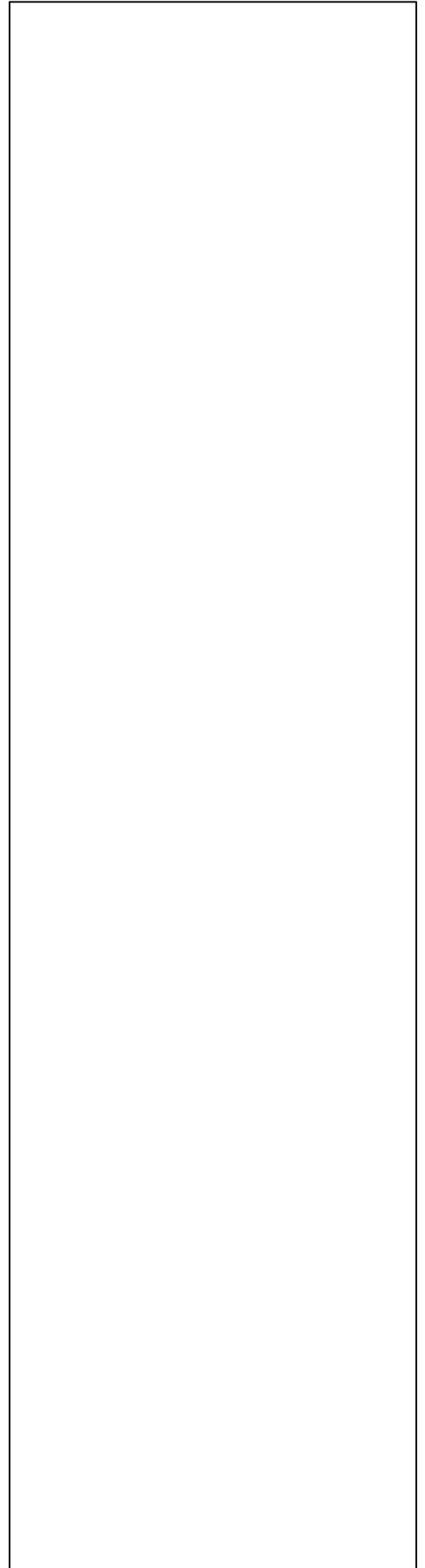




- What about Sustainment?

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- Hydrate
- Eat
- Sleep
- Pace
- Team up



Before **During** After

## Bystander Management (1 of 2)



- Be professional and respectful
- Remember your role is to help with human remains
  - Unless you've been assigned to manage emotional reactions of others
- Maintain a boundary; you don't have to open up to the emotions of those around you



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## Outline the steps in managing bystander reactions

### 1. Introduce the issues related to other people's emotional reactions while managing human remains

- Tasks involving handling human remains can occur:
  - During combat maneuvers
  - As part of rescue operations
  - After a mission
- In certain situations, there may be others present while service members are conducting the tasks.
- They may be having emotional reactions (grief, anger, shock, gratitude, numbness or indifference).
- Their reactions may interact with your own reactions to handling human remains.
- Let's review 6 concrete steps you can take to counteract the mental stress that can come from other people's reactions.

### 2. Review first three steps

- First, be professional and respectful
  - Second, remember your role is to help with managing human remains, unless you've been specifically assigned the task of managing the emotional reactions of others (like the family or community members)
  - Third, maintain a psychological boundary (and ideally a physical boundary); you don't have to open up to the emotions of those around you.
- 

Before

During

After

## Bystander Management (2 of 2)

- Don't feel bad about not experiencing empathy but accept that you might
- Stay focused on the key skills
- Leverage resources (relatives, chaplain) on site to delegate providing support to others

<https://www.defense.gov/Multimedia/Photos/igphoto/2002036386/>



### Continue outlining the steps in managing bystander reactions

#### 1. Review additional 3 steps

- Fourth, don't feel bad about not experiencing empathy but accept that you might.
- Fifth, stay focused on the key skills we have reviewed here.
- Sixth, if you are tasked with managing the emotions of others around the site, follow the basic principles
  - leverage resources that might be available on-site to support others (relatives, chaplain, morale officer)–that way you won't get distracted from other tasks.
  - Use deliberate breathing to manage your own emotions
  - Follow the principles of psychological first aid by focusing on:
    - safety,
    - calmness,
    - connectedness to others,
    - self-empowerment
    - hopefulness

**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** *In Psychological First Aid, the basic principles following a disaster are provided in a 1-pager developed by the Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress:*

<https://www.cstsonline.org/resources/resource-masterlist/psychological-first-aid>]





By Elf | Talk 22:10, 14 Jan 2005 (UTC). - Own work Taken Nov 2004 by Elf | Talk 22:10, 14 Jan 2005 (UTC)., CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2864525>



## Introduce three skills for after the task

### 1. Explain the need to address the recovery phase

- After the task, you may experience a range of feelings
- These feelings may include negative or unpleasant emotions
- You can expect these feelings to fade over time

### 2. Introduce four post-task skills

- There are four steps you can take after the task to help you adjust
- First, you'll want to acknowledge in some deliberate way that you are transitioning to this new phase
- Second, you'll want to provide a framework for thinking about the tasks you completed
- Third, remember to keep connected with others
- Fourth, you'll want to remind yourself to accept the aftermath



Before      During      After

End with a symbolic event that marks the end of the task

Give yourself a moment to reflect

Leverage power of ritual

**Close-out**  



## Describe the deliberate skill of “close-out”

### 1. Create a deliberate “close-out” experience

- At the end of your shift, there are steps you can take to help you adjust

**[ASK]** How can you mark that you are transitioning from engaging in handling human remains to closing out that task?

**[DISCUSS]** and listen for a variety of responses and then introduce the rest of the slide]

- Create a deliberate ritual to signal the end of the task. For example, you can
  - take 5 deliberate breaths,
  - go for a run, or
  - complete some other act that signals a transition

### 2. Offer a moment of reflection

- Offer a moment of reflection or conduct whatever personal ceremony your own beliefs and background recommend.

