iCOVER

train-the-trainer

WR★AIR
Walter Reed Army Institute of Research
Defense Health • Global Health

This module was developed by the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR).

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This Train-the-Trainer Workshop provides instruction on iCOVER, a six-step process that Service Members can use to help restore a buddy who has been rendered combat ineffective due to an acute stress reaction (ASR) to a critical event.

The six-step process is as follows:

1. Identify a buddy in need.

2. Connect with your buddy by making eye contact and requesting he acknowledges you.

3. Offer your commitment so he knows you have his back and he's not alone.

4. Verify facts about the situation to help prompt logical thought.

5. Establish the order of events by telling your buddy what happened, what is happening now, and what will happen to help him get reoriented.

6. Finally, request a specific, mission-related action so he can return to productive functioning.

iCOVER is based on research, lessons learned, and first-hand accounts of the issues commonly experienced from previously deployed Service Members. The iCOVER strategy originated with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), where the strategy is mandatory training for all Soldiers. The IDF has been refining the strategy and training process for years; this module incorporates their lessons learned.

[**NOTE to TTT Instructor**: *This Train the Trainer Workshop includes a real-time teach of the iCOVER module. In the interest of flow, you should have the iCOVER PowerPoint module open and minimized for smooth transition*.]

iCOVER

Outline

iCOVER Concepts

- Explain why the training is important to the Force

Demonstration of iCOVER

- Teach the full iCOVER module

Background

- Debrief iCOVER module training
- Review background of iCOVER

Participant Teach-backs

- Observe participants teach the iCOVER module

Summary

- Discuss implementation plans
- Conclude workshop

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Training Module Symbol Guide

Symbol	Represents	Explanation
(clock)	Timing	This symbol indicates the amount of time allotted for a given section of the material.
(target)	Target / Intent	This symbol indicates the main function or rationale for a given slide.
1.	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.
[*TEXT*]	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.
(clapperboard)	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.
(document)	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.
(weightlifter)	Exercise	This symbol indicates the start of an exercise or activity. To avoid down-time, keep an eye out for these and plan accordingly.
(green triangle)	Continue	This symbol indicates that the training material for a given slide continues onto the next page.
(red square)	Stop	This symbol indicates that the training material for a given slide ends on this page.

iCOVER

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🕐 **iCOVER: 1 Hour**

◎ **To introduce yourself and the module.**

1. **Introduce the module and its purpose.**

- Good [morning/afternoon], my name is _____.
- Welcome to iCOVER Train-the-Trainer.

*[**NOTE**: iCOVER is the second of two modules that comprise the Tactical Stress Care curriculum. It's part of the Deployment Cycle Resilience Training.]*

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workshop purpose and process

- **purpose**: prepare you to effectively deliver the iCOVER module

- **process**:
  - day 1
    - introduce iCOVER foundation
    - demonstrate iCOVER training
    - review background on iCOVER
  - day 2
    - practice with teach-backs
    - discuss implementation

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To explain the purpose and process of the workshop.

[NOTE: Slide builds]

1. Explain the purpose and process of the iCOVER Train-the-Trainer Workshop.

- The purpose of this workshop is to prepare you to train the iCOVER module with confidence.

- First, we'll talk about the goals of iCOVER and why it matters.

- Then, we will first do a real-time teach of the module with you as the audience.

- Then we will do a deep dive into some of the research conducted on iCOVER.

- And then we will cover some of the frequently asked questions we've received from trainers and students in previous classes.

- Tomorrow you will teach the material for the class and receive constructive feedback on your delivery.

- Once we are done with teach backs, we'll answer any additional questions and wrap-up the training.

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◎ **To transition to why iCOVER is important.**

1. Transition to discussing why iCOVER is important.

    • Let's talk about why iCOVER is important
    • iCOVER is designed to target Acute Stress Reactions

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what is an acute stress reaction?

- shifting symptoms in response to extreme stress
  - emotional
  - physiological
  - cognitive
  - behavioral

- acute stress reactions (ASRs) can have negative consequences for the Service Member as well as the Force

- immediate intervention is critical

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🎯 **To provide a justification for iCOVER.**

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1.   Explain the need for iCOVER training.

- An Acute Stress Reaction is a transient set of shifting symptoms that occur as a result of a potentially traumatic event (like combat).

- These reactions can be

    -emotional (anxiety)

    -physical (increased heart rate, sweating, rapid breathing)

    -cognitive (disoriented, non-responsive, hyper alert)

    -behavioral (curling up face down).

- The key feature is that the person is not functional for a period of time.

- ASRs experienced during combat can have a significant impact on the Force.

- An Acute Stress Reaction has the potential to endanger the life of the individual, the safety of the rest of the team, and the success of the mission.

