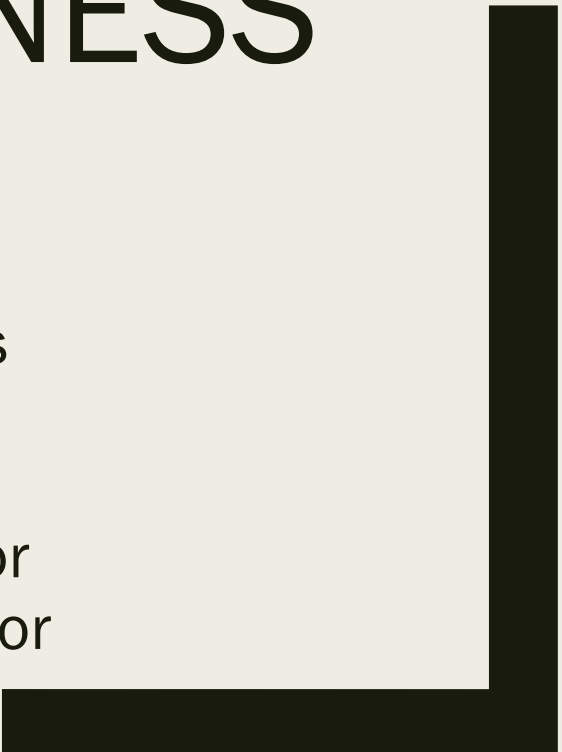


A thick black L-shaped graphic on the left side of the slide, consisting of a vertical bar and a horizontal bar that meet at a right angle.

# OFFICER WELLNESS

## Mental Resiliency

Commander Dave Hughes  
Commander Rob Sagle  
Officer Jimmy Ashenhurst  
Lisa Callander, EAP Director  
Justin Parsley, EAP Counselor

A thick black L-shaped graphic on the right side of the slide, consisting of a vertical bar and a horizontal bar that meet at a right angle.

# Why Mental Resiliency?

- “Law enforcement today is a rapidly shifting landscape, with challenges on many fronts.”
- “Officers are increasingly being asked to do tasks beyond core law enforcement....”
- “New policing strategies need to go beyond enforcement....and include emphasis on interpersonal skills...and emotional intelligence”

# At the same time.....

- The job requires.....
- Toughness
- Emotional shielding
- “Suck it up” = (Nancy Sherman—Stoic Warriors)

*These traits are important.....but can get in the way of recognizing when things are getting to you.*

- We want you to stay physically, mentally, and spiritually fit from day one, until the day you retire.

# What we are covering today:

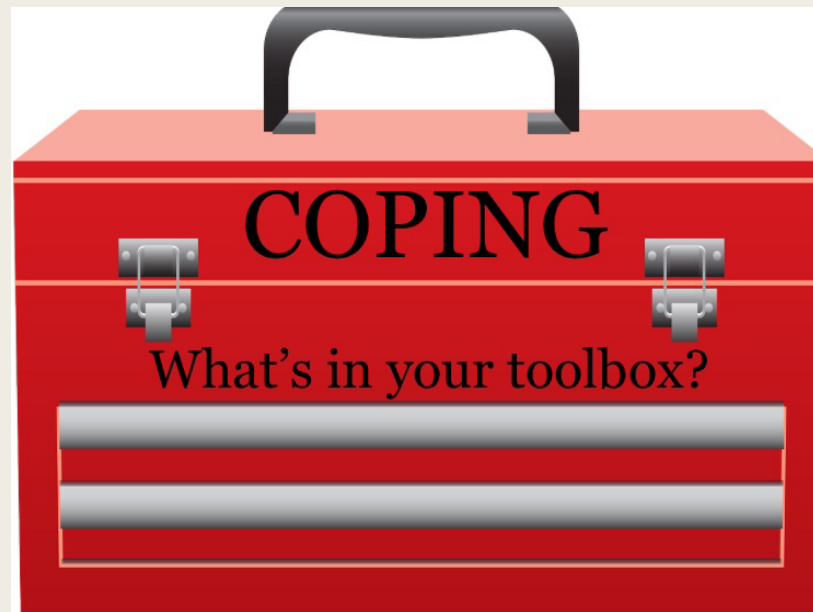
- 1. Why now?
- 2. Potential impact of the job
- 3. What does resiliency look like?
- 4. How will you sustain wellness?
- 5. Who is your “go to” person to hold you to this?
- 6. Tools in your tool box
- 7. Wellness resources
- 8. One Officer’s story.....

