

Spiritual Resilience

Compassionate, Life-affirming, and Productive of Wellness

Several aspects of a professional life of public service are spiritual — meaning an expression and affirmation of goodness, integrity, compassion and selfless purposefulness in being useful and helpful in protecting life.

Spirituality is one's capacity to love, to be helpful, useful, and to be driven by the heart with compassion to make a meaningful difference. It is the ability to do the most good and to consistently affirm the good within you and to have a higher purpose in this noble profession beyond one's self-interests. It is the ability to be connected to others, to the community, and to the integrity of the profession. Also, spirituality involves continuous self-improvement.

Spirituality also refers to that which positively enhances one's inner spirit in ways that are enriching, inspiring and life enabling. This spiritual component of selfless service to affirm the good within us and the good that we can do for others in protecting life is essential for work to be meaningful, productive of wellness and life-affirming.

What are spiritual resilience and wellness?

Resilience is a product of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellness – which need to be practiced *daily*. Spiritual wellness and resilience significantly enhance not only physical, mental and emotional well-being, but also enhance one's capacity to respond to trauma and life's challenges in constructive ways that are productive of wellness.

Spiritual wellness and resilience are a composite of one's integrity and character, compassion, and ability to be useful and helpful to others. It is one's ability to connect with others in meaningful, enriching ways and to maintain close, meaningful relationships.

The expressions of spiritual wellness and resilience are usefulness, service before self, generosity, compassion, teachableness, humility, gratitude, tolerance, understanding and caring. These expressions of a healthy inner spirit need to be practiced daily, through all our interactions with others and in every call for service if one wants to avoid becoming indifferent, unprofessional, ineffective, less resilient, and lacking a sense of peace and fulfillment.

The need to be useful

Other than love, one of the most basic human needs is the need to be useful. How an officer fulfills this most basic need will, to a great extent, determine the quality of their life and career.

An officer fulfills this essential need by consistently striving to do as much good as they can, to help create positive change, to work to improve things and to make a meaningful difference in their agency, with their colleagues and within their community.

Over the course of one's career, officers can often succumb to the intense traumas, negativity and darkness of the job — thereby becoming less resilient, healthy and effective. It takes a purposed, conscious intention to practice daily the expressions of spiritual wellness and resilience to prevent the heart from suffocating. The most effective way to prevent that is to consistently put your heart into everything you do at work.

At the heart of public service is the desire to make a meaningful difference, to selflessly serve and to do good while having the will and the compassion to help others. It is the capacity to become aware of some need and to be driven to fill that need in any constructive, meaningful way. That is how officers can find peace and purpose throughout their years of service.

Choices that are both compassionate and life-affirming

Integrating the elements of spiritual service into our everyday choices will enhance one's sense of peace, purpose and fulfillment. Prior to making a decision or before deciding how to respond to a situation, step back and examine all your potential options. Look at which option will affirm the good within you and will be productive of wellness and resiliency.

When this is done, there will always be one option that stands out as the most compassionate (to yourself and others) and life-affirming (that which enhances peace and wellness) for you than any of the others. If an officer can learn to consistently choose to do that which is the most compassionate and life-affirming for them, then their decisions and actions will consistently be productive of wellness and resiliency.

Compassion in service

Compassion is the DNA of service. The peace officer profession is dedicated to alleviating suffering, serving the needs of others no matter who they are, standing up to evil, solving problems and creating positive change in people's lives. We don't always get the chance to save a life, but every day we get numerous opportunities to affect a life, and the more that we do so in purposeful and positive ways reflective of spiritual values, the more we are creating wellness within ourselves.

Compassionate service means trying to make that difference because you care about people and the community and about the good you can potentially do. You care about the image of your agency, the professionalism of your service, your integrity and honor, and your influence to create positive change. Being purposeful through heart-centered service erases a lot of the negative influences of trauma and acute stress as well as enhances overall wellness and resilience.

Conclusion

The undeniable secret to not only surviving a peace officer career but loving it and remaining healthy and well throughout your many years of service is to be driven by your spiritual heart to make a difference, to create positive change, to alleviate suffering and to be useful to others.

The surest way to increase your survivability, work through trauma and enjoy a greater quality of life in your service career? Make compassion and life-affirming actions become as natural as breathing.

(Article first appeared in American Police Beat Magazine. To view other published articles by Dan Willis, see <https://apbweb.com/author/dwillis/>)

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