

Coping With Stress.....

Professionals in the fields of law enforcement and other public service fields have unique challenges when coping with both on the job and personal stresses. These groups of professionals regularly deal with sometimes violent, impulsive, and predatory members of society. Those that work in law enforcement put their lives on the line, and confront the ugly nature within our society that the rest of the population views from a sanitized distance. Law enforcement professionals are frequently criticized by citizens, the media, the judicial system, adversarial attorneys, social service personnel, and their own administrators and law enforcement agencies. When these individuals have hit their maximum with the amount of stress they can handle, often times professional treatment is necessary. Understanding when you or someone you know may need to seek outside help is key. Symptoms that can be present in someone experiencing a stress overload may include numbed responsiveness, impaired memory alternating with intrusive, disturbing images of the incident, irritability, hypervigilance, impaired concentration, sleep disturbance, anxiety, depression, phobic avoidance, social withdrawal, and substance abuse. For others, there may be no singular traumatic event but the cumulative weight of a number of more mundane stresses over the course of one's career.

Most professionals within these fields deal with stresses by using a variety of coping and defense mechanisms, such as repression, displacement, isolation of feelings, humor often seemingly callous or crass humor and "toughing it out". These coping mechanisms may help in the short term but in the long term fail to adequately address the problem.

The importance of understanding the presence of these unique stresses and the significance of adequate treatment is evidenced by statistical data. In the United States, two-thirds of officers involved in shootings suffer moderate or severe problems and about 70 percent leave the profession within seven years of the incident. Law enforcement workers are admitted to hospitals at higher rates than the general population and rank third among occupations in premature death rates. Tragically, about 300 annually, die by their own hand as are killed in the line of duty. In New York City, the suicide rate for police officers is more than double the rate for the general population. Often, problems involving alcohol or romantic crises are the catalyst, and easy access to a lethal weapon provides the ready means.

....continued next column.

There is the additional risk of confiscation of their guns or other career setbacks if they report distress or request help.

However, those that do seek professional help often find a secure place away from the judgments of co-workers and find relief for an opportunity to discuss their issues openly. Many departments and agencies have policies and procedures that can be followed to gain access to treatment services when needed. Knowing that other professional peers do and have experienced the same types of issues can be the first step to adequately coping with issues.

-- Reference: Law Enforcement Traumatic Stress: Clinical Syndromes and Intervention Strategies by Laurence Miller, PhD at <http://www.aets.org/arts/art87.htm>



The Dangers of Holiday Drinking and Driving

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), last year 10,228 people were killed in alcohol-impaired driving crashes, including 415 in the second half of December alone.

----Reference: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration at www.nhtsa.org

This Is Your Brain On Reading?

“Because it calls into play several different areas of the brain, reading is more neuro-biologically demanding than processing images or speech. Watching a movie or listening to books on tape will work out and expand your brain but not at the same level that reading can”. According to author Dillan Barmmer in his recent article in *Renew Magazine*, reading demands intelligence, concentration and imagination. Brammer writes, “From keeping your memory sharp and enhancing your learning capacity to setting the stage for new activities and passions, reading is the ultimate brain exercise.....there’s also a very calming and soothing aspect that often comes with digging into a good book or article”. According to the author, the benefits of reading can be more dramatic and beneficial for someone who has an addiction, which is becoming increasingly understood as a brain disease. Many people in recovery dealing with underlying disorders can benefit from reading. Reading can provide a focused activity for them and have positive effects on the brain.

— Reference: *RENEW MAGAZINE*: Jan/Feb 2012 issue
“Read This!” by Dillan Barmmer

The Importance of Funding

80% of drug court professionals reported that insufficient state or federal funding was the primary obstacle limiting the capacity of their Drug Courts. Among all respondents, the top three factors most commonly identified included insufficient state and federal funding and an insufficient availability of treatment slots.

NADCP Perspectives.....

Drug Court professionals can refute criticisms best when they accomplish the institutionalization of best practice standards for their programs, which indicate not only which protocols improve outcomes and save money, but also which practices impair results and waste resources.

Science is accomplishing considerably more than substantiating the 10 Key Components. It is defining them in concrete terms, transforming them into best practice standards.

The NADCP has begun work on a strategy to develop evidence based practice standards for the drug court programs. The goal is to set basic, minimum evidence-based practice standards and to provide education and resources for the field.

Government Accountability Office Validates Drug Court Effectiveness

The United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) has issued a report entitled, *ADULT DRUG COURTS: Studies Show Courts Reduce Recidivism, but DOJ Could Enhance Future Performance Measure Revision Efforts*. In its report, the GAO validated existing Drug Court research by examining over 30 scientific studies involving more than 50 Drug Courts. The GAO confirmed, once again, that Drug Courts reduce recidivism and save money.

Reference: National Association of Drug Court Professionals at www.allrise.org

SAVE THE DATE!
***Annual State Drug
Court Conference is
April 5-6th, 2012***

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Office of the Courts.

A copy of this issue
can be found at:

[http://
courts.arkansas.gov](http://courts.arkansas.gov)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Webinars and Resources

E-Learning for Drug Courts at:
<http://e-learning.nycourts.gov/>



National Reentry Resource Center
Recidivism Reduction, Substance abuse and Co-Occurring Disor-
ders at:
[http://www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/training/
webcasts#recid](http://www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/training/webcasts#recid)

“Translating Drug Court Research into
Practice” at:
<http://research2practice.org/>

NDCI’s “Tune In Tuesdays” Webinar series:
[http://www.ndci.org/training/online-trainings-webinars/
webinars](http://www.ndci.org/training/online-trainings-webinars/webinars)

And other useful links.....

<http://www.courtinnovation.org/topic/drug-court>

www.drugfree.org

**The 2011 Legislative Report is now available online at Division of
Drug Court Programs website.**

Contributions, comments and inquiries are welcome. Please submit to:

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