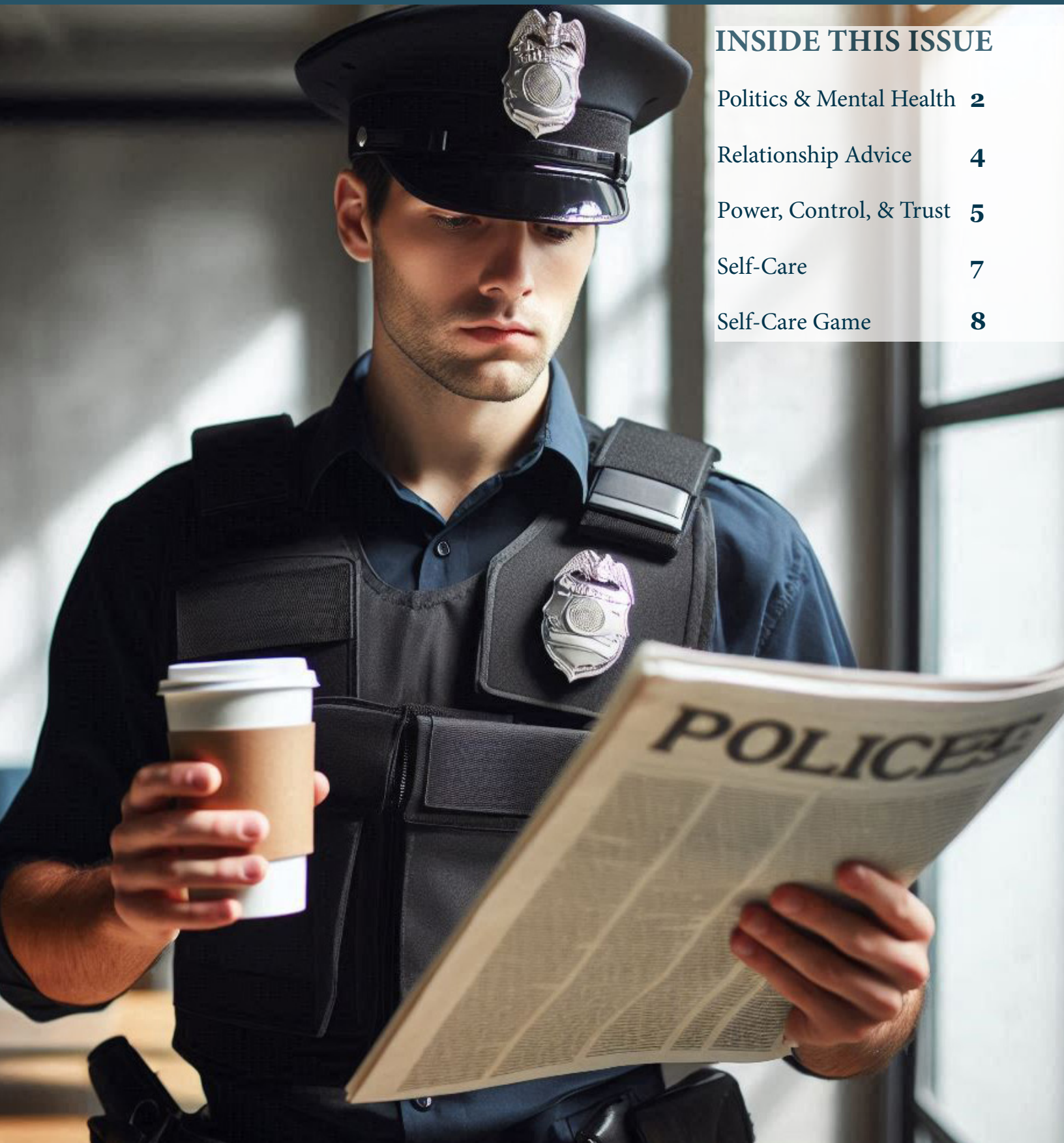




NEWSLETTER



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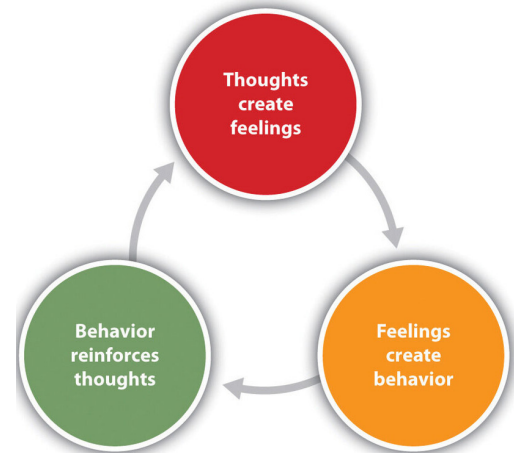