- For example, freezing during mission execution, like breaching a doorway or upon contact, leaves an unprotected sector of fire, further exposing both the individual and team.

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- Screaming or other unrestrained activity can draw the attention of the enemy, revealing the location of the team and making them an easier target.

- Additionally, the team may have to utilize internal resources to manage the individual on the battlefield, which can jeopardize the success of the mission.

2. **Explain the need for an immediate intervention for ASRs.**

- Traditionally, service members experiencing severe mental stress would receive treatment from mental health personnel who are located at an off-site location, separate from the service member's unit.

- However, immediate intervention is critical for helping the service member return to functioning and for reducing the risk for future mental health concerns, such as post-traumatic stress.
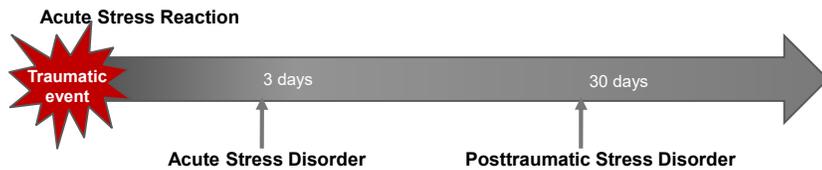
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[*REFERENCES:*
See Appendix A, pg T-22-A]

when does an acute stress reaction occur?

Acute Stress Reaction

Traumatic event

3 days

30 days

Acute Stress Disorder

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

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◎ **To explain the timing of an acute stress reaction.**

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1. **Place Acute Stress Reaction into temporal context.**

- An acute stress reaction happens during or immediately after an acute traumatic event

- You may have heard of other terms related to traumatic stress such as acute stress disorder and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These are disorders and there are treatment options. But that's not what we are talking about here.

- An Acute Stress Reaction is not a disorder, it's just a normal response to an extreme situation.

*[**NOTE**: There is also no clear link about whether people who have an Acute Stress Reaction have greater likelihood of developing other kinds of disorders like acute stress disorder or PTSD]*

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how common are ASRs?

1 in 6

source: Adler & Gutierrez (2022) Current Psychiatry Reports

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To explain prevalence.

[NOTE: Slide builds]

1. Explain the frequency of ASRs in combat.

- There are few estimates of how often an Acute Stress Reaction occurs in combat

- In a 2022 survey of US Soldiers who had deployed to combat, 17-23% reported they may have experienced an ASR during a significant combat-related event (such as a fire-fight or IED) where they were so overwhelmed that they had difficulty functioning for a period of time
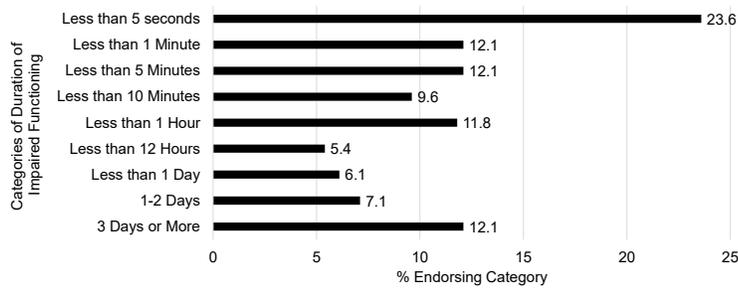
[ADVANCE SLIDE]

- That's 1 in 6

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[*REFERENCES:*
See Appendix A, pg T-22-A]

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how long until functioning returns?

Self-Reported Duration of Impaired Funtioning Associated with
Combat-Related Acute Stress Reaction

Categories of Duration of Impaired Functioning	% Endorsing Category
Less than 5 seconds	23.6
Less than 1 Minute	12.1
Less than 5 Minutes	12.1
Less than 10 Minutes	9.6
Less than 1 Hour	11.8
Less than 12 Hours	5.4
Less than 1 Day	6.1
1-2 Days	7.1
3 Days or More	12.1

source: Adler & Gutierrez (2022) Current Psychiatry Reports

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[**REFERENCES:**
See Appendix A, pg T-22-A]

🎯 **To explain typical duration**

1. **Explain the self-reported duration of an ASR.**

• In that same study, those who had an ASR were asked how long they thought it had lasted.

• About 1 in 4 said less than 5 seconds

• More than 50% reported they were impacted for more than 5 minutes

• *[ASK]* What does 5 minutes mean in the context of a mission?

[NOTE: listen for answers related to dangers of having a non-responsive team member]

• Nearly 20% reported the impact lasted longer than a day

• These results suggest the ASR experience is different for everyone but it lasts long enough for most that it is worth paying attention to how team members can help their battle buddies manage an ASR.

