Mental Health and Physical Well Being

NOVEMBER 2026

Challenges faced by first responders seeking help.

STIGMA

FEAR

PERCEPTION OF WEAKNESS

EMBARRASSED

THESE ARE JUST A FEW – THEY ARE ENDLESS

Objectives

UNDERSTAND THAT THE MENTAL / PSYCHOLOGICAL ISSUES CAN BE ACCUMALATIVE VERSUS ACUTE.

HAVE AN AWARESS TO THE SIGNS OF MENTAL STRESS.

BE ABLE TO LIST THE 8 DIMENSIONS OF WELLNESS.

Mental Health & First Responders

WARNING SIGNS

- ANXIETY OR NERVOUSNESS
- ANGER OR AGGRESSION
- APPETITE OR WEIGHT CHANGE
- CHANGES IN SLEEP
- LOW ENERGY OR MOTIVATION
- ISOLATION OR WITHDRAWAL

TYPES OF SUPPORT

- PSYCHOTHERAPY
- SUPPORT GROUPS
- MEDICATION MANAGEMENT

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

IF YOU HAVE BEEN EXPEREINCING ANY WARNING SIGNS OR CHANGES IN MOOD OR BEHAVIOR FOR **MORE THAN TWO WEEKS**, SEEK SUPPORT.

MAINTAINING POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH

- ENGAGE IN HOBBIES
- GET INVOLVED WITH NATURE
- EXERCISE OFTEN
- SPEND TIME WITH OTHERS
- MAINTAIN A HEALTHY DIET

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COUNSELING & CONSULTING

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BEINSPIREDCC.COM

Statement of Issue

NATIONAL EMS MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

Mental Health and Stress in Emergency Medical Services

The institution of Emergency Medical Services, by design, sends people into environments where high stressors abound. Providers care for people whose drunk driving just killed an entire family; they transport children that have suffered facial trauma at the abusive hands of their parents; they hold the hand and, through a smile, reassure the soul of someone that is passing away in front of them because their patient's long battle with cancer is lost. These examples may seem graphic to some, but they are very real to EMS professionals, and they occur frequently.

It should not be a surprise that these stressors can lead to post-traumatic stress, acute stress, cumulative stress, and depression. Furthermore, it is not only reasonable to predict that these mental health issues can put a provider at risk for accidents or cause them to make critical errors due to impaired judgment, decision-making, and concentration, but these conditions will undoubtedly put a person at greater risk of either contemplating or attempting suicide.