# WELLNESS IS:

1. Physical
2. Mental (Cognitive)
3. Social
4. Emotional
5. Spiritual

What do you do to manage your stress and stay well?

# Tool Box Tip #1. Listening



# IMPACT OF THE JOB?

When an officer is experiencing constant stress or burnout, the consequences can be:

- Cynical
- Irritable
- Low Morale
- Low Energy
- Higher Impatience
- And?



# **EMOTIONAL SURVIVAL FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT**



**A Guide for Officers  
and Their Families**

**Kevin M. Gilmartin, Ph.D.**

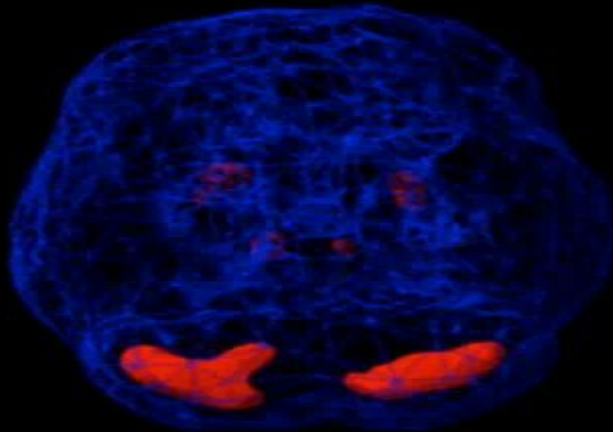
*"If you want to make it through to*

# It's not just in your head:

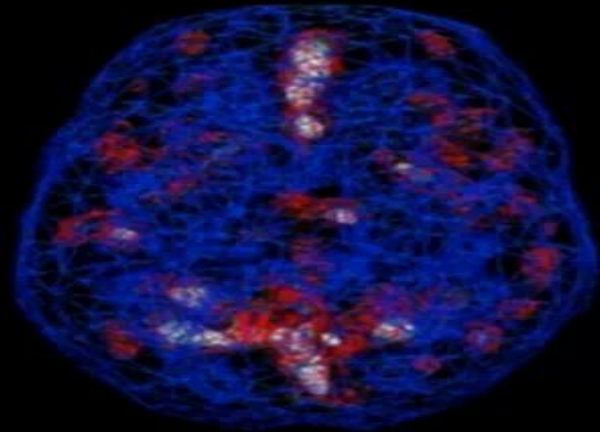
- Hypervigilance is a biological state
- Extended, frequent, and repetitive periods of hypervigilance (i.e. combat), create high levels of cortisol.
- High levels of cortisol contribute to increased bp, diabetes, gastro, depression, etc.
- 8 years!!!