The Impact of Politics on Mental Health

Author: Davena Longshore, CFHC, MEdS, MS, PhD

In 2020, the American Psychological Association issued the following statement: We are facing a national mental health crisis that could yield severe health and social consequences for years to come. Since that time, 45% of adults between the ages of 35 to 44 have a mental health diagnosis, while 50% of adults ages 18 to 34 have a mental illness (American Psychological Association, 2023). With the current cognitive state of many Americans already compromised by a pandemic, soaring rental prices, and inflated food prices, an election season will undoubtedly contribute to worsening individual well-being.

Research has found elections to increase medical treatment by 19%, with most being the treatment of acute respiratory infections, gastrointestinal conditions, and physical injuries (Chang & Meyhoefer, 2023). Physiological changes that take place during election season and when individuals are exposed to election campaigns include increases in cortisol and decreases in testosterone. These hormonal changes lead to more aggression, low mood, increased fear, insomnia, anxiety, and depression (Chang & Meyhoefer, 2023; Niederdeppe et al., 2021). Increasing political polarization among American communities in the last several years has heightened outrage, hostility, and fear, which impact our behavior. According to Niederdeppe et al. (2021), these emotions lead to more antagonistic interactions with others in person and on social media platforms. Have you ever heard of the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) Model of Emotions? This model explains the interconnectedness between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Thoughts generate feelings, impacting our behaviors (see the diagram).



Post-traumatic stress lingering from the pandemic combined with political campaigns that influence how we think about the future impact how we feel. For example, these thoughts can generate uncertainty, fear, hopelessness, and anger. As a result, we may behave in ways that are not personally beneficial and negatively impact our work and home lives.

What are some things we can do to manage the increased stress of a political election?

- First, we can guard our minds from political propaganda. Political campaigns pair their messages with scary music and dark imagery (Niederdeppe et al., 2021), which can cause physiological changes that induce a stress response. Instead of watching news coverage on television or a device, consider reading articles and policy. Reading allows the reader to have more control over the information that enters the conscious and unconscious mind.
- Set a time limit on reading and researching political content. While we want to be informed so we can make informed decisions, limit exposure to content that can increase anxiety, stress, and depression.
- Be aware that elections also impact youth. According to DeJonckheere et al. (2018), youth experience cardiovascular disease, anxiety, depression, aggression, substance abuse,



and behavioral problems in adolescence during political campaigns, and this issue continues into adulthood. Limiting your child's time on social media sites like TikTok and Instagram can reduce their exposure to political content.

- Refrain from discussing political content outside of your intimate social circle. People will have varying opinions, which increases the likelihood of disagreement.
- Take care of yourself physically. Eat well-balanced meals, get sunlight, which helps decrease depression, and get adequate sleep.
- Set small personal goals. Accomplishment can build hope and boost self-esteem, which in turn can reduce hopelessness.

If you feel so overwhelmed during this time that your educational, occupational, and interpersonal life is impacted, consider seeking help from a licensed mental health professional.

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Maintaining Healthy Intimate Partner Relationships

Author: Davena Longshore, CPHC, MEd, MS, PhD



Research has unequivocally shown that job stress and burnout harm the quality of interactions between police officers and their intimate partners (Karaffa et al., 2015). This is primarily due to how stress influences mood and increases the likelihood of negative emotions, manifesting as negative behaviors such as criticism, avoidance, defensiveness, and aggressiveness. The nature of police work, including shift work and long hours, often makes it challenging for officers to spend quality time with their loved ones and participate in family events. As a result, partners may feel neglected and less important than the officer's work responsibilities, leading to resentment.

In response, officers may immerse themselves more in their work to avoid their resentful partner, exacerbating the issue.

The demands of police work often change the personality of those who go into the field. Partners and families report that officers give more authoritative demands, are overprotective, and are cynical. Embedded in police culture are traditional gender role norms, which emphasize aggression, competitiveness, emotional restriction, and control as traits of masculinity (Karaffa et al., 2015). On the contrary, successful intimate relationships require their participants to be empathetic, nurturing, communicative, cooperative, team-oriented, and positive listeners.