### 3. Leverage the power of a ritual

- You can also reach out to the military chaplain and/or local clergy to conduct a rite or ceremony.
- Even very brief rites can help preserve a sense of dignity and humanity in a tough situation.
- Collectively, these steps will help you transition psychologically from the “during” phase of the task to the “after” phase of the task



### 4. Remind yourself there is both good and bad in the world

**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** *This section is relevant for individuals who are dealing with human remains in the context of combat or disaster, not for a simple training mission]*

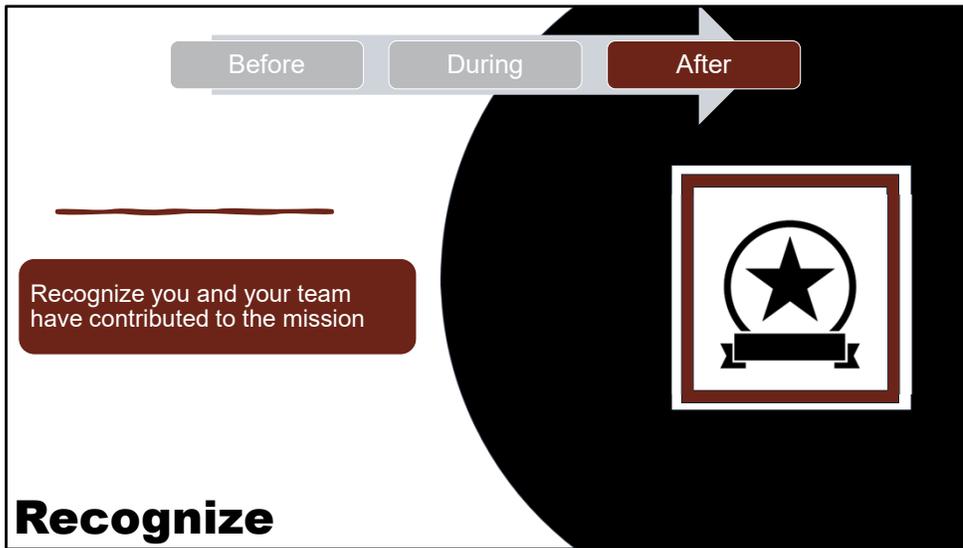
- After managing human remains, some service members begin to have unhelpful thoughts about the world being bad as a whole.
- To counteract over-generalizing (all-or-none thinking), remind yourself of the good in the world, and seek out positive experiences that help you remember this.

**[FOR MEDICS:** Be sure to support service members and challenge unhelpful all-or-nothing thinking they may be experiencing.

For example, service members may be expressing thoughts such as "People are all horrible" or "The world is an awful place." By being attuned to this kind of all-or-nothing thinking, medics can simply observe out loud that they are hearing all-or-nothing thinking and that this all-or-nothing pattern is an understandable response to the kind of task.

Medics can also offer a response to an all-or-nothing thought by offering a nuanced observation. For example, if medics hear someone say "The world is completely awful", they can offer a response like "There are awful things in the world." Such an alternative phrasing allows for the possibility of hope.]





## Describe reframing

### 1. Recognize you have contributed to your community

- In framing your experience, remember to be proud of your own effort, and recognize the effort of others.
- Thank people for doing this important task.
- Help remind each other that your effort helped preserve the dignity and humanity of your country, your fellow service members and yourself.
- If you are in a leadership role, ensure that the team and its members are appropriately recognized and honored for their efforts.

### 2. Think of tough feelings as a sign of having completed an important task

- Reframe difficult feelings as a sign that the task you just completed was tough but important.
- Someone had to do it for the sake of the health and safety of everyone—you stepped up.

### 3. Use after-action reviews to frame the team's experience

- Units may benefit from after-action reviews when the team is done with the shift to talk through what has occurred, and share thoughts, feelings and reactions.
- Try to attend and use the time to lead by example in talking about the experience.
- Be on the lookout for service members who might withdraw afterwards and reach out to them.



## Fostering Resilience and Managing Emotions

- Work with the incident commander to help advise them how to deal with these after-action reviews
- There can be difficult thoughts and feelings but it is important not to force anyone to talk who does not want to talk
- Support the unit in knowing that they can get satisfaction from having contributed to an important task and done the right thing. Work with leaders to understand this concept.

