

Stress Management in Law Enforcement

Stress Management in Law Enforcement

Third Edition

Edited by

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Dedication

*For my wife, Elena, the kindest and sweetest woman I have ever known,
and our children, Lorraine, Sergei, Kseniya, Illia, and our grandchildren,
Matthew, Branden, and Alexander.*

—Leonard Territo

“For Kate ... who faced the demons of The Job ... and survived ...”

—James D. Sewell

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Preface

There is considerable evidence suggesting that more law enforcement officers are likely to be killed by job-related stress than are killed by criminals. For every police officer slain by an assailant in the line of duty, countless others succumb to the insidious, long-range effects of job-induced pressures including alcoholism, drug abuse, domestic violence, post-traumatic stress disorder, and even suicide.

The stress imposed by the physical hazards of policing is well known. Few occupations require employees to face the kinds of dangerous situations that police officers may encounter as part of their daily routines. Popular television shows have familiarized viewers with the more obvious dangers police officers encounter in protecting society from the lawbreaker, especially hot pursuits, stop-and-search situations, domestic violence calls, violent political demonstrations, and terrorist attacks such as those on the World Trade Center. The continual observation of incidents of injury, death, and inexplicable acts of cruelty over time can take a terrible toll on the psychological and physical well-being of police officers.

Both editors of this volume have been extensively involved in training and writing about police stress for the past 30 years and, over that time, have witnessed major changes in the ways law enforcement agencies and their leadership respond to this critical problem. Since police stress became a focus of academic and professional concern in the mid-1970s, we have seen the creation and expansion of progressive programs which specifically address issues associated with job-related stress. Throughout this time, training in this area has also been vastly improved and has resulted in saving the careers and even the lives, health, and psychological well-being of many police officers.

We recognize that a wide variety of groups are interested in the topic of police stress. To this end we have designed this book toward meeting the interests of four audiences: first, academicians who have a scholarly interest in police stress and who may also teach the subject; second, police administrators who must deal with the negative effects of stress on their officers on a daily basis; third, police officers who work on the streets and are regularly exposed to the stress to which we have already alluded; and, lastly, students of law en-

forcement who wish to understand and carry out research relating to the impact of stress on law enforcement officers.

This book is divided into ten sections in which we address matters of intense current interest among law enforcement personnel. We have accomplished this by the careful selection of articles and research papers written by the leading scholars in the field of job-related stress in policing, and each of this volume's ten sections focuses on particular areas of police stress. Each section has a list of key terms. In addition, each article/research paper includes discussion questions which can be used by instructors to enhance the engagement of students in the classroom, as well as for the creation of essay examination questions in regular college classes.

Part One—What Is Stress All About? provides the reader with an orientation and introduction to the topics of stress and some of its principal psychological, physiological, and social consequences. It acquaints the reader with basic concepts and terminology relating to stress.

Part Two—What Does Stress Mean for Cops? examines some of the basic issues of stress that affect law enforcement officers, looking at symptoms and causes throughout the profession, as well as focusing on the unique effects caused by the location and size of the police agency.

Part Three—Are There Ways We Can Tell It Is There? presents a number of research studies which have empirically analyzed and quantified police stress and its impact on police officers.

Part Four—What Are Some of the Bad Effects of Stress on Cops? discusses two of the most destructive maladaptive manifestations of stress in police work: addictive behaviors and suicide. The selected articles will assist the reader in understanding why cops are driven to drink or drugs, why police suicides occur, and what can be done to prevent both.

Part Five—How Does Stress Impact the Cop's Family Life? examines the toll extracted from spouses, children and relatives of law enforcement personnel as a result of the stressful aspects of police work. The alarmingly high rate of marital discord too often includes violence in the police family, events which sometimes culminate in the murder of a family member by a police officer, followed by the officer's suicide. Other less extreme effects on the family include; chronic family bickering and divorce; disruption of the family-centered activities due to irregular work schedules; and school and adjustment problems among the children of law enforcement officers.

Part Six—How Does the Worst of the Worst Affect Cops? focuses on those features of police work that often expose officers to trauma as a result of critical incidents in which people are violently killed or injured. This regular and consistent contact with the effects of cumulative career traumatic stress may,

and often over time does, result in signs of traumatization as well as overt manifestations of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Part Seven—What Is the Impact of Foreign Wars on Our Cops? America's protracted wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have taken their toll on American law enforcement personnel serving in military reserve and National Guard units that have been activated for service. Police officers returning from a combat deployment and combat veterans seeking first-time employment as police officers both face the potential impact of psychological issues resulting from their combat experiences. Perhaps more frightening, recent research indicates an increased risk of suicide among returning combat veterans and among police officers. Additionally, law enforcement in the future will find itself dealing with wartime veterans as consumers of police services as those wartime experiences manifest themselves in homelessness, domestic violence, substance abuse, and violent behavior acted out "on the street."

Part Eight—What Are the Tools that a Cop Can Use to Better Handle Stress? looks at the methods by which individual officers may better handle the stress of their law enforcement world. These include increased stress management training, professional counseling for officers and their families, peer support, and required fitness standards and programs.

Part Nine—What Support Is Available for Cops? examines some of the individual techniques and more successful programs recognized as providing effective police psychological services and support for officers under stress.

Part Ten—How Can the Bosses Better Help Their Cops? reflects on the role of the organization and agency managers in identifying, confronting, and reducing stress among an agency's law enforcement personnel and includes recommendations by the Police Psychological Section of the International Association of Chiefs of Police for the psychological support of American law enforcement personnel.

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Lastly, we want to thank our publisher, Keith R. Sipe, for sharing our conviction that this book, like previous editions, will continue to make a significant contribution to the law enforcement profession.