Because work stress is related to poor communication and emotional regulation in intimate relationships with law enforcement (McQuerrey et al., 2018), we wanted to provide tips on creating and managing a healthy relationship.

- ❑ **Build secure bonds.** There is a strong correlation between the quality of a relationship and attachment security (McQuerrey et al., 2018). Be dependable, responsive, committed, trustworthy, engaged, and communicate often.
- ❑ **Practice more relationship-conducive characteristics.** Disengage from the “tough” persona when interacting with your partner. Be emotionally expressive, cooperative, and flexible.
- ❑ **Communicate effectively, especially during conflict.** John Gottman coined the “Four Horsemen” communication styles that predict separation or divorce. These communication styles are criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling.
- ❑ **Seek help.** Marriage and family therapists, counseling and clinical psychologists, and clinical social workers specializing in couples therapy techniques can assist you with improving your relationships.

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Navigating Power, Control, & Community Trust

Author: Jordan Pate-Garrett, LMHC, MS

Police officers navigate a complex landscape filled with intense moments that demand quick decisions and courage under pressure. Qualified immunity for police officers has become a buzzing topic during this year's election, sparking significant debate and placing officers at the center of discussions on accountability and justice. Understanding what qualified immunity entails and its potential impact on your role and well-being is essential as the debate unfolds nationwide.

What is Qualified Immunity?

Qualified immunity protects government officials, including police officers, from civil liability when performing their duties, provided their actions do not violate “clearly established” rights that a reasonable person would know (Schwartz, 2018). The idea behind this doctrine is to allow officers to perform their duties without fearing constant lawsuits for their actions on the job. However, the interpretation



and application of qualified immunity can significantly affect how officers are portrayed in their communities, especially when incidents involving the use of force or other contentious encounters occur (Mullenix v. Luna, 2015).

The Perception of Power and Control

The public's perception of qualified immunity as a ‘free pass’ for misconduct can lead to mistrust and tension between law enforcement and the communities they serve (Schwartz, 2020). This perception can influence officers' views, potentially painting them as untouchable or beyond accountability. When the community feels that law enforcement is not held to the same standards as civilians, it can diminish trust, making effective policing more challenging. The urgency of addressing this issue is clear, as it directly impacts the trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve (Goff et al., 2016).

Job pressures can strain an officer's mental well-being considerably, and the added scrutiny or feelings of alienation from the community can compound these challenges (Jetelina et al., 2020). For officers, the “free pass” perception and lack of trust can have a profound impact on their mental health, particularly concerning power and control. In this context, the Stanford Prison Experiment offers a powerful lens through which to view the dynamics of power and control, reminding us of how power and authority affect behavior (Haney et al., 1973)—prompting us to consider the well-being of those who serve and protect.



Navigating Power, Control, & Community Trust continued...

Balancing Protection and Accountability

Officers must be especially vigilant in their decision-making if qualified immunity is passed. Here are some strategies to help you protect yourself, make sound decisions, and maintain community relationships:

- Continuous training and education
- Self-awareness and reflection
- Build strong community ties
- Mental health support
- Emphasize transparency

Qualified immunity is a complex issue that could impact police officers and the communities they serve. Recognizing these dynamics, we can actively work to create a collaborative approach to policing and community trust. The badge represents authority and responsibility; balancing these will help protect integrity, careers, and the communities officers are sworn to serve.

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About the Author



Jordan Pate-Garrett, MS

Jordan M. P. Garrett is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC). Jordan earned her Master of Science Degree from Barry University with a major in Clinical Psychology specializing in Forensic Psychology. Mrs. Garrett has specific training and experience in the areas of substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, and young adult and adolescent development. Jordan currently serves as the Youth Services Coordinator for Miami-Dade Economic Advocacy Trust's Youth Services Division, while being enrolled in Barry University's Counseling Psychology Doctoral program.



Author: Jordan Pate-Garrett, LMHC, MS

Police officers are no strangers to high-pressure situations, whether it's de-escalating a tense encounter, navigating the complexities of their public image, or managing the everyday demands of the job. Let's dive into how you can prioritize self-care while handling the unique challenges of law enforcement mentioned throughout this newsletter.

Self-Care Tip #1: When discussions around qualified immunity or any policy changes get heated, focus on what you can control. Engage in activities that ground you—whether it's a workout, a hobby, or simply spending time with loved ones. Remember, you're human, and you need a breather!

