Advanced Survival Training

Managing Police Stress

and

Burnout

Rick Randall MS, DRS, CMBT
APD Senior Chaplain and Training Specialist
Stress plays a significant role in the health and well-being of police officers.

Stress impacts performance and achievement in many areas of our life.

This course focuses on understanding the physiological and psychological bases of stress as a precursor to learning a number of strategies to regulate stress for optimum performance and resiliency.
WHAT’S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?
"The facts, Ma'am. Just the facts."
• LEOs are top ranking in professions for Heart Disease…………….Hypertension........ Diabetes.....

• The average life expectancy of the general public is 79 years of age; for LEOs its 64
• The Law Enforcement officer is more likely to suffer from alcoholism than the average American.
  300% More likely to abuse alcohol

• A police officer can develop a mental process of emotional containment and detachment.

  “Emergency Responder Exhaustion Syndrome” (ERES)
  Aka “First Responder Syndrome”
• LEO Divorce Rate:
  Estimated at Twice National Average
  at close to 80%
LEO Suicide Rate: One every 24 hours
Hypervigilance

Hypervigilance is the necessary manner of viewing the world from a threat-based perspective, having the mindset to see the events unfolding as potentially hazardous.

Permits the on-duty officer to develop the perceptual skill set required for maximum officer safety. Every decision the officer makes is dependent on the perceptual set of hypervigilance.
Hypervigilance is a Biological state

Its foundation is in the neurological functioning of the brain. The *Reticular activating system* (RAS). Creating a heightened sense of awareness and perceptiveness of the environment.

- Increased Peripheral vision
- Improved hearing
- Faster reaction times
- Increased blood sugar
- Elevated heart rate
- Increased blood pressure
- A general sense of energy.

This enables rapid thinking on one's feet and quick decision making.
Profile of the Average LEO

Hypervigilant on duty....
Lethargic off duty...
Hypervigilance

What causes the psychological changes in officers?

Is it what cops see in the world?

Or

Is it how cops must learn to see the world?
Equal and Opposite Reaction

Because every action has an equal and opposite reaction, the HIGH demand for more elevated alertness that is required for on-duty law enforcement work will produce, unless corrected, an extreme reaction in the opposite direction when off duty.
Equal and Opposite Reaction

**On Duty**

Alive, Alert, Energetic, Involved, Humorous

**Off Duty**

Tired, Detached, Isolated, Apathetic

Normal Range of Risk
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>On Duty</th>
<th>Off Duty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Heat seeker</strong></td>
<td><strong>Couch Potato</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(sympathetic branch)</td>
<td>(parasympathetic branch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alert</td>
<td>Tired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alive</td>
<td>Detached</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quick Thinking</td>
<td>Isolated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good sense of humor</td>
<td>Apathetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camaraderie</td>
<td>Irritable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Self Correcting

On Duty

Alive, Alert, Energetic, Involved, Humorous

18 to 24 hours

Tired, Detached, Isolated, Apathetic

Off Duty
Don’t Go Home

Can become an unconscious way of breaking the cycle. At first, it is not so much a deliberate strategy for avoiding home as much as a conscious awareness that while on duty the world is alive, stimulating, and invigorating, and off duty, at home, it is subdued, depressing, and isolating.
Disengagement

On Duty

Alive, Alert, Energetic, Involved, Humorous

Overinvested

Tired, Detached, Isolated, Apathetic

Off Duty

Underinvested
Symptoms of the Hypervigilance Rollercoaster

- The desire for social isolation at home
- Unwillingness to engage in conversation or activities that are not police related
- Reduced interaction with non-police friends and acquaintances
- Procrastination in decision-making not related to work.
- Infidelity or serial relationships
- The I “USTA” syndrome-Loss of interest in hobbies or recreational activities.
IS LEO STRESS DIFFERENT?
By it's very nature

- Police work, by it's very nature, calls for an incredible amount of restraint.
- Continual restraint.
- Draining restraint.
- It is stressful

Dr. Daniel A. Goldfarb
Remembering “That Call”
What Do We Do?

