In a recent survey, we asked readers of Street Talk what topics they would like us to discuss in upcoming articles. We received many good ideas, but the overwhelming request was dealing with stress.

We all know that law enforcement seems to wrap its arms around stress. Perhaps a bear hug would be more accurate. Long hours, switching shifts, working holidays, midnights, dealing with the public; all of these factors make law enforcement unique. The unpredictability of our job and the inevitable two hours of quiet, followed by one minute of mayhem, will burden even the strongest of hearts.

This article will be the first in a series dedicated to discussing ways to deal with stress. We hope you can find some ideas that will make your life a little easier.

Why is this important? A recent study by the University of Buffalo stated that the daily stress of police work puts officers at a greater risk for long-term physical and mental health effects, including obesity, cancer, sleeplessness and suicide. John Violanti, PhD, a professor at the University of Buffalo stated, “Usually, health disparities are defined by socioeconomic and ethnic factors, but here you have a health disparity caused by an occupation.” The study emphasizes the need for police officers to be educated about the signs of stress and how to get treatment for their problems.

Get Control of Your Life
We have control over many of the things that add stress to our life. It’s time for you to get a handle on some of the things that make your everyday life more stressful.

Get Organized
• It’s not doing a lot of things; it’s doing the right things, that is important.
• Remove the clutter from your life. If you don’t use it, get rid of it. If you don’t wear it, give it away. If it’s broken, throw it away. Your ten-speed that has been hanging in your garage for 20 years needs to go.
• Take your time. Leave early. If you are always rushing, it’s because you are not giving yourself enough time. Eliminate the distractions and slow down. It’s amazing how an extra ten minutes makes all the difference in a hectic schedule. Try leaving for work ten minutes earlier than you do now.
• Carry a notebook and pen. We all have one at work. Get into the habit of keeping one with you at all times...in the car, by the phone, on your nightstand.

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This helps when you need to remember the errand after work, the soccer practice, or the meeting at church.

Change
- Don’t stress over change you cannot control. The big three are: weather, traffic and your boss. You have no control over these. Take a deep breath and learn to roll with it. If you have that mindset, it will help contain your stress.
- Try to reduce or eliminate change you can control. How many times have we seen the guy at work that gets married, buys a house and has a kid in the span of one year? Those are all stress-related experiences you control. Try not to add stress to your life intentionally. Make the big changes when you are prepared to handle them. Especially when finances are an issue.

Worry
- Ninety percent of everything we worry about never happens. It’s true. In the next few days, write down (in your notebook) everything that you are worrying about and test this statement. You will find we often worry about things that turn out to be a lot less of a big deal than we thought. Try to keep it real.
- Always worry with a notebook and a pen. Writing it down can help get it organized in your head.

- Worry can affect your personal life and work life in a lot of negative ways. You become physically and emotionally drained.
- Try to talk with someone about what’s bothering you. Maybe it’s a trusted co-worker, a family member or friend, or someone who is a professional. The worst thing you can do is keep it to yourself. None of us are Superman; we need help to make things right.

Many departments have excellent EAP programs that address many of the topics in this article. Take the time to get familiar with your program. If you need help, be smart, and take advantage of this valuable resource. Think about it. When the public needs help, they call the police. When we need help, why should we be different?

Make the call.

Major Dan Fitzgerald is the Assistant Chief of Police for Brentwood. He currently chairs the Street Talk Advisory Committee.
When Lesley Levin was chosen in 1995 as President & CEO of Behavioral Health Response, she faced a challenging environment. She was responsible for starting a new organization that was unique in several ways.

BHR wasn’t just going to offer phone-based crisis counseling for the general public. It was going to do so with state-of-the-art technology:

- enough staff to answer calls in less than 30 seconds
- masters-level clinicians who could provide immediate crisis intervention
- a database of resources for follow-up referrals
- the infrastructure to collect data on thousands of calls each month

BHR was also going to serve as the crisis services hub for this area’s Community Mental Health Centers system. And it was going to offer a radically new service for our area called a Mobile Outreach Team.