**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** *Some leaders may be focused on tactics and not be thinking about the need for an after action review.*

*Some leaders may also not understand that service members will be processing the experience in their own way and should not be pushed to talk if they do not want to.*

*Medics or others being trained in this module may need to advise leaders on after action reviews, and how to make these reviews most effective. As appropriate, these medics or other specialists can work with leaders to understand that service members have contributed to an important task*

*Recognition does not only mean awards – it also means personally acknowledging the individual’s role in the mission and their contributions]*





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## Describe connection

### 2. Reach out and take care of each other as service members

- Afterwards, it's also important to stay connected and look out for one another

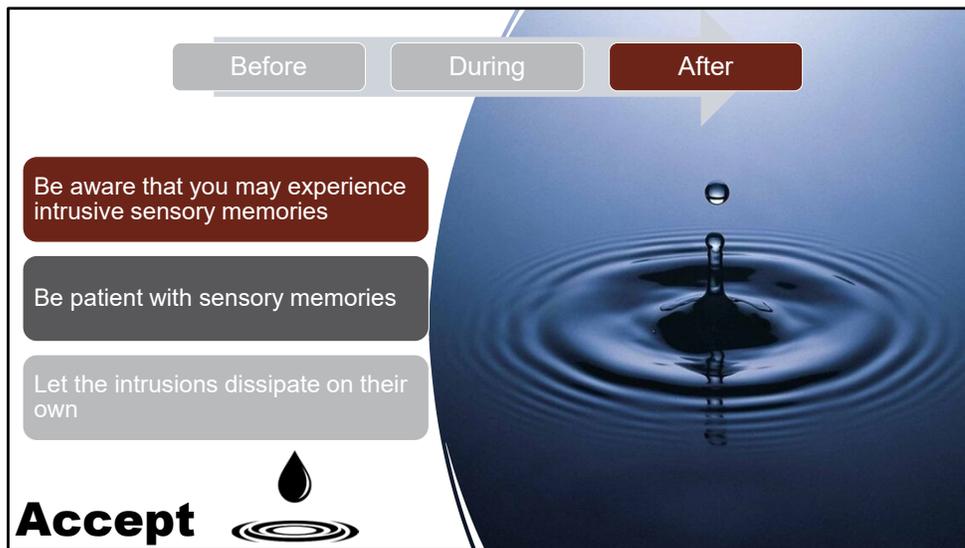
**[FOR MEDICS/LEADERS:** You may be in a particularly important position to help service members recover from the task of managing human remains.

As a medic, make sure your team members know that they can reach out to you if negative reactions persist.]

- Likewise, be wary of withdrawing from others yourself.
- Be patient with yourself – as you'll see in the next section, the recovery process requires time

**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** *Medics who have completed BH Gear or Module 4 from Operational Resilience Training (ORT) can be encouraged to use skills in understanding how to reach out.*]





## Describe what “accept” means

### 1. Watch for intrusive sensory memories

- Be aware that you may experience intrusive sensory memories.
  - Smells can get “stuck in the nose”
  - Gory mental images can intrude on consciousness
- These aversive sensory experiences (bad odors, grotesque sights, disturbing sounds etc.) are quickly stored in our memory and may easily be triggered later (by opening packaged meats or grilling food).

### 2. Be patient

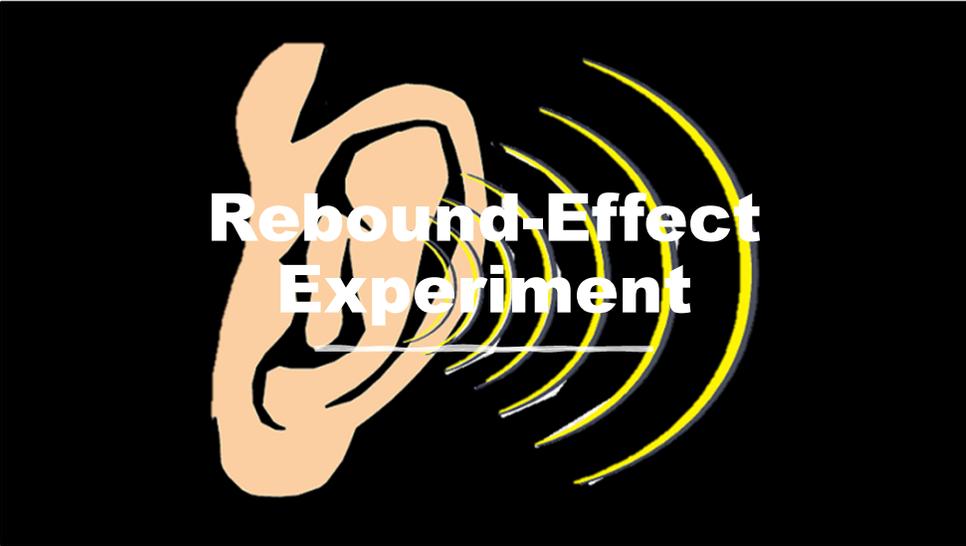
- Sensory memories represents a natural and adaptive function that aims to protect us from things that may harm us in the future.
- However, these memories are involuntary and can disrupt daily life (such as eating and sleeping).
- Sensory memories usually fade with time, that’s why it is important to be patient.

### 3. Let the intrusions dissipate on their own

- If you react to sensory memories with persistent irritation, suppression, avoidance or frustration, you can risk amplifying them instead of having them diminish.
- The key is to let sense memories dissipate on their own.