AVOIDANCE/ DENIAL

• Alcohol/ Drugs
• Denial/ Thought Suppression
• Risky Behavior
• Excess Work

This works until it doesn’t
HOW STRESS AFFECTS THE BODY

**BRAIN**
Difficulty concentrating, anxiety, depression, irritability, mood, mind fog

**CARDIOVASCULAR**
higher cholesterol, high blood pressure, increased risk of heart attack and stroke

**JOINTS AND MUSCLES**
increased inflammation, tension, aches and pains, muscle tightness

**IMMUNE SYSTEM**
decreased immune function, lowered immune defenses, increased risk of becoming ill, increase in recovery time

**SKIN**
hair loss, dull/brittle hair, brittle nails, dry skin, acne, delayed tissue repair

**GUT**
nutrient absorption, diarrhea, constipation, indigestion, bloating, pain and discomfort

**REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM**
decreased hormone production, decrease in libido, increase in PMS symptoms
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hippocampus</th>
<th>Amygdala</th>
<th>Frontal Lobes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Memory Center</td>
<td>• Center of Uncertainty</td>
<td>• Executive System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Most Stress Hormone</td>
<td>• Emotional Regulation</td>
<td>• Planning, Judgment,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receptors</td>
<td></td>
<td>Problem Solving,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Decreased Function</td>
<td>• More Anxiety</td>
<td>Impulse Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Less Communication</td>
<td>• “Faster” Fear</td>
<td>• Reorganizes Neuronal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Neurons</td>
<td>• More Excitatory</td>
<td>Connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lower Neurogenesis</td>
<td>Neurons</td>
<td>• Poor Decision Making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dead Neurons</td>
<td>• Depletion of Dopamine</td>
<td>• “Fuzzy” Thinking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stress and Your Health

The Risk Increases

The “Disease of Prolonged Arousal” is caused by hormones that are released during stressful events

- Increased plaque buildup
- Hardening of the arteries
- Increased blood pressure
BURNOUT AND THE CAREER TRAJECTORY

Fascination Stage
- Years 1-5
- Everything is new and shiny

Hostility Stage
- Years 5-10
- Gripe about everything

Superiority Stage
- Years 10-15
- You know what you are doing

Acceptance Stage
- Years 15-?
- The goal is making it to retirement
WHAT CAUSES BURNOUT?

1. Fear of losing your job
2. Working hard with no recognition or reward
3. Being in the wrong profession or position
4. Working for a difficult boss
5. Not having enough people or resources to get the job done
PTSI

Risk

Type or Intensity

Duration

Frequency

Perceived Control

Coping Strategies
Encouraging Resiliency
# Individual Preventive Measures for Stress Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Primary Prevention</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learned optimism:</td>
<td>Alters the person’s internal self-talk &amp; reduces depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time management:</td>
<td>Improves planning &amp; prioritizes activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure time activities:</td>
<td>Balance work &amp; nonwork activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Secondary Prevention</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical exercise:</td>
<td>Improves cardiovascular function &amp; muscular flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxation training:</td>
<td>Lowers all indicators of the stress response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diet:</td>
<td>Lowers the risk of cardiovascular disease &amp; improves overall physical health</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Tertiary Prevention</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening up:</td>
<td>Releases internalized traumas &amp; emotional tensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional help:</td>
<td>Provides information, emotional support, &amp; therapeutic guidance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Physical Techniques to Reduce Stress

- Deep Breathing
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)
- Exercise
- The Relaxation Response
- Mindfulness Training
- Sleep
- Diet
A moment of Introspection

• What is going on in your life right now (your current reality)?
• Why does my “current reality” seem so difficult?
• How are my relationships?
• How do I spend my time?
• What do I choose to continue/let go of?
Remember your “Purpose”

- Why am I here now?
- What is it I ultimately want to achieve?
- What power do I have?
- Where am I “in” purpose, or “out” of purpose right now?
- Will any of this matter to me on my deathbed?
Stress Busters

• Set Boundaries To Your Work
• Resolve Conflicts Quickly
• Take Care Of Unpleasant Tasks First
• Inoculate Yourself Against Stress
• Be Firm About Setting Up Your Recovery Times
• Keep Your Adrenaline Arousal To A Minimum
• Maintain Open And Healthy Relationships
• Sleep Better And Probably Sleep Longer
THANK YOU!