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[*REFERENCES:*
See Appendix A, pg T-22-A]

What proportion of service members with combat experience report seeing acute stress reaction in team members?

40-50%

source: Adler, Svetlitzky & Gutierrez (2020) BJPsych Open

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◎ **To describe how often others see an ASR.**

[*NOTE: Slide builds*]

1. Explain how often ASRs are observed.

   - The good news is that Battle Buddies can tell if one of their unit members is experiencing an Acute Stress Reactions.

   - In several survey studies, Soldiers with combat deployment experience reported whether they had observed a team member get so overwhelmed by stress during a combat-related event that they were unable to function.

   - About 40-50% of Soldiers surveyed report having seen this reaction in others.

   - This is good news because it means that Battle Buddies can be part of the solution.

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why iCOVER?

- ASRs can occur in response to extreme combat-related events

- ASRs impact functioning

- battle buddies are well placed to intervene

- iCOVER is…
  - a simple, rapid technique
  - designed for battle buddies to use with unit members
  - focused on restoring team members to purposeful action

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◎ **To provide a justification for iCOVER.**

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1. **Explain the need for iCOVER training.**

   - ASRs can occur. As you've seen, about 1 in 6 Soldiers report possibly experiencing an ASR during a combat-related event.

   - While ASRs don't happen all the time or to everyone, an ASR can disrupt functioning, impair the safety of the team, and impede completion of the mission.

   - Battle buddies are well paced to intervene – they can see when a unit member is experiencing an ASR.

   - iCOVER is a simple technique that doesn't take long to use.

   - It's meant for Battle Buddies to use in the moment.

   - The goal is to restore team members back to purposeful action.

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iCOVER

teaching demonstration

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◎ **To teach the iCOVER module.**

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1. Conduct the real time teach of the iCOVER module.

- Let's now go through the iCOVER module in real time.

- I'll ask that you participate from the perspective of a Service Member receiving the module as a unit training requirement.

- As an active participant you are expected to respond to questions when asked and ask questions if things are unclear.

- Let's begin.

[**NOTE**: *Use the iCOVER module in Tab B to teach the module.*]

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teaching debrief

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🎯 ***Debrief training.***

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1. Transition to discuss the training they just observed.

- Ok…so let's talk a bit about the training.
- What did you observe? [Discuss observations, including the trainer's perception of anything that happened that was particularly useful or important]
- Now we're going to discuss some behind-the-scenes information about this training.

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iCOVER
background

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◎ ***Transition slide.***

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1. **Transition to explaining the background of iCOVER.**

- We discussed Acute Stress Reactions, and you've now seen the training.
- This next section is going to review where the training came from and what studies have to say about it.

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origin story

- developed by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF)

- mandatory training for all IDF Soldiers

- team members best positioned to be first responders

- YaHaLOM

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🎯 **To explain the history of iCOVER.**

[NOTE: Slide builds]

1. **Explain the history of iCOVER.**

   - iCOVER is an adaptation of a novel program, called *YaHaLOM*, which was developed by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in 2014 and became mandatory for all IDF Soldiers in 2016.

   - The *YaHaLOM* program was developed based on the understanding that fellow team members and leaders are better positioned to be first responders and to provide immediate intervention for combat ASRs than mental health personnel.

   - The training was provided to the US in 2017 and adapted and tested for the first time with Soldiers and Marines in 2018.

   [NOTE: Much of the training between YaHaLOM and iCOVER is the same. Some differences in the US version include: the addition of "i" as the first step, clarification of the "offer commitment" step, and delineation of the rationale for each step. The US training materials also include CUF.]

Record your own notes here:

In Hebrew, *YaHaLOM* is an acronym for the steps and means "diamond." It is part of a larger IDF stress management program called *Magen* (or shield).

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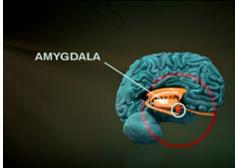
iCOVER

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t84_QvbnIT0
**YouTube Search:
"WRAIR" and "iCOVER"**

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🎯 **Explain YouTube video.**

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1. iCOVER is a video on YouTube.