[https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Funsplash.com%2Fs%2Fphotos%2Fwater-drop&psig=AOvVaw0FsxP-\\_oDKAh\\_gCoOA0Smp&ust=1732390664884000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CBQ QjRxqFwoTCPCqlanY8IkDFQAAAAAdAAAAABAE~~](https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Funsplash.com%2Fs%2Fphotos%2Fwater-drop&psig=AOvVaw0FsxP-_oDKAh_gCoOA0Smp&ust=1732390664884000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CBQ QjRxqFwoTCPCqlanY8IkDFQAAAAAdAAAAABAE~~)





# Rebound-Effect Experiment



## Demonstrate Rebound-Effect

### 1. Conduct Rebound-Effect experiment

- You already have experience adjusting to sensory memories dissipating on their own.
- Let's test it out.

**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** *Point out a sound in the room (fan, radiator etc.)*]

**[ASK]:** Did anybody notice the sound before I pointed it out?

**[DISCUSS:** *Briefly allow for response*]

**[ASK]** Now try NOT to hear the sound

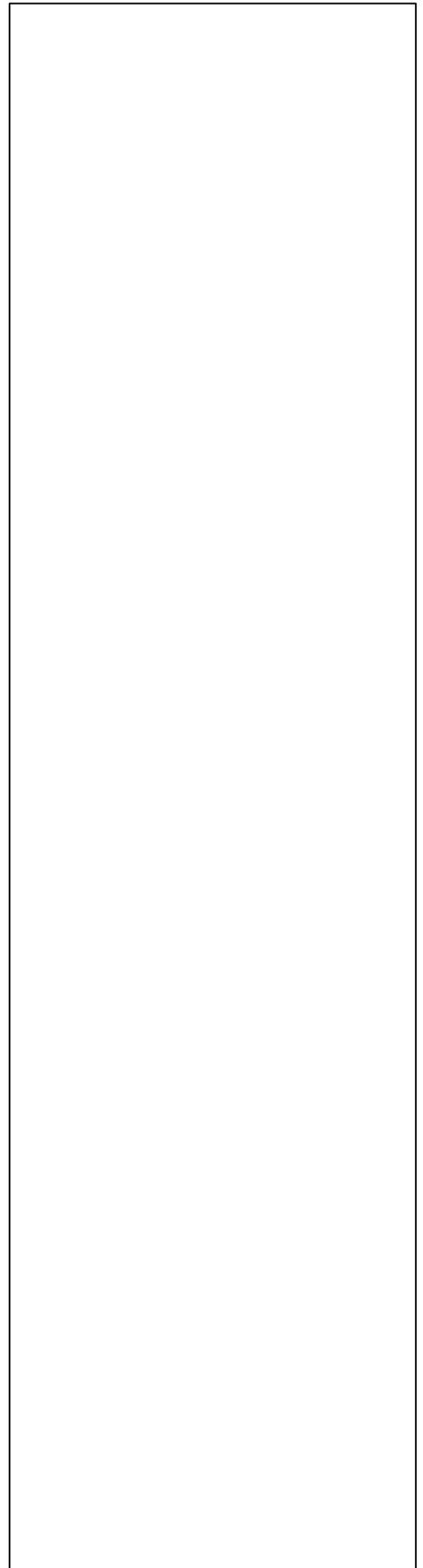
**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** *Service members will likely hear the sound even more.*]

- The best way to deal with these sensory intrusions is by taking a neutral, non-judgmental stance towards them.
- As we continue this class, the sound will fade if we
  - do not actively listen to it or
  - try to block it out.
- The same benefits of non-reactivity can happen for visual images as well.
- For example, if I asked you to NOT think of a White Bear, or a Pink Elephant. It would be hard for you to NOT think of it.



## Fostering Resilience and Managing Emotions

- Both actively engaging and trying to suppress a sound or image will just make it more prominent in your mind.
- That's why the best way to relate to unwanted intrusions is to try to take a neutral, non-judgmental stance towards them
- Let the sensory experiences come and go as they want.
- The same thing works for managing intrusions that happen as a normal, albeit unpleasant after-effect of managing human remains.
- Don't try to NOT think about memories that pop into your mind.
- Just allow them to come and go naturally and eventually they will fade



Before During **After**

## Check on Learning








### Check on learning for the “after” skills

#### 1. Check on learning

- We’ve covered a few skills for after the mission.

[**ASK**] What’s something you remember?

[**INSTRUCTOR NOTE**: Listen for themes and then fill in any gaps. Ideally, the service members will recognize most of the concepts]

- Close-out (find a way to transition through an activity, moment of reflection, or a ritual)
- Frame (remember the importance of your task)
- Connect (look out for one another, including yourself)
- Accept (allow for the fact sensory impressions take a while to fade)



Before    During    After →

## Practical Exercise

What information do you need?

What do you want to tell your unit and/or leader?

**Team Exercise**

- **Scenario: “We just pushed back the enemy and cleared a village. The village has human remains that need to be dealt with. We head out tomorrow.”**
- **What is your information request?**
- **Identify key points to review with the unit and leader**

**Practice “before” mental skills**

**1. Conduct practical exercise**

- Imagine the following scenario...Your leadership tells you “We just pushed back the enemy and cleared a village. The village has human remains that need to be dealt with. We head out tomorrow.”
- Thinking about what we talked about for the “before” phase, what do you need to do?
- Get together in groups of 3-5 students and try to answer the following questions
  - What information do you need? What do you want to try to ask before the mission?
  - What do you want to tell your unit and/or leader to help them prepare for the mission?