Challenges

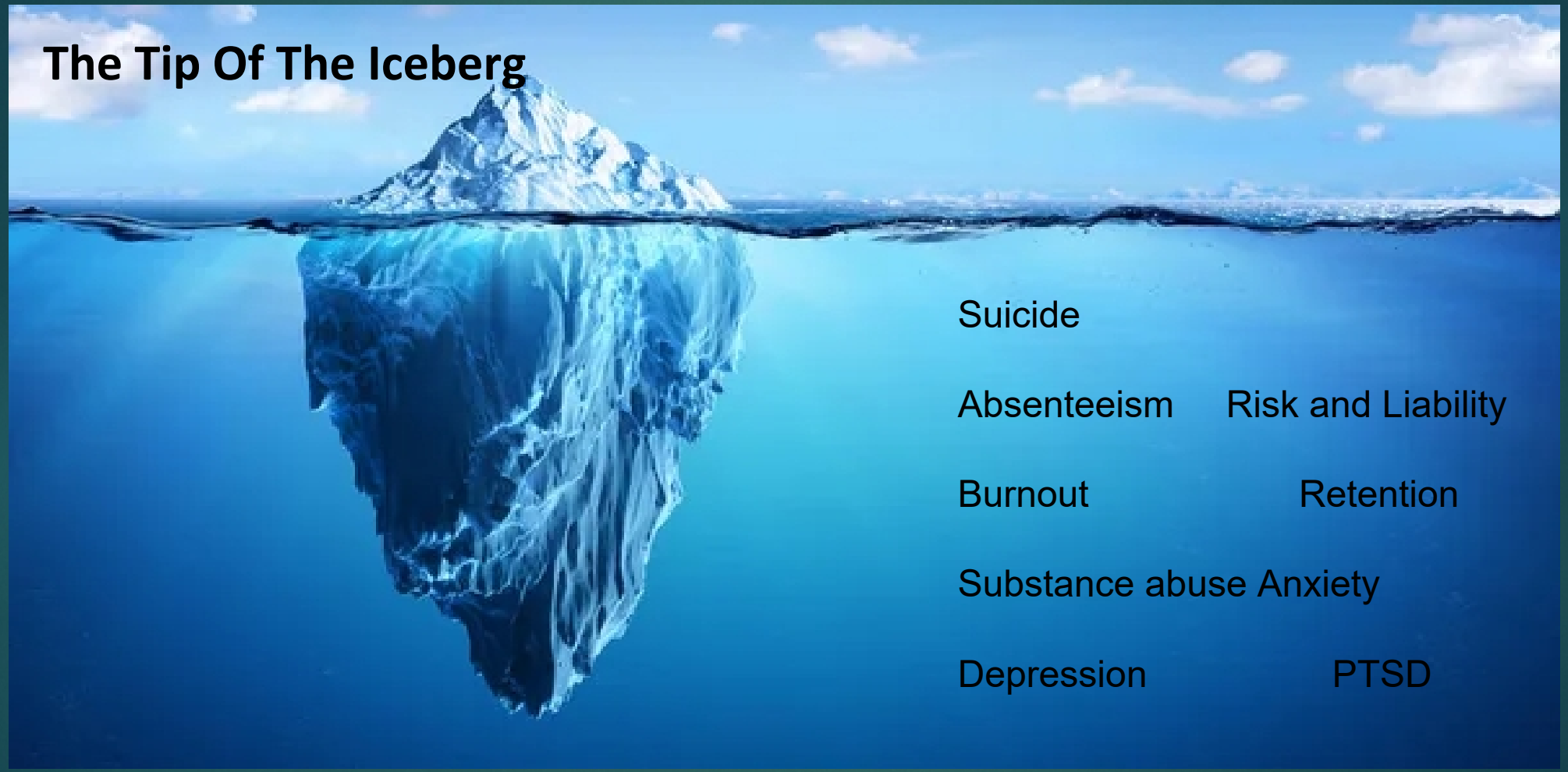
- More first responders die by suicide than in the line of duty
- Avg $400K spent annually on leave of absence, absenteeism and overtime
- Retention & early retirement - $150K- $250K per employee

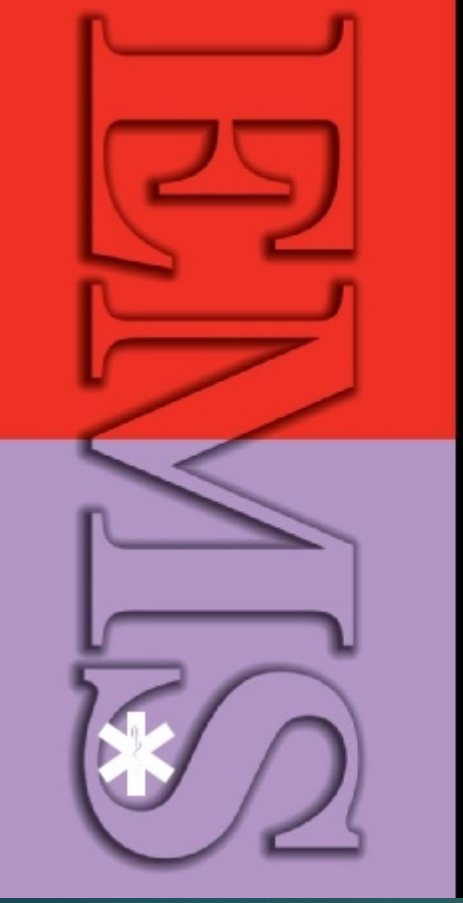
According to an NLC-RISC analysis on impact of PTSD on Work Comp Claims (16 participating member pools):