**For those that tell me,**

***"PTSD? it's all in your head bro"...***



*Healthy Brain*



*PTSD*

**Yes, it is.**

***Fight the phobia,  
End the STIGMA.***

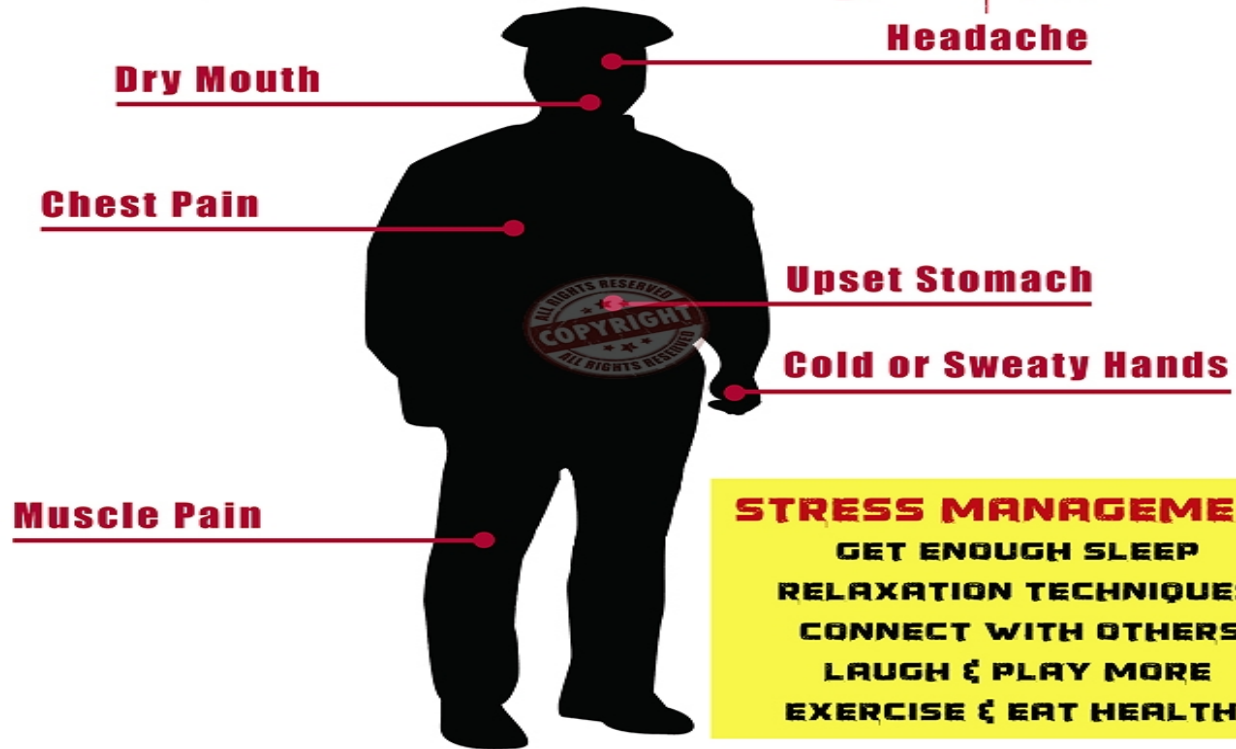


[facebook.com/veteransptsdproject](https://facebook.com/veteransptsdproject)

TomKauffman '14

TOOL BOX TIP #2. Body Awareness—Know when you're stressed:

# **SIGNS OF STRESS**



- Basic Law Enforcement Training (BLET) prepares police officers with: firearm training, self-defense tactics, physical training, knowledge of law and procedures.
- *All of these skills are essential to doing a great job.*
- It is erroneous to assume that because an officer completes Basic Law Enforcement Training, that they have the mental toughness that will carry them through the dangers of the job.

## Tool Box TIP #3. Breathing



# BREATHING TECHNIQUES

- Nervous System focus, calming and regulating improves performance
- Box Breathing
- Breath Counting

# Mindfulness: A Path to Wellness and Resiliency

## 1. Mindfulness is not about daydreams or waterfalls

- *Pay attention. Much of the time, we waste energy on anxieties and guilts, aversions and diversions, and so on. But if you want to be truly effective, you deal – to the best of your ability – with the here and now. Right now.*

## 2 . Mindfulness is not complicated.

## 3. Mindfulness is not about sitting still

*As a first responder, you must make [quick decisions with the best knowledge available](#). You must deal, furthermore, with bureaucracy and boredom and other such challenges. It's a lot.*

## 4. Mindfulness is not a defense against being a jerk



# <https://www.mindful.org/mindful-policing-the-future-of-force/>

- **Studying Police Trauma and Mindfulness**
- Working in law enforcement can be life-threatening, and not just because of violent encounters. Researchers have linked policing careers to high rates of depression, PTSD, and substance abuse, along with physical ailments like sleeplessness, diabetes, and sudden cardiac death. Officers are more prone to attempt suicide than the general population, and more likely to kill themselves than get killed on duty. Plus, because police culture values stoicism, officers are often reluctant to seek out mental-health treatment.
- One [study of almost 2,800 white male police](#) officers in Buffalo, New York, found their average life expectancy to be 22 years shorter than their civilian counterparts. The authors, from the University of Buffalo and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, suggested that stress, trauma, obesity, shift work, and exposure to toxic chemicals might all contribute to the early deaths.
- The consequences go beyond the occupational hazards. When police suffer from debilitating stress, they are more likely to exhibit problems at work, “including uncontrolled anger toward suspects,” researchers at Oregon’s Pacific University [noted in a 2015 study](#).

