

BECOME A CRISIS ATHLETE PART 1

There remains a culture of stoicism in the emergency management and response fields—where vulnerability and reaction to daily trauma and emergency are more often than not viewed as signs of weakness. Working **COUNTLESS HOURS** is still viewed as a **BADGE OF HONOR** or expected as “just what you do”.

HIGH STRESS environments can physically alter your **BRAIN** at the neurological level. Under chronic stress, the connections to your Prefrontal Cortex (your “higher brain” responsible for decision-making) shrinks; while your Amygdala (your “lower brain”—responsible for regulating emotional reaction and control) does the exact opposite and grows! Your memory, ability to make good decisions, focus, and ultimately, your **PERFORMANCE** is severely compromised.



STRATEGY 1: MINDFULNESS

MINDFULNESS is simply... **NOTICING WHAT IS HAPPENING RIGHT NOW**. Recent brain studies find it to be a key element in stress reduction, with direct impacts on happiness and overall well-being. Mounting scientific evidence shows mindfulness may even be the “magic bullet” for overall preventive health if there is one. It helps to calm the Vagus Nerve, one of the central nerves controlling many of the body functions we don’t even think about—such as heart rate, breathing, ability to swallow, and perspiration. Mindfulness also decreases the brain’s “Default Network”—or tendency to ruminate, which helps decrease anxiety and depression. You don’t have to be an expert to **BEGIN** to reap the benefits. **START** today with simple, quick, effective tactics.

UNDERSTAND YOUR BRAIN



There is a silver lining: **NEUROPLASTICITY**. You can teach your brain to be stronger and **MORE RESILIENT** to stressors. Our brains can actually change and grow, and undo some of the stress and damage. There are things **YOU** can do to help make your brain more resilient **NOW**.

- 1** Set a timer for one-minute and take slow, deep breaths while you focus on being present, observing each in and out breath.
- 2** To improve team focus start your meetings by having people take 3-5 deep breaths first. This may sound like fluff, but don’t be embarrassed! It works. Lead by example.
- 3** Use apps like *Calm* or *Headspace* which have easy, progressive mindfulness exercises. **Bonus: Both Headspace and Calm are offering free resources and access right now.**