

POLICE AS VICTIMS OF CRIME:

Building resilience in contemporary Policing.

“What disturbs men’s minds is not events, but their judgements on events”. Epictitus 55-135 AD

“Any abnormal reaction to an abnormal situation is normal behaviour”. Victor Frankl.

“Cops aren’t authorised to be traumatised”. L. Ken Rogers. US Police Officer.

How this research came about:

- Crisis care (Vietnam Veterans.) 75-82
- Ash Wednesday bushfires 1983 (Prof. Beverly Raphael)
- Crime victims (VOCS South Australia) 89-95
- Mobilong Prison 95-97
- Empower Justice Services P/L 97-2010
- Flinders University 2010-?

The research: How to build a PHD

- The process
- Settling on the question
- Jumping the hurdles
- The process of becoming..... A scholar

The title:

Resilience among Police in Australia: “Cops aren’t authorised to be traumatised!”

The inspiration:

John Endersby: ex Prison Officer.

“Monsters in the dark”. 2004

The autobiographies:

- “The cost of Bravery”: Allan Sparkes
- “Crime Scene”: Esther McKay
- “Under Siege”: Belinda Neil
- “Jack Knife: The crashing of a Policeman.” Paul Horner
- “Forensic Investigator” Esther McKay (Geof Bernasconi)
- “Post traumatic stress disorder: A Police officer’s report:”
Ken Rogers, Michigan USA
- “After the smoke clears; Surviving the Police Shooting. An analysis of the post officer- involved shooting trauma”
Adam Pasciak Ph.D USA
- “Death work” Police, trauma and the psychology of survival” Vincent Henry. New York USA

The themes that emerged:

- Lack of self-care (inability to say “no”, high level of commitment to the job).
- Exposure to grotesque death scenes.
- Lack of positive feedback from the organisation.
- No recognition of early symptoms of PTSD.
- Impact of Police culture on talking about symptoms.
- Sadness/tears
- Temper outbursts. Irritable on and off duty.
- Alcohol abuse
- Prescription drugs and self-medication.
- Risk taking behaviour (drink driving, gambling, smoking, diet,)

The themes: (cont.)

- Sleep problems (linked with alcohol and prescription drugs)
- Absence from close relationships. (Gilmartin: “The special chair.”)
- Lack of post-operational debriefs.
- Suicidal ideation.
- Lack of confidence in the “Police Family”.
- PTSD diagnosis career ending.

The Aim of the research:

How have those Officers interviewed remained resilient in the face of the challenges of a Police career?

What does “the literature” say about Policing and resilience? PTSD history and development, PTG, treatment approaches.

How does Police culture and organisational structures influence the health and resilience of members?

What, if anything needs to change?

Resilience:

- Surviving and thriving
- Creative problem solving
- Perseverance (stumble and recover)
- We all have it
- It can be increased
- We can prepare for adversity
- Prevention in stressful situations (better than treatment)

Resilience:

“The ability to bounce back and thrive”.

PTSD

- DSM 5 2013
- “ the result of exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury or sexual violence through either direct experience of the actual event, witnessing the event as it occurs, learning that such an event occurred to a close family member or friend or experiencing repeated or extreme aversive details of the event e.g. first responders collecting human remains or Police Officers repeatedly exposed to details of child abuse.”

Symptoms of PTSD:

- Recurrent, intrusive and distressing memories of the event(s).
- Dreams
- “Flashbacks”
- Distress at cues that are reminders of the event.
- Avoidance
- Change of thinking and moods
- Negative beliefs
- Hyper vigilance, risky behaviour, poor sleep and concentration.

Will we all get PTSD?

No!

Sandy Mc Farlane: Mt Gambier 1983.

Post traumatic growth:

“The experience of positive psychological change, reported by an individual as a result of the struggle with trauma or any extremely stressful event.” Tedeshi and Calhoun

Positive psychology: Looking at strength and potential, not just risk and pathology.

Well-ness and resilience training in the US Military.

Brigadier General Rhonda Cornum.

Professor Beverly Raphael.

The key concepts:

- Wellbeing
- Happiness (Seligman)
- Mindfulness (being self-aware and in the moment)
- Positive psychology

How to create and maintain resilience and well-being: Self-care.

Resilience:

- Sense of autonomy (being able to separate)
- Calm under pressure
- Rational thought
- Self-esteem
- Optimism
- Happiness and emotional intelligence
- Meaning and purpose (what I do matters)
- Humor
- Altruism (learned helpfulness/ love/compassion)

Resilience: (cont.)

- Character/integrity
- Curiosity
- Life balance
- Sociability/social skills
- Adaptability (persistence, hard work, confidence, flexibility, accepting what you can't control, problem solving, coping.)
- Good health habits (sleep, nutrition, exercise, control over alcohol etc.)

The central issue:

Don't own the problem, take a long view of trauma and horror.

“It's not my problem, it's not my loss, it's not my trauma”

Don't take it home....

Martin Seligman:

- “We do not want our legacy to be the streets of Washington full of begging veterans, PTSD, depression, addiction, divorce and suicide. We have read your books and we want to know what you suggest for the army”

Col. Jill Peters. US Army.

Policing and positive psychology:

Police don't have the luxury of leaving the battle zone.

Therefore prevention resilience and maintenance is the key.

Cf: "Psychic numbing" Henry. The balance....

The study:

- Focus
- Autobiographies and emerging themes. Eg. Police culture, “grey literature!”
- Read, read, read! (become obsessed!)
- The Supervisor
- The difference between this and “normal study”

The Police interviews:

“tell me about your career”

Take notes

Keep an open mind

Note themes

Write that up, compare it with the literature, reach conclusions and make recommendations.

Building resilience: a work in progress.

- Needs to be practical and possible. Eg. exercise
- Psycho education- understanding trauma and growth.
- Training
- Kevin Gilmartin: “Emotional survival” Focusing on what you can control. Taking care of yourself.

Readings:

Gilmartin: “Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement”.

Schiraldi: The complete guide.....

“The Evil Hours” David Morris

“Death work” Henry

Maintaining a positive view of the world...

Seligman.....

Possibilities:

Recruitment

Resilience training (Gilmartin)

Early intervention (Sergeants?)

Debriefs

Psycho-education

Regular check ups

Movement through specialist roles (e.g. Family Violence, Crime Scene investigation)

Questions?

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