- The US developed a training video that is available on YouTube (just search WRAIR and iCOVER)
- The video is 11 minutes long
- Portions of this training is included in the PowerPoints, as you might recall
- The training does not mention Care Under Fire – it makes the topic accessible and focuses on each step
- The training video has some translation options as well (click settings)

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iCOVER studies

- high acceptability
- improved confidence
- changed perspective
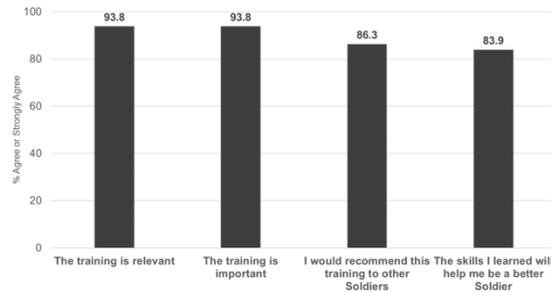
source: Adler & Gutierrez (2022)

◎ **To review study findings of iCOVER.**

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1. **Explain the main findings about iCOVER studies.**

   - US research shows that Soldiers and Marines value the training

   - Almost all Soldiers, for example, report that the training is relevant and important (see figure). These data are from a study with Soldiers about to deploy to combat.

   - iCOVER also increases knowledge and Soldiers and Marines were able to follow the protocol training in tough, realistic training exercise

   - iCOVER is also associated with an increase in confidence that they, their team and their leaders can manage acute stress in combat situations

   - For example, Soldiers were 39% more confident in their unit's ability to help someone with an ASR and 35% more confident in their own ability to help.

   - They are also 14% more likely to think that it is the unit's responsibility to help a team member with an ASR.

   - Case studies from the IDF also demonstrate that it has been used successfully in a variety of settings
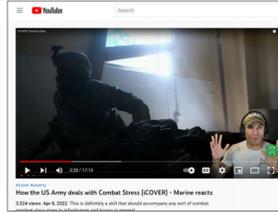
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🎯 **To review other feedback about iCOVER.**

1. **Describe the reception of iCOVER and transition to other outlets.**

- iCOVER has been featured on YouTube reaction videos (such as the Combat Arms channel).
- Operational units may want to review this video version since it has an experienced operator providing feedback as he watches the video.
- The equivalent of iCOVER has also been adapted by a variety of other nations, including
  - Norway (Re-START)
  - Canada (Back from the Black)
  - Germany (BESSER)
  - Belgium
  - New Zealand
  - Mexico.
- Other countries are actively examining how to integrate their version of iCOVER. Ideally, this adoption can support interoperability.
- iCOVER has also been adopted for other contexts, including the medical context. At the start of the pandemic, civilian hospitals contacted the iCOVER team and requested support. iCOVER-Med was developed and disseminated to help medical staff from freezing.

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To provide guidance for the iCOVER teachbacks.

1. Setup expectations for next day teachbacks.

- Tomorrow you will teach-back the iCOVER module to the class. You'll be provided constructive feedback regarding content and delivery.

- The goal of the teach-backs tomorrow is to gauge your understanding of the concepts and content at the core of the training. All feedback is designed to inform you of how you can present this content better by filling in any gaps in knowledge or understanding.

- Study hard!

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iCOVER *implementation*

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🎯 To generate discussion about how the students will implement iCOVER

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1. **Transition to the topic of implementing an iCOVER strategy.**

- Now we are going to focus on how to take everything we've talked about and implement it in your units.

- The current plan within the US Army is for iCOVER to be a Soldier task that has to be mastered in basic combat training. As far as we are aware, iCOVER is the first task related to mental health that has obtained the level of Warrior Task.

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implementation

- timing of training

- leverage physiological activation

- integration into field training and field care system

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🎯 To generate discussion about how the students will implement iCOVER

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1. **Prompt discussion about implementation.**

- *[ASK]*: When should iCOVER training be implemented? basic combat training? pre-training? pre-deployment? What about in your unit?

[NOTE: Allow for brief discussion and answer any questions.]

- *[ASK]*: Do you want students to be revved up physically when they have to practice iCOVER skills? Maybe after a run or after PT? So that they can be trained in iCOVER in the same physical state when they are called upon to use it?

[NOTE: Allow for brief discussion and answer any questions.]

- *[ASK]*: How can iCOVER training be integrated into existing field exercises? How can it be integrated into training that addresses medical skills? Can you build it into scenarios so it becomes second-nature?

[NOTE: Allow for brief discussion and answer any questions. Encourage a crawl-walk-run approach to implementing iCOVER Training into exercises]

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iCOVER questions?

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◎ To solicit and answer any questions students might have regarding the training module.

1. **Ask for answer any questions students might have about iCOVER.**

- *[ASK]*: Are there any questions?

[NOTE: Allow for brief discussion and answer any questions.]

Record your own notes here:

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iCOVER

thank you!

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🎯 To complete the train-the-trainer package

1. Thank participants

- Thank you for taking your time to learn about iCOVER

- We believe it has the potential to be helpful in a variety of contexts

- Please work on creating lessons learned so that we can build on this key advance in mental health

*[**NOTE**: Allow briefly for, and answer any questions.]*

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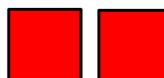
Appendix A: References

T-4-B

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