

RESILIENCE, MBSR, LAW ENFORCEMENT CULTURE AND TRAINING: BREACHING THE BARRIERS TO MINDFULNESS INTEGRATION

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ABSTRACT

Law enforcement agencies are just beginning to explore mindfulness-based training methods to enhance officer resilience in these very physically and emotionally demanding careers. There are many practical administrative and cultural advantages for police agencies to incorporate mindfulness-based methodologies in officer training. Ways of incorporating mindfulness-based training methods into police training and culture will be listed and described. The experience of introducing the first of these methods to law enforcement culture in a medium-size agency will be described, critiqued and discussed. Participants will be asked to contribute to current methods and offer creative ways to translate, introduce and assess mindfulness-based trainings in a law enforcement setting.

CONTENT

The stressors of police work have human and organizational consequences. To date, the American Policing Institution (API) has provided too few resources to its first responders that nurture resiliency for the chronic and traumatic stressors of police work. Recognizing this critical industry need, the FBI Behavioral Science Unit has launched an officer wellness educational campaign to make police leadership aware of “the toxic effects of their profession.”¹ In the wake of military action abroad, mental health clinicians and medical researchers have discovered ground-breaking facts of neuroscience that have proven application in military and police training and conditioning.² Mindfulness Training stands to provide the link between the API and the people it serves. This link is through officers that are more effective in their service, have greater emotional intelligence and relational leadership, and serve their communities with a foundation of wellness and Mindfulness. This foundation of mindfulness offers healing for the suffering innate to the duties of police work and rejuvenates the idealism that draws men and women to police service: to be part of something greater than themselves.

Administrative and Cultural Relevance

- Officer Wellness
- Officer Performance Enhancement
- Operational Risk Reduction

Incorporating Mindfulness Training (MT) into Culture through Strategic Leadership

- Training in Emotional Intelligence
- Introductory MT for key organizational change agents
- Ongoing MBSR (modified to be culturally relevant) courses

Advantages of MT for Professional and Personal Lives of First Responders

- Sets officers on a path toward holistic wellness
- Builds resilience for difficulties of the job, and life
- Teaches Proactive, Adaptive coping techniques that can be integrated into lifestyle
- Benefits and applications beyond the Watch...better relationships at home

¹ Beyond Survival. Samuel Feemster. *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*. May 2009.

² Stanley, Elizabeth A. and Amishi P. Jha. *Mind Fitness and Metal Armor: Enhancing Performance and Building Warrior Resilience*. Joint Force Quarterly, No. 55 (October 2009)

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