Self-Care Tip #2: Invest time in building and maintaining strong connections. Schedule regular meetups with friends or family or join a group activity that interests you. Even a simple coffee catch-up can be a powerful tool for relieving stress and staying grounded.

Self-Care Tip #3: Set clear boundaries between work and personal time. It's tempting to bring work home, especially in a demanding and unpredictable job. However, establishing a routine that allows you to unwind can make all the difference in maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

Self-Care Tip #4: Practice self-compassion. Give yourself the same grace you'd extend to a colleague. Recognize when you're pushing yourself too hard and take a step back. Remember, you can't pour from an empty cup.

Take the Quiz to Find out!

Take a quick break and see how you're doing with your self-care routine. Remember, there are no wrong answers—just some friendly advice (and maybe a few laughs) to help you stay balanced!

1. It's been a long shift, and you've just finished a tough call. What's your go-to de-stressor?

- a) Hit the gym and blow off some steam
- b) Grab a coffee with a friend and vent
- c) Head home, put on your favorite show, and relax on the couch
- d) Check in on your favorite hobby—maybe it's fishing, painting, or even cooking

2. Your partner insists on rehashing the same debate for the millionth time this week. You...

- a) Politely listen but make a mental note to meditate later
- b) Suggest changing the topic to something lighter
- c) Dive into the debate with gusto—you've got some thoughts!
- d) Offer to grab some lunch and take the discussion outside—it's easier to talk while eating

3. Your family is planning a weekend getaway, but you're

worried about leaving work behind. You...

- a) Commit to the trip and set an autoreply for work emails
- b) Ask a colleague to cover any urgent matters so you can unplug
- c) Bring along your work phone just in case, but promise not to check it every five minutes
- d) Decide to stay home

4. It's Friday night! What's on the agenda?

- a) A quiet night in with a good book or your favorite movie
- b) Hitting the town with friends—time to let loose a bit!
- c) Planning a game night with your kids or partner—some friendly competition never hurt
- d) Catching up on sleep—you've earned it!

5. Your favorite TV cop character is...

- a) Olivia Benson from Law & Order: SVU—tough, compassionate, and always doing the right thing
- b) Jake Peralta from Brooklyn Nine-Nine—funny, clever, and great at balancing work with a good laugh
- c) Andy Sipowicz from NYPD Blue—gritty and seasoned, always gets the job done
- d) Riggs from Lethal Weapon—a bit wild, but you can't help but root for him

How's Your Self-Care Game?



Results:

Mostly A's:

You're a self-care pro! You know how to unwind and keep a healthy balance between work and life. Keep up the good work, and don't forget to share your self-care tips with your colleagues!

Mostly B's:

You're doing well, but there's always room for more self-care. Consider adding a few new activities to your routine, like meditation or a fun hobby. Remember, a little fun goes a long way!

Mostly C's:

You're juggling a lot, and you clearly care about your job and loved ones. Try to carve out a bit more "me time" each week—you deserve it!

Mostly D's:

Looks like you might be putting work first a bit too often. It's important to recharge your batteries to stay sharp on the job. Start small with a relaxing activity you enjoy and see how it feels!

No matter where you fall on the quiz, remember that self-care is a journey, not a destination.

Closing Words

Your mental health and wellness are crucial. They not only impact the community but your loved one. CFBH's mission is to further behavioral healthcare and positively impact our communities. As a result, we support law enforcement agencies with fiscal, mental, emotional, and psychological resources. This newsletter is one of the many tools provided to support your wellness journey.

We hope that you found the newsletter informative and beneficial. Your continued support means a lot to us, and we look forward to bringing you more exciting updates in the future. Until next time, enjoy your wellness journey!



CFBH Current Research



- Volunteers needed to participate in research studying the effectiveness of your current wellness program.
- Must participate in wellness fair and one wellness intervention to qualify.
- Participation is anonymous and voluntary.

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Publisher

Cummings Foundation for Behavioral Health
 4781 Caughlin Pkwy
 Reno, NV 89519
 Phone 775-826-3311
 info@CummingsCFBH.org
 www.CummingsCFBH.org

Editor

Davena Longshore, Ph.D.
 dlongshore@CummingsCFBH.org

Writers

Jordan Pate-Garrett, MS
 jgarrett@CummingsCFBH.org
 Patricia Petrova, MS
 ppetrova@CummingsCFBH.org

Editon

August 2024