Not content to deliver only what was required, Lesley made sure BHR became a “partner” in the mental health community. Doing so, BHR has contributed time, financial support and staff expertise to numerous initiatives, committees and projects with other agencies.

Now, after 17 years of leadership and innovation, Lesley is retiring.

We want to acknowledge and thank Lesley for the many ways BHR has supported the law enforcement community in so many ways.

- In 1998, BHR responded to Mental Health America’s (MHA’s) request to partner together to produce *Street Talk*, the first mental health newsletter specifically for area law enforcement. BHR has consistently participated on the Advisory Committee and provided staff support for design/layout of every edition.
- BHR became an integral partner of the CIT (Crisis Intervention Team) program when it was established in the region in 2002. Hundreds of hours of BHR staff time have been given to the program in the form of Council leadership, attending national conferences, serving on numerous committees, presenting at training sessions, participating in role plays, as well as providing meeting space for dozens of committee meetings. BHR has also provided financial support of the annual CIT Awards Banquet.
- In 2004, BHR responded to a request from Mental Health America (MHA) to partner together to develop and deliver half-day training sessions for 911 Dispatchers and Call-Takers. These professionals are not typically thought of as law enforcement, but their ability to gather and relay pertinent information during a mental health crisis call can have a huge impact for the officer being dispatched.
- For the past two years, BHR has been the Presenting Sponsor of MHA’s McAtee Police Recognition Award Luncheon. This support enhances MHA’s ability to honor police officers who have shown exemplary understanding and compassion when assisting someone during a psychiatric crisis.

These are just a few examples of the many ways BHR has had a positive impact on community agencies, and most importantly, the people served by those agencies.

*Lesley, Thank You for 17 years of dedication to the mental health community, and best of luck in your next chapter of “life after BHR.”*

Lesley officially retires on December 1, at which time Pat Coleman will become BHR’s second President & CEO.
It would seem youth are increasingly coming into contact with scary, violent and traumatic events.

As a result, more and more professionals who work with children - in any capacity - have to assist them not only during the time of the trauma, but also after the incident.

After the incident is the time when the child is struggling to understand what happened and to cope with new feelings. Hopefully I can answer a few questions that may give you some ideas about how you can help a child who has been through a traumatic experience.

What is a traumatic experience?
In a way, trauma is person-specific; what may be traumatic for one person may not be for another. Trauma also has a wide range of severity and individuals will move through the resulting emotions at their own rate.

Common traumatic events are abuse and neglect of any nature; experiencing a violent event, death, and war. Children certainly may experience all of these things; however, the event does not have to be that severe. Being separated from a loved one, all forms of bullying, witnessing or hearing about a scary event, even one not related to the child, e.g., a news story can be traumatic.

What happens to someone after they have had a traumatic experience?
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is the diagnosis most often related to trauma, but this does not mean that all people who experience something traumatic will have PTSD. Trauma is different for everyone, and the true measure will be how the person’s life has been affected after the event. Anxiety, depression, panic attacks and sudden mood swings can be experienced by people who have had a traumatic experience. Usually these things are triggered by something that’s causing that person to relive the trauma, or reminds them of that trauma, such as seeing someone.
Most emergency responder organizations today offer an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Not EPA, the Environmental Protection Agency, but EAP, Employee Assistance Program.

If you had to turn to your co-worker or spouse and ask “What is an EAP?” or “Who is our EAP vendor?”, this article will provide good information. If the person responds with the right answer, then your EAP and Benefits Manager are doing a solid job of promoting this invaluable benefit.

If the person looks at you without a clue of what you’re talking about, then more EAP visibility is needed.

