

Understanding the Cycle of Stress and Its Associated Risk Factors Within the Law Enforcement Profession

REALITIES OF JOB

High Liability

Exposure to Misery

Low Pay

Public Perception

Long Hours/
Shift Work

"I'm Fine"
Culture

Isolation from
non-LE Friends

Dangers of Job



EFFECTS OF JOB

Relationship
Strain

Healthy Habits
Difficult

Financial
Challenges

Social Bonds
Limited to LE



RESULT OF JOB EFFECTS ON A PERSON

Stress

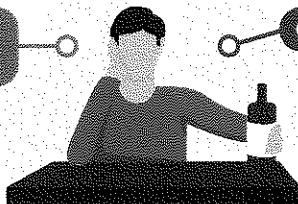
UNHEALTHY COPING

Social
Isolation

Overworking

Alcoholism

Internalizing
Emotions



CONSEQUENCES OF UNHEALTHY COPING

Broken
Relationships

Health
Problems

Frustration

Job Troubles



SUICIDE

RESULT OF
STRESS CYCLE

Hopelessness



Defining Stress

When dealing with mental wellness of officers it is important to be able to articulate what stress is and how it manifests in officers.

Stress by its very nature is good and bad. It is literally how you respond to demands placed on you. Some forms of stress are lifesaving.

Stress: a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or demanding circumstances.¹

Different kinds of stress include:²

- Acute stress: the most common form of stress. It's the recent happenings and anticipation of the near term demands. Most people thrive under this type of stress.
- Episodic stress: perpetually under acute stress. For officers it's going from call to call without a break or the ability to process what they dealt with.
- Chronic stress: cumulative piling up of stressors. Often it occurs in officers due to not dealing with the daily exposure to stress. Without taking personal inventory it can then spill over in their lives in the form of substance abuse, problematic behavior, relationship issues, job issues, etc. These unrelenting demands and pressures may continue for seemingly interminable periods of time and lead to hopelessness.

Critical incidents: events that will strain one's ability to function. These events, which include having to witness or experience tragedy, death, serious injuries, and threatening situations are called "critical incidents."⁴



PTSD. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is an intense physical and emotional response to thoughts and reminders of the traumatic event that last for many weeks, months, or years after the traumatic event.⁵ PTSD is a medical condition that can be diagnosed by a mental health clinician.

References

1. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/stress>
2. <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/stress-kinds.aspx>
3. <https://www.cdc.gov/masstrauma/factsheets/public/coping.pdf>
4. <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/emergency-preparedness/guides/critical.html>
5. <https://www.cdc.gov/masstrauma/factsheets/public/coping.pdf>



Trauma: When an event, or series of events, causes a lot of stress, it is called a traumatic event.³



Scan the QR code for more wellness resources on the VALOR website.

