



BADGE OF LIFE

POLICE MENTAL HEALTH Quarterly Newsletter January 2015

THE SOBERING TRUTH:

Police Officers died as the result of suicide in **2012: 126**
Police Officers died as the result of gunfire in **2012: 49**
Police officers (est.) in US with symptoms of PTSD: **125,000**

*For every police suicide, almost **1,000 officers** continue to work while suffering the painful symptoms of PTSD.*



I have tried to think of an illustration for mental health in law enforcement and I came up with a tree, which branches out and reaches all levels of a department—patrol officers, first-line supervisors, administrative positions, and the departmental leadership at the top. The key to this tree is that each branch is responsible for itself and the load that it bears. Like a tree, it is both top to bottom and bottom to top. It's more than just training a group of peer support officers and making them available—it is this and more and is only as strong as the weakest link.

The tree analogy is applicable to all, geared to the concept that it is everyone's responsibility to understand and implement a sound mental wellness program in their department. At the bottom, each officer is responsible for listening to and adhering to the program; conversely, every chief is responsible for ensuring that the necessary resources are available and personally endorsing the program.

This is the 21st century. It is no longer acceptable, when a suicide occurs, to say, "He should have sought help." That's not good enough anymore. The chief must be actively involved, not being content to say that officers don't understand their responsibility to maintain their good emotional wellness in this toxic career field. It is time to stop running away; both sides need to listen to one another. Both ends of the chain and the links in between have a responsibility to talk and listen to one another.

These ideas are now being picked up across the country. Peer support and annual mental health checks are increasingly being accepted and promoted by departments. It's about time in this caustic line of work. Officers are being urged to exercise, see a therapist at least once a year (the mental health check), and watch over themselves instead of focusing on unseen symptoms in

other officers. All the branches of the tree, from top to bottom and bottom to top, are responsible for maintaining this vigilance.

We are well into this century and the ways of the past are extinct. Being “tough enough,” even “resilient enough” are outdated. More is required. Chiefs must lead. Supervisors must motivate. Officers and those of all ranks must participate. The alternative is to become a casualty and a statistic.

--Ron Clark, RN, MS, Chairman of the Board

Five Self-limiting Beliefs That Ruin Our Social Life. Everybody has problems and issues but not everybody does something about them. In fact, most people don't even want to admit having them, not to mention defining them. We live in a world where conventional wisdom dominates and being happy means being average. But that's terribly wrong. [Continue reading at Self-Limiting Beliefs.](#)



Nationwide protests after the deaths of two unarmed black men by police in Missouri and New York might cause officers to hesitate to use deadly force for fear of becoming the “next Darren Wilson,” Baltimore’s mayor said Wednesday.

Meanwhile, police unions say departments across the country are battling anxiety that could compromise officers’ safety. They called upon more police chiefs and elected leaders to vocally back officers, who have felt their public support erode even as they continue to do dangerous jobs protecting communities. Read more at [Unions, Anxiety Could Compromise Safety.](#)

The Disabled Police Officer—Gone and Forgotten. I couldn't figure out for the life of me what had happened. The phones stopped ringing, the visits dwindled. I made a lot of friends in twenty years. Where were they? No matter how much damage was done to me, I was still the same Richard Pastorella I had been before the bomb went off. Then I began to understand. My broken body reminded them of how vulnerable they were. [Gone and Forgotten.](#)



The New “Operation Restore” First Responders Post Trauma Training. Available to personnel nationwide, first responders spend four days at a Franciscan Center located on eight acres along the eastern banks of the Hillsborough River near Tampa, Florida. This peaceful setting allows individuals to connect with other responders who have faced the same stream of critical incidents. Participants begin to identify their cumulative stress reactions to various traumatic experiences during the course of their career.

It also provides them with a tool kit of new ways to cope with these daily stressors. The training includes educational sessions each day that help participants understand the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual impact of critical incidents. A team of EMDR practitioners led by a preeminent national forensic psychologist and trauma expert guides responders through the reprocessing of critical incidents.

First responders will leave with an understanding of post trauma stress and will be armed with new strengths to cope with critical and other incidents. For more information, write FirstResponders911@gmail.com or call 813-765-1853.

Retreat Restore Renew

The First Responders Post Trauma Training creates a safe, confidential environment for individuals to work through their most critical incidents and process the cumulative stress of risking their lives throughout their careers.

OPERATION RESTORE
Franciscan Center
First Responders
Post Trauma Training



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