EAP is more than you might think

Historically, EAP services focused on substance abuse. The EAP concept originated in the 1970s in an effort to reduce substance abuse and intoxication in the workplace. Over the past 30 years, EAPs have changed dramatically in the way they function and the type of services they now offer.

An EAP is an employee benefit set up and paid for by your employer, to provide you with assistance in dealing with those personal concerns that may affect home or work life. This benefit is also available to your eligible dependents.

EAPs have evolved to deal with a variety of issues such as:
- marital problems
- depression
- loneliness (even though you may have 400 Facebook friends)
- anger management
- anxiety
- physical illness
- eating disorders
- gambling
- Internet addiction
- and more

EAPs also provide assistance with:
- child and elder care resources
- eldercare management assistance
- financial consultation
- legal consultation
- preparation of a will
- tobacco cessation
- weight and nutrition consultation - These services can assist if you happen to have high cholesterol, blood pressure, are borderline diabetic, or want to lose or gain weight, and much more

All EAP counseling and work/life services are confidential and the services are provided at no cost to you. The EAP will not disclose any information about your participation in the EAP unless you give your specific, written consent to do so (except as required by law).

EAP staff may include:
- licensed mental health professionals
- registered dietitians
- attorneys
- certified financial planners
- specialists in child and elder care services, parenting, education, organization and time management, health coaches, and specially trained crisis responders.

You can begin to see why an employer with an established EAP can often attract and keep better talent than an otherwise similar employer without an EAP.

Given the nature of law enforcement, Employee Assistance Programs also offer assistance for employees, their families and co-workers who experience significant trauma. Your EAP’s network of trained crisis responders is available to provide services that minimize the emotional impact of the trauma and reduce recovery time for affected individuals.

These services may include:
⇒ Onsite critical incident de-briefing
⇒ Psychological first aid
⇒ Grief/loss intervention

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In July, the St. Louis Area CIT Program sponsored its third 3-day training for law enforcement officers who respond to mental health crises involving youth. In St. Louis County alone, an average of 40 CIT reports each month involve youth under the age of 19. The St. Louis Area CIT Program was the fourth CIT Program nationwide to develop Youth CIT training.

Amy Willenbrock, St. Louis County Police Officer and School Resource Officer, facilitated the training developed by the training committee. The various blocks of training focused on mental health issues affecting youth, such as brain development, medications, autism, suicide, Individual Education Plans (IEPs), self-harm or cutting, and many more.

Officer Joseph Klipsch, St. Louis County Officer and SRO wrote:

“Barry,

It's not a habit of mine to email about training, but I feel this one is warranted. I have gone on a lot of training that, when finished, left me feeling like there was a lot left on the table. Youth CIT was just the opposite. I left feeling I could immediately apply 80 to 90 percent of what we talked about. Please express to the speakers that the Rockwood SROs in attendance felt the same way. Minus a couple blocks of school case law, I learned more valuable information for school here than the Basic SRO class I took last summer.

I do have one block that I think would be beneficial to an SRO, but might be a little outside the CIT program.

Introduce a block discussing the aftermath of a student suicide or tragic sudden death from a student's/youth’s point of view. It is common to hear after a major incident the school will have extra counselors available. What do they hear from students? What do they say to the kids to help them cope? What could a police officer do to help make them feel safe?

As police we train to prevent, but as we discussed, even the best of plans are not successful 100% of the time after we leave them. As a police officer on the street, we don't have a lot of contact with the family/friends of the deceased unless we decide to make contact once again. In a school setting, SROs are forced to re-enter the same environment with the kids that who were affected by the death. Personally, I think it would be beneficial if I knew a little about what a middle school-aged mind is thinking after a situation like this.”

As Joe suggested, the training committee will discuss and add a block on the aftermath of a tragic incident.

We will offer another Youth CIT Training in 2013 that, hopefully, will not conflict with any other SRO training. Youth CIT Training is open to any officer who has attended the 40-hour basic CIT Training from any of the statewide programs. I will contact department CIT representatives with the dates and location as soon as it is scheduled. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact Officer Willenbrock or me by email.