**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** *Distribute handouts for this task so they can follow along*]



## Practical Exercise: Debrief

How did it go?

Information request

Consulting with leader

Preparation for unit



### Review "before" practical exercise

#### 1. Debrief practical exercise 1

[**ASK**] How did it go?

[**DISCUSS:** Allow for responses.]

[**ASK**] What information did you request?

[**DISCUSS** and then review questions such as

- The background and circumstances (e.g., artillery shelling, small arms fire fight, fire).
- Type of casualties (e.g., Your own forces, enemy forces, Civilians? Children?
- Condition of remains (Badly injured remains? Recently deceased or decomposed?).
- The operational context in which you will be performing the task
  - During combat maneuvers?
  - During an operational pause?
  - In a safe area?
  - Will there be friends or families of deceased there?) ]

[**ASK**] How did you approach the leader?

[**DISCUSS** indirect and direct approaches]



[**ASK**] What key points did you want to review with unit members (and/or leaders)?

[**DISCUSS** and then review suggestions such as

- Set the Stage
  - Talk with team members about what to expect
  - Remind them of their tactical training
  - Remind them that security of site, personal safety and structural safety will be addressed
- Remember the big picture
  - Keep the importance of the task top of mind
  - Talk about the value of what you are doing
  - Remember that you are helping the deceased to receive a respectful burial
  - Treating remains with a measure of respect will help YOU maintain your humanity in a stressful and taxing situation
  - In some cases, family and friends can know their loved one was a casualty and gain closure rather than struggling with uncertainty
  - Remember you are creating a safer environment
- Maintain balance
  - Treat remains with respect
  - Don't do things you'll regret later
  - Treat remains as remains (try numbering them)]
- Refresh skills
  - Exposure control
    - set perimeter & assign roles
    - manage triggers
  - Attentional control
    - focus deliberately
    - use self-talk
  - Activation control
    - self-assess
    - ground your feet
    - use respectful humor



- Sustainment
  - Hydrate
  - Eat
  - Sleep
  - Pace
  - Team up]

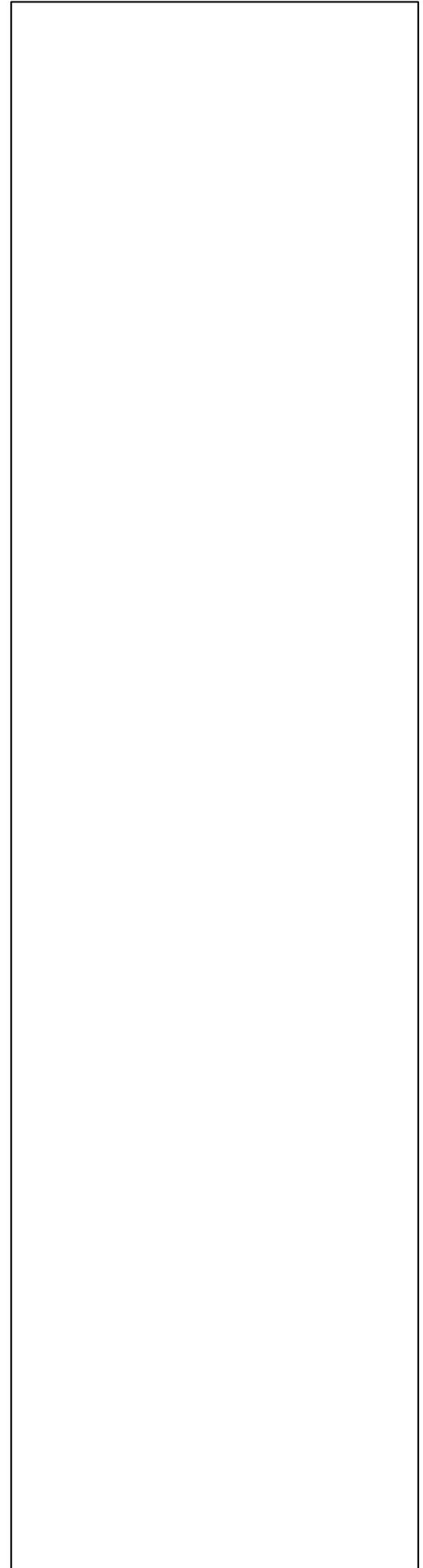
**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** Encourage service members to realize that it may take them a moment to remember their skills, and that's ok.

*Also, encourage them to look out for one another since sometimes that is easier than looking out for themselves and can help distract them as well.*

*Finally, acknowledge that some may find this task easier and some may find it harder.]*

**[FOR MEDICS:** Did you consider that there would be individual differences in the way people responded? You can expect individual differences in handling all kinds of stressors, including managing human remains.]

