

## Psychological Preparedness for Emergencies in the Workplace

### What is Psychological Preparedness?

Psychological preparedness is a crucial element of emergency readiness. It's about being mentally prepared for an emergency, just as we prepare physically or materially for a potential event. It's about anticipating our reactions to extreme stress and honing skills to help us maintain control during an emergency.

Psychological preparedness involves two main components:

- Knowledge of probable psychological reactions to threats/ extreme stress
- Identifying and practicing adaptive coping skills

### Why is Psychological Preparedness Important?

Emergencies can strike unexpectedly in the workplace. However, being psychologically prepared can make a significant difference. It can boost individual confidence, enhance control, and minimize confusion when responding to a disaster or emergency. Most importantly, psychological preparedness equips us with the ability to assist others, potentially saving lives and reducing injuries, and fostering a profound sense of responsibility and empathy.

### When is Psychological Preparedness Necessary?

Workplace emergencies can occur in many shapes and forms, and it's crucial to prepare ourselves physically, materially, and psychologically. By being aware of the potential emergencies and having a plan in place, you can feel secure and safe. Examples of workplace emergencies are:

- Natural hazard (e.g., fire, flood, tornado, snowstorm, earthquake)
- Infectious disease outbreak (e.g., Influenza, COVID-19)
- Active harmer/shooter
- Chemical or hazardous waste spill
- Accident or fatality in the workplace (e.g., motor vehicle accident, suicide)
- Medical emergency (e.g., on-site heart attack)
- Riot or protest involving threat to person or property

## How Can Psychological Preparedness Be Activated?

Psychological preparedness must incorporate both physical and psychological components. It's not just about identifying how you respond to extreme stress but also about developing a coping plan. Stress arousal can lead to physical and psychological responses that may inhibit decision-making during an emergency. One evidence-based coping strategy is 'grounding' to override our stress response, empowering you to regain control.

### Stress arousal may:

- Interfere with our ability to think
- Make it difficult to process complex information
- Impair thoughtful decision-making

**Grounding:** A highly effective coping technique that can help us regain control of our stress response to perform the necessary actions during an emergency. Grounding techniques, such as strong taste, pungent smell, cold water splash, and intentional breathing, have been proven reliable tools in managing stress, providing you with reassurance and confidence. Grounding techniques include:



Strong taste  
(sour candy)



Pungent smell  
(essential oils)



Cold water splash



Intentional breathing

## Source

[Welton-Mitchell, C \(2024, February 21\)  
Psychological Preparedness for Emergencies in the Workplace](#)

