

Post Traumatic

PTSD is an injury, not a weakness. The normal brain processing and functions have been seriously altered due to the effects of work traumas. It's not about what's wrong with you—but *what happened to you.*

Suffering in silence while trying to outlast the symptoms—hoping they will go away—kills more first responders than anything else. You need to express to someone that something is going on inside that you don't like, and that you might need some help.

There are effective methods to heal from PTSD and our work traumas—or at least get significant relief from crippling symptoms.

EMDR (*Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing*) is one of the most effective treatments to heal from traumatic stress. Visit *EMDRIA.org* or Google search *Trauma Therapist EMDR* in your local area to find a certified EMDR trauma therapist.

**With treatment—hope is restored,
and life gets better.**

PTSD Symptoms may include: serious sleep disorders, anxiety attacks, intrusive thoughts and memories, poor coping skills, risk taking behaviors, problems at work, relationship problems, depression, feelings of helplessness, poor concentration, anger or rage, uncontrollable emotions or becoming emotionally numb/dead, all-encompassing fears, inability to communicate, becoming increasingly isolated, disengaged, disinterested in life, uninvolved with prior interests

Effects of Work Traumas

- The #1 cause of death for first responders every year has been suicide
- 18-25% of first responders suffer from PTSD...Tens of thousands more suffer from addictions, major depression, sleep disorders, emotional numbness, burn out.
- 25-30% of first responders have serious stressed-related health problems
- 40% of all officers have sleep disorders
- First responders are twice as likely to become alcoholics than the general population
- First responders are at much higher risk of divorce, suicide, PTSD, and becoming uncaring, disengaged, disinterested in life.

Resources

- National Center for PTSD—www.ptsd.va.gov
- EMDRIA.org (certified trauma/PTSD therapists)
- SafeCallNow.org (206) 459-3020 / 1-800 Copline
- First Responder Support Network (www.WCPR2001.org) West Coast Trauma Retreat (415) 721-9789
- www.FirstResponderWellness.com
- Youtube: *Mike Spears PTSD*
- *Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement*, Kevin Gilmartin, Ph.D.
- www.Cordico.com - Wellness solutions app
- *I love a Cop*, Ellen Kirschman, Ph.D.
- ***Bulletproof Spirit: The First Responders Essential Resource for Protecting and Healing Mind and Heart***, D. Willis—Police Captain (ret)
- *Keeping the Peace* video—LegacyProductions.org

“The purpose of human life is to serve and to do good, having the will and com-

Beyond Surviving

From Traumatic Stress to Wellness



Practical Strategies to heal and thrive in wellness

***from the daily traumas of
first responder professions***

www.FirstResponderWellness.com

Nature of Trauma

Trauma is any experience that has the potential to affect you in a serious, negative way over a long period of time.

Our work traumas are toxic and cumulative—They have the potential to turn us into someone our loved ones no longer recognize—or *that we may not even recognize.*

Stages in a Normal Response to Trauma:

- Initial shock
- Disruption of normal activities/behaviors
- Integration of the trauma, return to “normal”

After Trauma, you might experience:

- Increased anxieties or fears
- Inability to eat, sleep, concentrate, relax
- Irritability, short temper, feelings of rage
- Behavior/Emotions that are unusual for you
- Desire to be alone / or fear of being alone
- Paranoid thoughts / Nightmares
- Hypersensitivity / Jumpiness
- Inability to stop thinking about the trauma
- Feeling detached, estranged from others

For Family Members and Friends:

- Listen carefully / Support without judging, pressuring to be “normal”, or condemning.
- Spend time with them / Reassure them
- Give them some private time
- Don't take their reactions personally
- Tell / show them you're there for them
- Don't tell them to “just get over it”

Trauma Coping Strategies and Post Traumatic Growth

Develop/Express a consciousness of gratitude

Practice positives (thinking, speaking, believing)

Mindfulness—living in the present moment

Remain active and engaged with life and others

Have a purpose beyond your self-interests

Cultivate heart-centered service—*Be driven by your heart with compassion to make a meaningful difference with every call—or the job can eat you alive...*

Exercise consistently / Have outlets of healthy activities

Sleep is essential – Find healthy ways to help fall and remain asleep

Remain engaged with life and active - Resist isolating yourself—Get out in nature – plan ahead to do things with family, kids, friends.

Do not drink alcohol—10 times increase for suicide if you drink with symptoms of PTSD.

Annual Wellness Check-in with a Trauma Therapist certified in EMDR (EMDRRIA.org to find certified therapist in your area)

Be mindful of having your actions consistently *compassionate* (kind, helpful, positive, constructive) and *life-affirming* (enhancing your peace, happiness, health)

Learn to control only those few things in life that you actually can control – your integrity, compassion, attitudes, how you choose to react to someone or something, how you spend your free time.

Focus on fulfilling the needs of others—What others expect and need from you rather than what you want from them.

Reduce negatives - Negative thought patterns, negative actions – Emphasize positive expressions

Meditation – Study, learn, practice the healing and peaceful practice of meditation daily

Make a “to do” list each day and follow through to remain active and to keep a normal routine

Things to try after experiencing trauma

- *Physical exercise alternated with relaxation*
- *Structure / Plan your time—Keep busy*
- *You're normal and having normal reactions to trauma—You're not losing your mind.*
- *Talk to others / Express what you are experiencing—Talk is one of the most healing medicines*
- *Do not numb the pain and confusion with alcohol or other substances.*
- *Connect with others—Reach out. People may not understand, but they care about you.*
- *Maintain an active, normal schedule*
- *Spend time with others*
- *If others experienced the trauma—check in with them, share how you are feeling. Help them as you are able. We are all united by trauma and working to heal together helps everyone.*
- *Do things that you enjoy*
- *Don't make big life decisions or changes*
- *Try to get plenty of sleep / Rest*
- *Make as many daily decisions for yourself as you can.*
- *Eat well-balanced and regular meals (even if you don't feel like it.)*
- *Tell your spouse/life partner what you want and need from them—Don't struggle alone or in silence...Don't expect them to know what to do.*
- *Don't try to fight against recurring thoughts, dreams, or flashbacks—they are normal and will tend to decrease over time and become less painful.*
- *If symptoms and uneasiness do not sub-*