- Now that you've prepared the unit, we are going to try using these strategies in the next practical exercise



Before
During
After

## Practical Exercise

**Intelligence Report**

- What is the number of remains you observed?**
- Are they military? Civilian?**
- What are their uniforms (if any)? (own forces, allies, enemy)**
- What condition are the remains in? (Mutilated? Decomposed?)**
- Are there signs of war crimes? (Hands tied? Signs of execution?)**
- What sort of weapons and equipment are present?**
- Other important details?**

INTELLIGENCE  
REPORT

INTELLIGENCE  
REPORT

### Practice "during" mental skills

#### 1. Introduce the "during" practical exercise

- Now we are going to take a look at a photo of human remains
  - Since this is a picture, you will only experience the visual component of the adverse sensory stimuli common to these tasks.
  - However, this training exercise can still be unpleasant and gives you a chance to practice some key skills.
  - Remembering your role will help you maintain your functioning and not be swept away by emotions.
- Here are the conditions:
  - [INSTRUCTOR NOTE: Provide information about number of remains and their condition]**
  - The site is secure
  - In this exercise, your role is to deliver an intelligence report about what you see; your leadership needs this information



- You will be asked to do this task for two minutes and then you will take a 30 second break
- This is really an important skill that may end up making a huge difference for your units if you know what best practices look like
- Remember the skills we just reviewed!

[**ASK**] Any questions?

[**DISCUSS** briefly]

[**INSTRUCTOR NOTE**: in this exercise preparation, the goal is to follow guidance outlined in this module, which includes setting the conditions, providing information, assigning a role, remembering their purpose, and reminding them to use their skills]



[**INSTRUCTOR NOTE**: *Distribute handouts for this task so they can follow along*]

- Look at the handout, and pay particular attention to the following as you view the picture I am going to show you on the next slide:
  - What is the number of remains you observed?
  - Are they military? civilian?
  - What are their uniforms (if any)? (own forces, allies, enemy)
  - What condition are the remains in? (Mutilated? Decomposed?)
  - Are there signs of war crimes? (Hands tied? Signs of execution?)
  - What sort of weapons and equipment are present?
  - Other important details?
- Ok...now we are going to show you the photo of the remains for 2 minutes....





**Insert Photo  
for Practical  
Exercise  
Here**



**Show photo and practice “during” mental skills**

1. Conduct practical exercise for “during” mental skills

**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** *Show picture for 2 minutes. Observe students and encourage them to write down what they observe on their handout*

*Select a photo or adapt instructions for in vivo exposure in controlled environment while preparing them with information about what to expect]*



## Practical Exercise: Debrief

How did it go?

What strategies did you use?



### Review the “during” practical exercise

#### 1. Debrief practical exercise

[**ASK**] How did it go?

[**DISCUSS:** Allow for responses]

[**ASK**] Did anyone check in with their buddies?

[**DISCUSS:** Allow for responses.]

[**ASK**] Did anyone start looking at the personal effects or hands and faces?

[**DISCUSS:** Allow for responses.]

[**ASK**] What strategies did you try?

[**DISCUSS:** Allow for responses. Address what went well and what was difficult]

[**INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** As a reminder the “during” strategies are:

- Exposure control (set perimeter & assign roles; manage triggers)
- Attentional control (focus deliberately; use self-talk)
- Activation control (self-assess; ground your feet; use respectful humor)
- Sustainment (Hydrate; Eat; Sleep; Pace; Team up)]

[**INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** Be sure to encourage the service members and acknowledge the challenge]



Before    During    **After** →

## Practical Exercise



Photo by [Staff Sgt. Dalton Smith](#)



<https://www.dvidshub.net/image/6782802/aar>



## Practice "after" mental skills

### 1. Conduct "after" practical exercise

- Now, the mission is over
- Get back into teams of 2 and take 5 minutes
- What do you want to tell your unit leadership about best practices for the "after" phase of the mission
- Create a plan together



## Practical Exercise: Debrief

How did it go?

What guidance did you provide?



### Review "after" practical exercise

#### 1. Debrief "after" practical exercise

[**ASK**] How did it go?

[**DISCUSS**: Allow for responses.]

[**ASK**] What guidance did you use?

[**DISCUSS**: Allow for responses.]

[**INSTRUCTOR NOTE**: As a reminder, the "after" skills are:

- Close-out (find a way to transition through an activity, moment of reflection, or a ritual)
- Recognize (remember the importance of your task)
- Connect (look out for one another, including yourself)
- Accept (allow for the fact sensory impressions take a while to fade)]





## How do you talk about this kind of experience?



### Introduce the Warrior Skill of "Telling Your Story"

#### 1. Introduce concept of sharing these kinds of experiences.

- Managing human remains is just one of the challenging tasks that service members are asked to perform.
- Being a service member means that you might have to deal with this kind of task or you might experience combat or witness difficult events
- Regardless, service members need to be able to share their experience successfully to help themselves in the long term.

#### 2. Learn how to manage your story

- How will you talk about these experiences?
- Part of recovering from these kinds of experiences is learning how to tell your story to others.

**[FOR MEDICS/LEADERS:** As a medic (or leader), you can coach unit members in how to do that.]

<https://api.army.mil/e2/c/images/2023/12/06/01b68bb7/max1200.jpg>

<https://api.army.mil/e2/c/images/2023/09/27/ac671f5e/max1200.jpg>



## Warrior Skill: Telling your Story (1 of 2)



### Benefit from Telling Your Story

- Helps you sustain your resilience
- Keeps you connected to people you care about



### Be strategic

- Have a superficial **short** story and a detailed **long** story about your experiences
- Match your story to the person you are talking with



## Explain the Warrior Skill of “Telling your Story”

### 1. Explain why “telling your story” is a useful skill.

- You can benefit from sharing your experiences because it will
  - Help you sustain your resilience and
  - Keep you connected to people you care about

