



**Training Advisory  
Council Coursework  
Comments and  
Suggestions**

**Wellness: Stress and  
Resilience**

**December 16, 2019**



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# WELLNESS: STRESS AND RESILIENCE

December 16, 2019

## 1. TAC Participants

Sylvia Zingesser, Recorder

## 2. High Level Summary

Overall the members of TAC who attended the training were glad to see this type of training, but felt that it could be better executed. The presentation felt too long to hold people's attention and it packed a lot into a very short period of time. This might be better as an online training with survey questions at the end to help the Training Division ensure that officers watched the video. Utilizing online learning tools could be a good way to introduce topics, which can then be reinforced by integrating the lessons into other courses with real life examples. It is suggested that officers be surveyed to see how helpful they felt this course was.

Indirectly connected to the class, it may also be helpful to survey officers regarding their views on Employment Information System (EIS) most notably on how does it help or hinder officers. If officers are having difficulty with their EIS entries, is this something that can be helped by an increased focus on writing skills, both for academy training and long-term officers? Concerns by officers regarding how well they test affecting their careers should also be further examined.

## 3. Comments and Suggestions

TAC members viewed the PPB's new Wellness: Stress and Resilience course on December 16, 2019. The purpose of the course is to train officers on the importance of

wellness programs and ways they can reduce their stress and improve their resiliency when dealing with stress.

It takes \$100,000 to replace a five-year veteran police officer (2009). With intervention training, i.e., *wellness programs*, at a cost of \$8600. (Probably this type of training for an officer who may be having difficulty on the job or off the job. This wasn't clear to me).

**Statistics:**

- Law enforcement injuries (self-reported) 9-32%
- Firefighters 5-16%
- EMS 7%
- Suicides as of 12/16/2019, reported, 212 for police officers

**Possible Officer Stress Triggers:**

- **Operational:** Stuff officers do.
- **Organizational:** Policy and procedures. An event with action that may cause an officer/s to be brought before the Internal Affairs. If cleared how does the officer come back to work, and work effectively, without stigma from supervisors or coworkers? External example would be officer involved shooting. Will this event be used as a learning experience, one-on-one conversation with supervisors? Types of calls are key to possible outcomes, good or difficult (an officer involved shooting).
- **Employment Information System (EIS):** Some comments by officers attending the class include concern that officer documentation may affect their record. My concern on this issue is that EIS could be more punitive than an opportunity to retain an officer. This goes back to Quality Assurance (QA) program that is designed to catch near-misses than to catch incidents after the fact. Near-misses give the opportunity for retraining, not setting up an officer to be let go. This goes back to the wellness part of an officer and the support of their superiors, a us against the them. My opinion is that EIS is a data collections tool as opposed to QA program. I would like to see a survey taken by every PPB officer. The question is: How does EIS help or hinder the officer? Discussion by officers in this class that officers who goes by policy, can get *jammed up* with EIS entries. In other words, should there be more focus on writing skills, especially for long-term officers?
- **On taking test:** Some people test well on paper others test well by demonstrating. There is a concern by some officers that if they do not test well this is on their record. I see this as an area to make a possible recommendation. Something to think about.
- **The difference of the district that an officer works:** If an officer works a very active district there is more chance of having a bad outcome. Should this be taken into account when possible discipline is considered? Or there are injuries or officer involved shootings? If the one officer has more injuries or takedowns is the officer facing burn-out?
- **Mandatory overtime:** How to regulate mandatory overtime. Portland only has court from 8 am-4pm. It was pointed out that Portland does not have night court which would cut down on officer overtime. My observation is you would still need to hire more officers to cover while officers attend court, be it evening or days. This is a city hall recommendation. Staffing is a big part of this concern.
- **Managers job:** A leader needs to lead by motivating their charge, listen to their officers, and have a willingness to take on professional risks as well as personal risks. The key point here is to train your officers so they never want to leave the

job. Management needs to be willing to engage and take on the responsibility of a manager.

### **Why we need Wellness Programs:**

- Sleep deprivation a key factor for many officers. Seventeen hours without sleep is equal to a blood alcohol level of 0.05 or worse. What is the cost of long-term sleep deprivation?
- How to culturally reduce overtime. How to motivate employees to work overtime. Causes for overtime, lack of sleep, which is an assault on the body. Officers who have heart attacks often occur two hours after their shift.
- OSHA regulations do not take into consideration the work officers encounter.
- Trauma: A comment: Kids are not meant to die.
- Chronic exposure to stress causes less patience, more reactive, which can cause neurological damage. By signing up for this career you have donated seven years of your life expectancy.
- Reactive/panic attacks reactions cause the body to crash, nervous system causes officers to be tired of people, they tend to isolate themselves, disengage, burnout, possibly breakdown, and disconnect. Tendency to say "I can handle this, handle everything".
- NOTE: *Life is a marathon, not a sprint.*

### **Consequences:**

- Ready, Reacting, Injured, Ill
- Short term memory loss, substance abuse miss uses, (alcohol), motivation of use, intention of use, self-medicating.
- Injuries, PTSD is now a legal diagnosis as it can be identified by imagining, chronic stress (See TedEd Online)
- Signs of Stress: taking sick time, working too much overtime, avoiding calls while on duty, citizen/co-worker complaints, complacency of officer safety, unhealthy alcohol use, lack of financial resilience, error in thinking "if only", right or wrong thinking, we live in grey area of thinking. Worst possible outcomes not talking with spouse, significant other, about work, like "I had a really bad day, but I can't go into it" (for instance), isolating from family and friends.
- Taking control of your stress before it takes control of you: (The brain is built to run from the bears or dragons).

### **What you can do:**

- Meditation and mindfulness techniques, focus on your breath.
- Physical health; first half hour off shift do moderate cardio exercise for 20 minutes (Cortisol hardens the arteries around the heart, cardio exercise reduces this risk after a stressful shift).
- Try to balance work, home, and play.
- Consider taking advantage of the eight sessions per year of paid counseling offered by the PPB.

### **Leading a more balanced life:**

- Additionally, connect spiritually, if that works for you, connect with your community (neighborhood), work on setting boundaries, make time for communicating with spouse/significant other, children, family, and friends.

### **My take on this training:**

I thought it was too long to hold the attention. The session packed a lot into a little bit of time. I would like to have a discussion on how this would work better. The Training Division needs to have a survey from officers to get their input on how helpful this particular class would be. It could be given on line with a required survey completed so the Training Division personnel knows officers have watched it. I would leave out the Bob Newhart sitcom section even though it was used to make the point that officers just need to suck up their feelings by "getting over it".

## **4. PPB Contacts**

Lieutenant Greg Stewart, Training Division