- Avg age of claim is 43 years
- Avg length of service is 12 years
- Avg cost is $134K per claim

- Expansion of PTSD Presumption to include EMS, Fire, Police and Dispatch
- Burden of Proof shifting to employer (organizational)

The Tip Of The Iceberg





EMERGENCY

MEDICAL

SERVICES

AGENDA

FOR

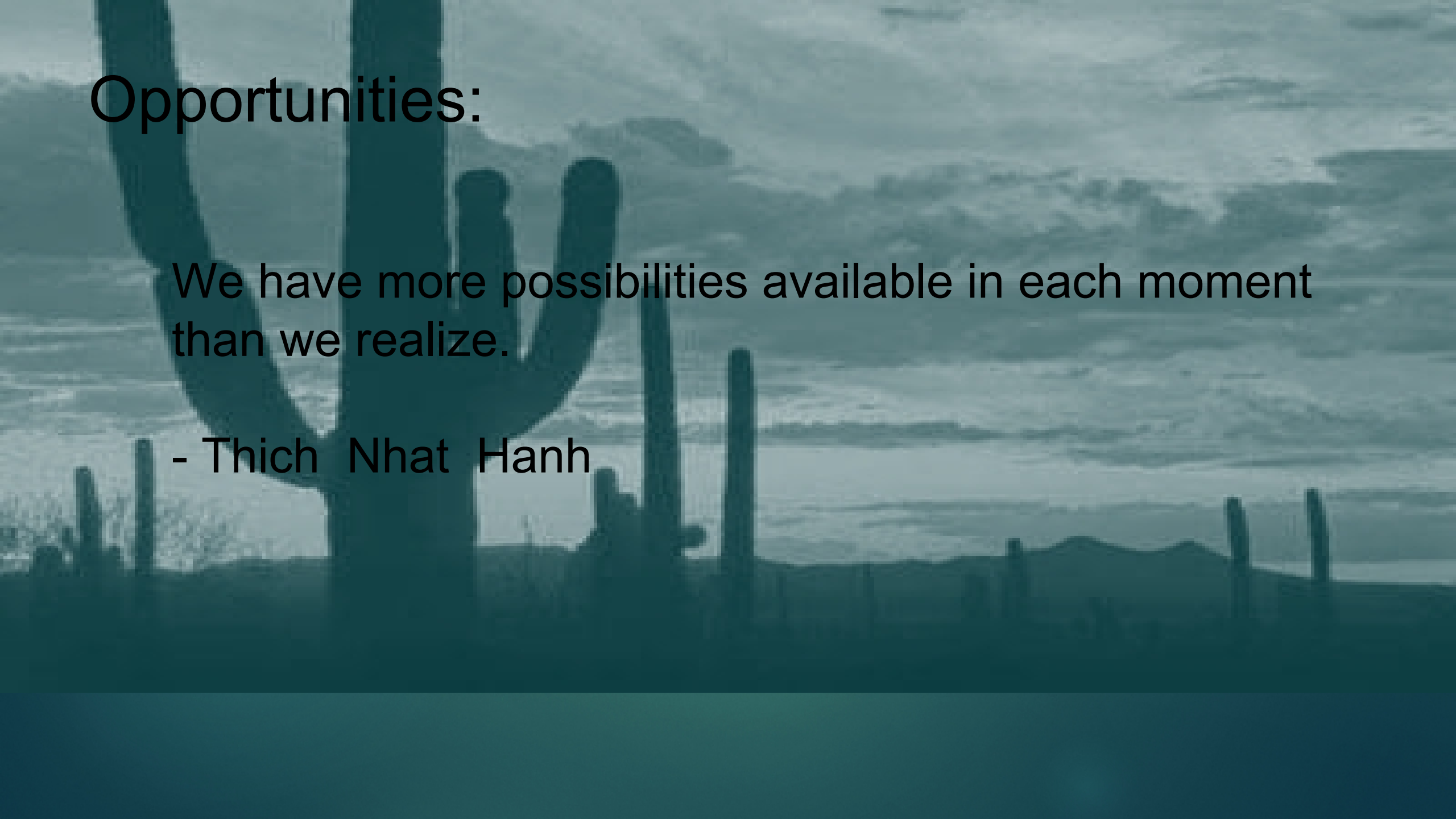
THE

FUTURE

"REGARDLESS OF HOW INTEGRATION WITH OTHER HEALTH CARE SERVICES AND INCREASED USE OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY CHANGES THE PICTURE OF EMS, HUMAN RESOURCES REMAIN OUR MOST PRECIOUS COMMODITY. WITHOUT EFFECTIVE "CARE" OF OUR HUMAN RESOURCES, THIS EXERCISE BECOMES ACADEMIC."

Roadmap for Helping our First Responders Help Others





Opportunities:

We have more possibilities available in each moment than we realize.

- Thich Nhat Hanh

The First Responder

- First on scene of accidents, medical emergencies, and acts of violence
- Care for victims of domestic violence, child abuse, extricate mangled bodies from crashed vehicles
- Occasionally must physically restrain combative patients
- Comfort and calm family members when a death has occurred
- Culture of “being strong and pushing through adversity”

The Sequelae

- These events can lead to the development of negative emotional states
- Psychological problems that result from emotional trauma can be acute or cumulative and take a variety of forms from mild to severe
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a more severe form with symptoms of disturbing thoughts, anxiety, poor sleep, and mental or physical distress
- Untreated PTSD raises a sufferer's risk of chronic pain (headaches/back pain, absenteeism, presenteeism, etc.) and suicide

WELL-BEING – DIMENSIONS OF WELLNESS

Agenda

- What is well-being?
- Eight dimensions of wellness
