

MODULE SIX: LAW ENFORCEMENT SITUATIONAL STRESS

#### **Definition of Situational Stress**

- a situation that you don't have (or feel you don't have) control over; uncertainty, unknown, change
- potentially unpleasant situation
- \* a situation that involves conflict, or a loss of status or acceptance in the eyes of your group
- often appears suddenly: a situation that you didn't anticipate
- brings up difficult and challenging emotions

Source: Stress and The Manager by Dr. Karl Albrecht

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# **CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS**

Officer-involved shootings,
line-of-duty deaths and
injuries, child victims,
employee suicide, and masscasualty incidents can trigger
traumatic-stress disorders for
officers and first responders.

# COMMON EFFECTS OF TRAUMATIC STRESS INCLUDE:

- Concentration impairment
- Eating and sleeping disturbances
- Psychosomatic symptomology
- ► Addictions
- ▶ Depression
- ► Irritability
- ► Avoidant behaviors
- ► Changes in libido
- ► Increased personal and professional conflict



# The effects of traumatic stress on law enforcement agencies:

- Communication breakdowns
- Decreased morale
- Deteriorating group cohesiveness
- Increased absenteeism
- Increased healthcare costs including increased worker's compensation and disability claims
- Decreased ability to retain effective personnel
- Decreased employee efficiency and productivity

How does your agency handle officer and first responder critical incident stress, trauma, and burnout?

**DISCUSSION** 

What are the impacts of your agency's existing policies on stress?

# **DISCUSSION**



#### **WARNING SIGNS:**



Procrastination, fatigue, cynicism, lateness, difficulty experiencing anything resembling happiness, pessimism, a sense of a foreshortened future, loss of satisfaction in your career or your life, and questioning your faith.

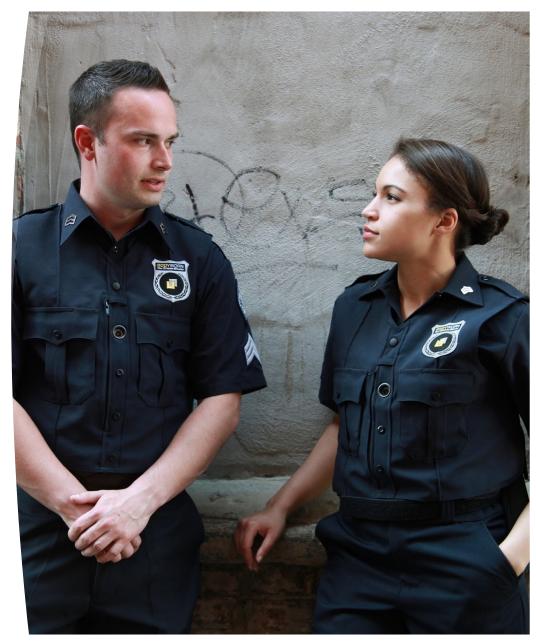
Burnout happens slowly over time, that's why it's so hard to pick up.

Burnout: a slow erosion of psychological and physical resources

#### **VICARIOUS TRAUMA:**

Psychological trauma that results from seeing and/or listening to the trauma of others. Psychologically contagious.

- ► "Compassion fatigue": developing some of the signs and symptoms of PTSD by observing the traumas of others.
- ►Guilt: a) for doing something you shouldn't have, b) for not doing something perhaps you could have, c) survivor guilt.
- Again, symptoms can include reliance on drinking or drugs to sleep and/or energy drinks or lots of caffeinated beverages.





# Signs and Risk Factors of Depression and Suicide:

- ▶ Difficulty with shiftwork (did not have in the past but is now struggling)
- ▶ Divorce and child custody issues
- Missing work and showing up late for duty (out of character)
- Abusing alcohol or other substances
- Duty performance drastically falls
- Preoccupied with death

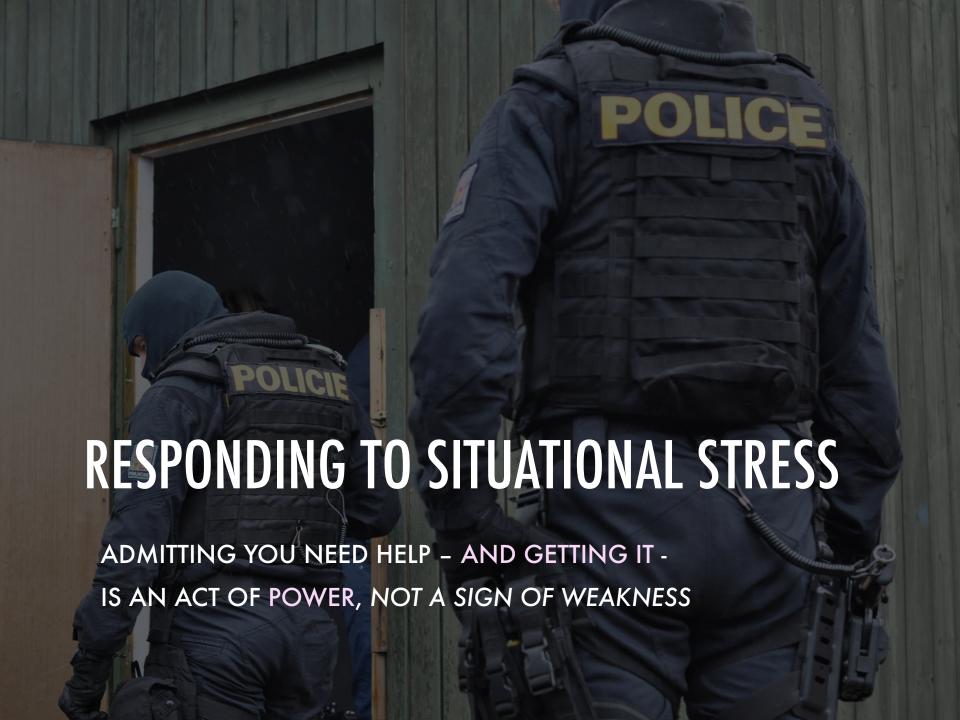
# Signs and Risk Factors of Depression and Suicide:

