Perceptions of Emotional Resilience Skills Training

How does the Emotional Resilience Skills Training (ERST) support Public Safety Personnel (PSP)?

PSP require emotional coping skills and evidence-informed mental health training to navigate difficult situations encountered while on-duty.

The current research focuses on the perceptions of ERST from four PSP sectors including: firefighters, municipal police, paramedics, and public safety communicators.

Background

PSP experience frequent exposure to many potentially psychologically traumatic events and other occupational stressors, which are associated with the development of mental health injuries. The Emotional Resilience Skills Training (ERST) is a pilot 13-week mental health training program led by a PSP peer and based on the robustly evidenced Unified Protocol for the Transdiagnostic Treatment of Emotional Disorders.

The current study

The current study assessed whether PSP:

- perceived the ERST as improving their mental health or their management of stressors;
- applied the associated knowledge and skills; and,
- would recommend ERST to other PSP.

Data were collected using a self-report survey and focus groups. A total of 197 PSP (58% male) completed a self-report survey and 72 PSP (33% female) participated in a follow-up sector-specific focus group to assess the ERST.

We would like to thank all participating PSP for their involvement in the study. The Study is made possible by a large and diverse team. We thank each team member, past and present for their contributions to the study. A list of participating PSP agencies, PSP knowledge users, and additional information is available in English at www.ptsslab.ca.

*The original wording of the study was changed and condensed for the current research infographic.

Results

Participants described the ERST as helpful for their mental health and reported using the skills in many different contexts:

- to cope with strong emotions;
- to better engage with their families; and,
- to practice cognitive flexibility in difficult situations.

ERST is a 13-week mental health training program based on the Unified Protocol.

Conclusions

The study indicates PSP perceive ERST as helpful when applied. Almost all participants (i.e., 96%) would recommend the ERST to other PSP.

Many participants expressed the ongoing need for mental health skills and knowledge, and identified not having training, such as ERST, available during their early-career training and stages as an important gap in mental health training.

Highlights

Many participants expressed a need for access to mental health training, such as ERST, during early-career and training stages to broadly support their mental health.

The current study was supported by a Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR FRN: 171645) and Canadian Institute for Public Safety Research and Treatment (CIPSRT) consortium Team Grant for Mental Wellness in Public Safety, with additional financial support from the Saskatchewan Ministry of Justice and Attorney General.

Read the full study here:

Nisbet, J., Sauer-Zavala, S., Andrews, K. L., Shields, R. E., Maguire, K. Q., Teckchandani, Taylor. A., Martin, R. R., Krätzig, G. P., & Carleton, R. N. (2024). Public safety personnel's perceptions of mental health training: An assessment of the Emotional Resilience Skills Training. Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1080/16506073.2024.2402995

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