- Self-assessment
- Reflection
- Action plan

WELL-BEING – DIMENSIONS OF WELLNESS

What is Well-Being?

A good or satisfactory state of existence; a state characterized by health, happiness, and prosperity; welfare.

https://www.dictionary.com/browse/wellbeing



WELL-BEING – DIMENSIONS OF WELLNESS



WELL-BEING – DIMENSIONS OF WELLNESS

Eight Dimensions of Wellness

1. **Emotional Wellness**

   Coping effectively with life and creating satisfying relationships.

2. **Spiritual Wellness**

   Expanding our sense of purpose and meaning in life.

3. **Intellectual Wellness**

   Recognizing creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills.

4. **Physical Wellness**

   Recognizing the need for, and seeking out, good nutrition, sleep, and physical activity.

WELL-BEING – DIMENSIONS OF WELLNESS

Eight Dimensions of Wellness

5. **Environmental Wellness**

   Cultivating good health by occupying pleasant, stimulating environments that support well-being.

6. **Financial Wellness**

   Satisfaction with current and future financial situations.

7. **Occupational Wellness**

   Personal satisfaction and enrichment from one's work.

8. **Social Wellness**

   Developing a sense of connection, belonging, and a well-developed support system.

WELL-BEING – DIMENSIONS OF WELLNESS

Self-Assessment

Scan QR code or go to
https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3KpjbU5fC2NmBiS



PURDUE UNIVERSITY | Steps to Leaps

WELL-BEING – DIMENSIONS OF WELLNESS

Reflection

- Were you surprised by your results? If so, why?
- Which dimension of wellness needs work, and what is one change you want to make?
- Who do you know who could keep you accountable?
- Which dimension of wellness do you think would be the most difficult to improve?