### 2. Describe the elements of the “telling your story” skill

- It’s important to be strategic in finding a way to tell your story.
- The skill is to develop a superficial story and a deeper (detailed) story

**[ASK]** Why might a service member need to have a superficial story ready?

**[DISCUSS]:** Listen for responses and highlight the following:

- The listener might be overwhelmed by the details
- People might treat them differently
- The person isn’t important to them
- The topics could upset those around them
- They may not feel ready to talk about it]



**[ASK]** Why might a service member need to have a deeper (detailed) story ready?

**[DISCUSS]:** *Listen for responses and highlight the following:*

- It can be a relief to talk about intense experiences with other people*
- It can help close others to understand what you've been through]*
- Family and friends may not have the same frame of reference as a service member.
- Service members who accept this difference in frame of reference can adjust their expectations about what it means to tell their story.
- Service members can then match their story with the person they are talking with.

**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** *If this module is part of the larger Operational Resilience Training (ORT) program, this skill of telling your story can also be moved to Module 4 or other post-deployment training]*





## Warrior Skill: Telling Your Story (2 of 2)

- Follow your instinct**
  - Shield family and friends from details that are overwhelming
  - Be deliberate
- Find someone**
  - Consider battle buddies, Other veterans
  - Consider mental health professionals



### Continue introducing the Warrior Skill of "Telling your Story"

#### 1. Use your gut to figure out how to tell your story.

- Service members can use their gut to decide what details to share.
  - For example, service members may not want to share details about difficult topics (managing human remains or combat) with their family but they might want to tell their family something.
  - So they can say that they had challenging military tasks and then share a story about some innocuous event in daily life (like what they ate, who their friends were, what sleeping conditions were like, what the weather was like).
- You can be deliberate and even try out a small story with those people closest to you to see how it goes.
- You can also ask those closest to you what they would like in terms of sharing
- Family and friends can provide important support even if service members do not necessarily disclose every experience.

**[ASK]** If you tell them nothing, what might people close to you think?

**[DISCUSS]:** Listen for themes such as

- You don't care about them or the relationship
- You didn't do anything meaningful while you were away from them]



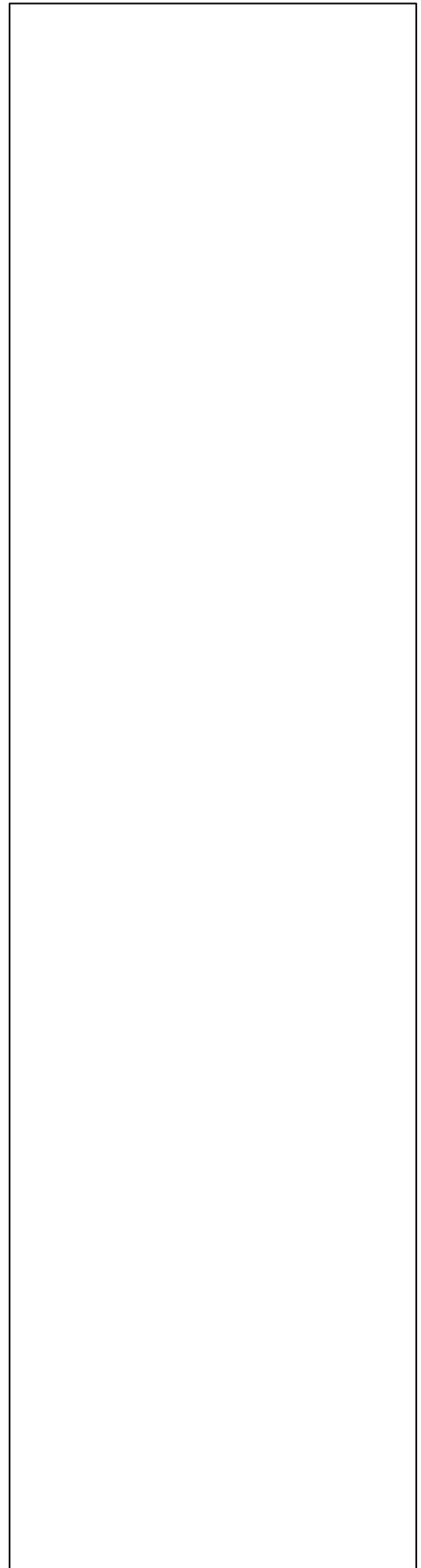
### 2. Determine who to tell your deep (detailed) story to.

- Still, it is important for service members to determine who to tell their deep (detailed) story to.
- Service members should think about selecting who they want to talk with as a way to avoid feeling alienated from those around them

**[ASK]** Who might be a good choice to tell your detailed story to?

**[DISCUSS]:** *Listen for themes such as*

- Battle buddies
- Other veterans
- Mental health professionals]



## Scenario

**Who:** You and your squad, which includes 2 new service members straight out of AIT

**What:** Support recovery of remains from mass grave

**When:** Tomorrow

**Where:** Outside of a village where families of victims live

**Why:** To support military operations and provide resolution to grieving families

**Activity**

In Groups of 2-3

- What can you do before, during and after to support functioning of you and your team?
- What will be the most challenging for you?