- Facing department charges/prosecution/internal affairs and feels humiliated and ashamed
- Death of a close friend, spouse, or child
- Loss of sleep, nightmares, and/or flashbacks
- Unexpected mood swings (not normal behavior)
- Not wearing the uniform with pride
- Personal legal problems
- Social media postings (self-harm threats or hopelessness themes)

# Signs and Risk Factors of Depression and Suicide:

- Serious illness and physical pain
- Loss of appetite
- Financial troubles
- Takes risk on duty (walking into danger on purpose without normal tactical response)
- Openly talks about self harm and makes statements like: "Things will be better when I'm gone."
- Withdrawn; not associating with fellow officers (as previously did)







#### MINDFULNESS PRACTICES:

- EXPLORING EMOTIONS
- ACTIVE/REFLECTIVE LISTENING

#### **EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE:**

- MANAGING DISRUPTIVE IMPULSES
- REGULATING STRESSFUL EMOTIONS

**PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID** 

FOR CIVILIANS, LEOS,
AND FIRST RESPONDERS
IN DISTRESS

# RESPONDING TO SITUATIONAL STRESS

#### PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID

FOR CIVILIANS, LEOS,
AND FIRST RESPONDERS
IN DISTRESS

Compassionate, supportive presence designed to mitigate acute distress, and assess the need for continued mental health care. Includes building rapport, active listening, assessment, intervention, disposition – and self care.

Designed specifically for public health personnel, educators, emergency responders, and disaster workers with little or no formal mental health training.

Evidence suggests that Psychological First Aid can increase the perception of personal and community resilience and preparedness, thus alleviating some of the strain on the public health system.



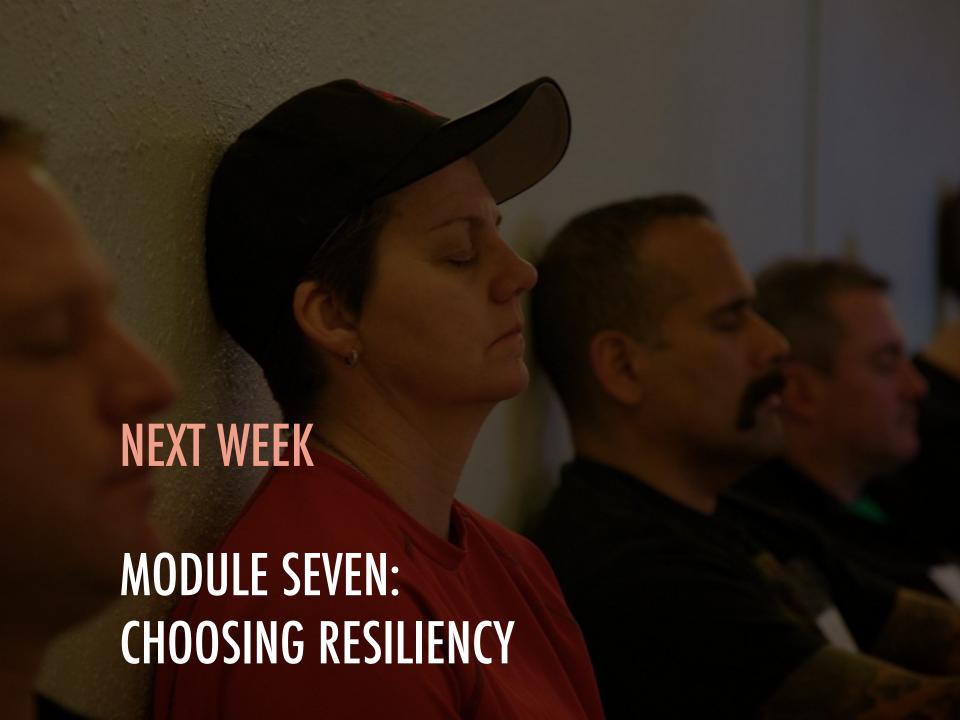
"Psychological crisis intervention has been shown to be superior to multisession psychotherapy post disaster, for reducing acute distress for first responders as well."





**ASSIGNMENT:** 

JOURNAL EXERCISE: "DEFINING TRUE NEEDS"





THANK YOU!