Reactive versus Proactive

MOST SYSTEMS REACT

- ACTION STARTS AT THE TIME OF THE INCIDENT

MODELS ARE DESIGNED TO BE REACTIVE

- DOWNFALLS
- THE RESPONSE IS MANUAL
- PEOPLE DRIVEN – SOMEONE HAS TO NOTICE AN ACTION IS NEEDED
- INEFFICIENT

Workplace Culture

Plays a significant role in how first responders react and deal with trauma

- Stigma associated with mental health conditions continues to have a negative effect on well-being and the desire to seek out support and assistance
- Fear of saying the wrong things in a difficult setting and possibly risking loss of occupation
- Often there is great concern, when sharing symptoms, of lost confidentiality

Only a shift in culture will lessen these barriers

- Must address the problematic issues as a group, not a top-down mandate
- Everyone must be committed to change

Positive Consequences of Cultural Shift

- Greater productivity, attendance and worker engagement
- Reduction in absenteeism with fewer performance and morale issues

Creating Long-Term Change

- Normalizing Proactive Mental Fitness
- Routine Wellness Checks
- Peer Support
- Data-Driven Early Detection & Intervention

What are the needs?

Early Intervention and Prevention	Tailored Support	Education and Training	Privacy
Online programs can facilitate early intervention and prevention of more serious mental health issue	Cater specifically to the unique mental health needs and challenges of First Responders	Equip First Responders with the tools they need to better manage their mental health	Some First Responders may be hesitant to seek help due to concerns with stigma and privacy

Support for Mental Wellbeing

State Level Program

- Strategy and Program Development
- Workplace Campaigns/Training
- Intervention/Treatment Overview
- Peer Networks

Clinical Application

- Behavioral Health Assessment
- Routine mental health checks
- Treatment via Tele-Therapy

Web-Based Programming & Resources (Focus on Prevention)

- Website – Desktop access to Assessment, Training, Education, Support, Resources & Treatment
- Immediate access to Resources, Tools, Therapy and Support

Financial Protection

- Support when Diagnosed with PTSD or Similar Mental Health Condition
- Suite of Benefits to Offset Costs of Diagnosis
- No coordination with Workers' Compensation system

Supporting Public Safety Health & Wellness:

What Are You Doing?

Its Not just a Personal Thing!

- Leadership
  - Supervisor roles
- Partners
  - Shift partner /partners
  - Colleagues –

  - They all face the same things. How do we recognize the effects of mental health in our teammates and or co-workers

Signs of emotional / mental stress

ARE THEY LESS ENTHUSIASTIC IN THE JOB

MOOD / BEHAVIOR CHANGES

AVOID SOCIAL EVENTS

SEEM WITHDRAWN

CHANGE IN SLEEP / EATING PATTERNS

UNKEMPT

LESS TALKATIVE

What to do.

BE PROACTIVE

- GENTLY ASK IF THEY ARE OKAY
- BE SUPPORTIVE / ACTIVE LISTENING

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANT PROGRAMS

- AWESOME RESOURCE – DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION HAVE ONE

IF YOU ARE CONCERNED SHARE YOU CONCERN

- DO NOT ASSUME THEY WILL BE FINE

Mental Health Month

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

TOOLKITS / RESOURCES

HTTPS://WWW.WORKPLACEMENTALHEALTH.ORG/EMPLOYER-RESOURCES/GUIDES-AND-TOOLKITS/MAY-IS-MENTAL-HEALTH-MONTH-TOOLKIT

HTTPS://WWW.WORKPLACEMENTALHEALTH.ORG/MENTAL-HEALTH-TOPICS/RESILIENCE

HTTPS://WWW.WORKPLACEMENTALHEALTH.ORG/MENTAL-HEALTH-TOPICS/WORKPLACE-STRESS

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AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION. STIGMA, PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS. MARCH 2024. HTTPS://WWW.PSYCHIATRY.ORG/PATIENTS-FAMILIES/STIGMA-AND-DISCRIMINATION