### Practice using skills through a scenario

#### 1. Practice skills using a scenario.

**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE: This activity is optional pending time availability. It can also be replaced with in-vivo exposure depending on the context. If there is in-vivo exposure, make sure that the service members practice all three phases of the mission (before, during and after)]**

- Consider the following scenario and then we'll break up into small groups for you to discuss how to apply the materials we've covered in this training module

**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE: If appropriate, have a volunteer read each of the 5 Ws in the scenario out loud; otherwise, read through the scenario for the class]**

- Who: You and your squad, which included 2 new service members straight out of AIT.

**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE: The detail about 2 new service members was added since they may require additional support and be particularly anxious – an opportunity to practice Teaming Up]**

- What: Support recovery of remains from mass grave.
- When: Tomorrow

**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE: This detail was included so that the point could be made that the service members had a chance to hydrate well and invest in sleep the night before]**

- Where: Outside of a village where families of victims live



**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** *This detail was added because some of the families may be in the vicinity and become emotional – an opportunity to practice Bystander Management]*

- Why: To support military operations and provide resolution to grieving families

**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** *The why allows for the groups to discuss the meaning of their task – including holding potential war criminals accountable and building trust with the community]*

**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** *Depending on time and availability, ideally the practical exercises would start with a photo of human remains (like in the "during" exercise), and then progress to in vivo exposure (actual remains).*

*After successful completion of that task, the training could move to scenario-based exposure (with smells, sounds etc.) to allow for mastery of these skills. This strategy would follow the crawl-walk-run approach to training]*



## Skill Reminder

Before	During	After
Get the G2	Set Perimeter	Close-out
Set the Stage	Manage Triggers	Recognize
Remember the Big Picture	Deliberate Focus	Connect
Balance your Outlook	Self-Talk	Accept
Refresh Skills	Self-Monitoring	Telling your story
	Grounding	
	Humor	
	Hydrate	
	Eat	
	Sleep	
	Pace	
	Team-Up	
	Bystander Management	



**Remind service members about skills from training.**

1. Remind service members about skills for use during scenario.

- As you discuss the scenario, here's a quick reminder of the skills we've just covered.



**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** *This slide can be kept up during the small group discussion of the scenario. This can also be a handout***]**



## Scenario Debrief

What can you do before, during and after to support functioning of you and your team?

What will be the most challenging for you?



### Debrief the scenario activity.

#### 1. Debrief scenario activity.

- How did it go?
- What did you think of for the first question?

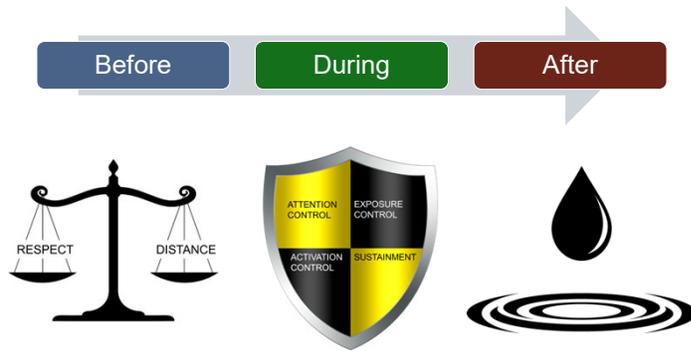
**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** Pull together suggestions across groups about what could be done before, during and after. This allows groups to offer suggestions in addition to those covered in the training module. Also, see if they caught the details about new service members, villagers nearby, and the meaningfulness of their tasks. Consider suggesting that since the task was the next day, they should be sure to invest in sleep and hydrate the day before.]

**[ASK]** What about the second question? What was the most challenging for you?

**[DISCUSS]**



# Reflections



**Reflect on the training module.**

## 1. Reflect on training.

**[ASK]** Thinking about the training as a whole, is there anything that surprised you?

**[DISCUSS]:** *Listen for 2-3 topics*

**[ASK]** What's one thing that you can take away with you from this training?

**[DISCUSS]:** *Listen for 2-3 topics*





<https://www.dvidshub.net/image/6462966/sunset>



## Transition out of the training module.

### 1. Transition out of the training.

- Just like following a real-world event, we want to make sure we acknowledge the work you have done in this training
- You've been exposed to some difficult content and difficult images
- You have also learned a lot
  - Common reactions to managing human remains.
  - Mental skills that can help you cope with negative reactions to this particular task.
  - Practiced pulling all of this together into a toolkit you can use in the future.
- Remember that thoughts and images about what we've reviewed today may stick with you for a while
- If you have intrusions, encourage yourself to use the acceptance skills we practiced during the rebound exercise
  - Be patient
  - Allow these thoughts and images to dissipate
- You are learning a critically important task that will help prepare you and your team in case you encounter this challenge





## Conclude the training module.

### 1. Conclude the training.

- Thank you for sticking with this training module.

**[FOR MEDICS:** And this toolkit will help you be a better medic to your unit.]

- It's normal to feel a bit overwhelmed with all this information but just by being introduced to these concepts and skills, you are already better prepared

**[FOR MEDICS/LEADERS:** And you are prepared to be a more effective medic (or leader)].

**[INSTRUCTOR NOTE:** *The goal of this final slide is to help lighten the mood and transition out of the training material. The image of lamps in a field was selected to offer light both figuratively and literally.*

*Depending on the training context, you might want to lead by example when it comes to using humor and ask if anyone has a joke they want to share. A joke or other light-hearted conversation may help service members transition out of the material.]*