# Benefits of Mindfulness:

- Some initial findings look promising. The Pacific University study, in which Goerling took part, led 43 officers through a curriculum called [Mindfulness-Based Resilience Training \(MBRT\)](#), which includes meditation, martial arts, and breath- and body-awareness. (It's a police-friendly version of [Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction](#).) *At the end of the eight-week program, the researchers found “significant improvement” in health outcomes like stress, fatigue, and sleep quality.*
- *“Fatigue and sleep disturbance are predictors of dysregulated mood, particularly anger,” says lead author Mike Christopher, an associate professor of clinical psychology. “And we know that anger is a big predictor of negative outcomes for police officers on the force.”*
- Newer, unpublished data from Pacific show a second group of officers *drinking alcohol less frequently, feeling less burned out, and having fewer aggressive feelings and behaviors* after undergoing training.

- What remains to be learned is how these early results translate to the street. The Pacific team tried to measure whether mindfulness training can reduce [implicit racial bias](#)—“that level of bias we all have at an unconscious level,” says Christopher. They used a simulation game in which officers had to make snap decisions about whether people of different races were holding weapons (as opposed to, say, soda cans). But the officers performed so well before the training, Hunsinger says, that researchers could not measure improvement.
- Still, Hunsinger feels optimistic. “We believe this [mindfulness] training will build resilience—our ability to bounce back from stress—and resilience is going to have all sorts of downstream consequences in the community,” he says. One measure psychologists use is “response inhibition,” the ability to suppress a kneejerk urge to do something harmful like reach for a gun unnecessarily. “The more resilient someone is, the better their response inhibition is going to be, because they’re going to have more cognitive resources.”

# What does Mindful Policing Look Like?

- Maybe there's a mass protest that's turning violent:
  - *“Before we deploy, there's a self-awareness check,” he says. “We're going to take a moment to do some deep breathing. We have to be aware of how we feel; we're going to embrace the fear. We're going to embrace, maybe, the anger at the injustice that's occurring. But we're not going to let those emotions interfere with our tactical, cognitive decision making.” (Goerling)*

# Mindful Policing: Visualization; Focused Attention; Controlled breathing:

- Other research has offered encouragement. In a [Canadian study published last year](#), police were taught *visualization, focused attention, and controlled breathing*—then thrown into tense, lifelike scenes involving a fleeing murder suspect, a fist fight, a hostage-taker, an impending assault with a wrench, and a bystander holding a radio. “You have to stress them out in reality-based scenarios, where you increase the speed and complexity while they learn to control their stress and threat responses,” says study author Judith Andersen, an assistant professor of psychology at the University of Toronto, Mississauga. “They then gain the confidence that they can do the right thing, even under the most highly stressful situation.”
- Andersen found that the trained officers made better use-of-force decisions than an untrained control group. They also had slower maximum heart rates and quicker recoveries. A fast-beating heart, the study noted, can cause irrational behavior.

## Tool Box Tip #4: Accountability Coach

- Who will you ask to keep you in check/give you feedback?
- When will you ask them to do this?
- What will you ask them to watch for?
- Do you agree not to get angry when they give you feedback?

# Wellness Resources:

1. Peer Assistance Team (PAT)
2. Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
3. Chaplains

# PEER ASSISTANCE TEAM -- PAT

- Confidential
- Over 100 peer officers
- Support and Listening
- Modeled after the CFD Peer Team



THE CITY OF  
**COLUMBUS**

**EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE  
PROGRAM**

**614-645-6894**

## 4 Tools in your Toolbox:

- Listening
- Body Awareness
- Breathing
- Accountability Coach

- We want you to stay physically, mentally, and spiritually fit from day one, until the day you retire.



■ **THANK YOU!**