

ABSTRACT for 2001 EAPA CONFERENCE

Title: An EAP Response to the Losses of the 1999 Mars Missions

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This presentation will explore how the Employee Assistance Program at Jet Propulsion Laboratory responded to the losses of the 1999 Mars Missions. The challenges and lessons learned will be shared on how the EAP faced the dilemma of responding to three failed space missions that involved the following dynamics:

- Mission team members who were recovering from the first failure were required to maintain a high performance for two months in order to execute the second and third missions.
- The cumulative affect to the team members and the organization of three mission failures in two months.
- The incidents were receiving global media coverage.
- Team members were assigned at different geographic sites
- The incidents involved coordinating efforts with other industrial partners.
- The organization was completing five years of downsizing and reorganizing and many employees were experiencing “survivor syndrome”.

Learning Objectives:

1. Explore how Critical Incident Stress Management Techniques for emergency responders can be applied to space mission rescue operations and high performance business missions.
2. Review Critical Incident Stress Management goals.
3. Discuss how utilization of multiple modes of communication, such as, electronic mail, telephone conferences, and in-person contact can assist the EAP to respond to employees at different geographic locations.
4. Identify how early intervention, and collaboration, with management can increase the success in the mitigation of workplace trauma.
5. Discuss the importance and benefits of including family members in the intervention process.

References and Resources:

Mitchell, Jeffrey T. and Everly, George S., 1994. Critical Incident Stress Debriefing: The Basic Course Workbook, International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc., Ellicott City, Maryland.

Noer, David, 1993. Healing the wounds: overcoming the trauma of layoffs and revitalizing downsized organization. Jossey-Bass Inc, San Francisco, California.

Oher, J.D. (ed), 1999. The Employee Assistance Handbook (Appendix). New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.