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barmfield@stlouisco.com
When complex psychiatric crises warrant law enforcement intervention, it sometimes takes teamwork to find a solution. This is one such case. Officers Hurley, Collins and Zeller were honored for their efforts at MHA’s 2012 McAtee Police Recognition Awards. Also deserving recognition for their involvement are Chief Chris Pigg, staff from Behavioral Health Response (BHR), Comtrea and Jefferson Regional Medical Center, and the Jefferson County Public Administrator.

This past March, Officer Deborah Hurley of Herculaneum responded to a call from the BHR Mental Health Crisis Hotline. The worker had just spoken with a man who stated he was going to kill himself.

At the residence, Hurley made contact with the resident; Officer Ed Zeller (Pevely) was on hand for assistance. Hurley began a conversation with the man, who denied his statement about wanting to kill himself. She kept the situation calm, not yet aware the man had been committed to a hospital twice in less than a year. The man clearly did not want help and was trying to convince the officer he was okay. Officer Blake Collins (Herculaneum) arrived at the scene and continued the rapport he had established with the resident during a previous well-being check. Collins was knowledgeable about the man’s diagnosis of bi-polar illness.

When the man asked for a cigarette, he allowed Officer Zeller to enter the house. When Zeller saw a box of .45 ammo in the living room, he knew they had a serious situation. A second trip for cigarettes led to the discovery of two handguns in the bedroom. The man refused to go voluntarily to the hospital, but he eventually said he would go for an assessment and was transported to Jefferson Regional Medical Center by Officer Hurley.

Evaluators explained they could not admit the man until there was proof he was a danger to himself. Officer Hurley contacted the crisis counselor at BHR who provided a statement which allowed the hospital to take action and begin treatment.

Hurley’s report of the situation was extremely useful three days later when the man’s parents came to the police department to report their son as missing. They had been trying to reach him by phone, and eventually decided to travel from their home in Arkansas in order to locate him. Because the parents were from out of town, they didn’t know who to contact or what steps to take, so they went to the police. Using Hurley’s report, Chief Pigg explained the situation and discussed their son’s involuntary commitment. He also connected the parents to the mental health organizations involved, which provided them with emotional support and helped to formulate a long-term plan.

The police continued to work the case. Over the next several months, they participated in numerous conversations with the parents, visited the man’s home to document the living conditions, and helped facilitate communication between the parents and the Public Administrator’s office.

In April, Chief Pigg nominated the three officers for their persistence, patience and professional behavior, which resulted in long-term care for a very ill man in a situation that might otherwise have turned tragic.

For the past four months, the subject has been receiving intensive treatment, and was recently released into his parents’ custody. Before heading back to Arkansas, the subject and his father stopped by the police department to express their gratitude to everyone for saving this man’s life and getting him the treatment he so desperately needed.

Congratulations to everyone for a job well done!
At times, especially as an emergency responder, balancing the demands of work and home life may create real challenges. Your health, both physical and emotional, is essential to your personal success and to your organization.

As the Director of Account Services for an EAP that covers thousands of St. Louis area first responders, it is my job and passion to remind you that an EAP is far more than a nice employee benefit. I’ve seen over and over again what a difference an EAP can make in peoples’ lives. So, next time you witness your family member or co-worker struggling with finances or a challenging relationship, or dealing with grief and loss, pick up the telephone and call your EAP. See what you can do to encourage the person to seek out services. Direct the person to the EAP poster or brochure. You’ll be so glad you did. And, that person will really thank you. So will I.

Jeff Elden, a licensed counselor with eight years experience in mental health, works with children and adolescents at Comtre, Inc. in Jefferson County.

Lauren B. Tucker is the Director of Account Services at Personal Assistance Services. Learn more at 800-356-0845 or www.paseap.com.