



WELLNESS NEWSLETTER

LEADERSHIP CORNER

Let's talk prioritizing mental wellness in your unit and community relationships.

POLICE PSYCHOLOGY

Explore the history of modern psychology and its applications in law enforcement.

AUTISM AWARENESS & POLICING

Policing in the community and interacting with individuals living with neurodivergence.

INDUSTRY INSIDER

Welcome to The Shield, your resource for bolstering resilience, promoting wellness, and enhancing mental health within our law enforcement community. This newsletter is dedicated to those who serve on the front lines, offering practical tools, research-backed strategies, and inspiring stories to support your mental and emotional well-being.



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PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF POLICE OFFICERS

Jordan Pate-Garrett, LMHC

Research shows that police officers experience high levels of work-related mental health challenges. Up to 90% of police personnel



report stress and mental health issues linked to their job, and compared to the general workforce, they are twice as likely to attribute these problems to their profession (Sherwood et al., 2019). Workplace stress can

trigger more serious mental health conditions, such as anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and trauma. However, while there is substantial research on the overall prevalence of these issues, there is a lack of focus on how they specifically affect police officers.



Let's Check Your Temperature Around Seeking Support

1. How comfortable do you feel seeking mental health treatment if needed?
2. What is your primary concern about seeking mental health treatment?
3. Do you believe that seeking support would negatively impact your reputation among colleagues?
4. In your opinion, how well do current department resources and support systems address mental health needs for officers?
5. Would you be more likely to seek mental health support if there were a clear emphasis on wellness and mental health in your department's culture?

To cope with the emotional challenges of their work, police officers often develop coping mechanisms that help them detach from their emotions, especially in high-pressure situations. However, when these strategies become ingrained over time, they can lead to long-term mental health concerns (Bryant, 2022). Depression is often triggered by prolonged exposure to life-threatening situations (Lanza & Roysircar, 2019), while anxiety disorders are caused by the unpredictability and dangers of daily tasks (Karaffa & Koch, 2016). Many officers turn to substance abuse as a way to cope with the cumulative stress and trauma they encounter (Violanti et al., 2018). The constant exposure to distressing events can shape officers' perceptions of their work, negatively impacting their well-being and, at times, their ability to perform effectively. It's important to view wellness as a positive, essential part of a police officer's career rather than a sign of weakness or failure.



A CALL TO THRIVE, NOT JUST SURVIVE

Wellness is both an individual and an agency responsibility. To a certain degree, you need to take ownership of your own well-being, yes – no excuses. But your agency also owes it to you to provide accessible resources, foster a wellness-oriented culture, and show genuine, proactive support. It is then in your hands to take advantage of what is available for you.

CONSIDER THIS!

FORCES BEYOND YOUR CONTROL CAN TAKE AWAY EVERYTHING YOU POSSESS EXCEPT ONE THING, YOUR FREEDOM TO CHOOSE HOW YOU WILL RESPOND TO THE SITUATION. – VIKTOR FRANKL

- Take charge of your wellness—it's a choice. **You either make time for your wellness or your illness.**
- Your profession puts you at higher risk for mental and physical health challenges, but that doesn't mean you're doomed. It just means you need to be extra mindful of your well-being.
- **Gratitude is powerful**—acknowledge one thing you're grateful for each day to boost resilience and reduce cynicism.
- Remember, **your job won't love you back**, but your family and friends do. You're replaceable at work but irreplaceable at home. Policing is just one part of who you are. You deserve to thrive at work and home, not just survive.
- Leadership should be compassionate and authentic. **Wellness isn't a box to check, and seeking mental health support doesn't mean you'll lose your job or be labeled.** It's about building a culture of support and trust.
- **More officers have died by suicide than in the line of duty** in recent years. This is a crisis we can't ignore. Suicide is complex, and the only way to know if someone is struggling is to ask and be prepared.
- You are not alone—resources are available, and **the world is better with you in it.**

MEET THE AUTHOR



MEGAN AMATURO



THE LASSO OF TRUTH: A HISTORY OF THE POLYGRAPH

Lie detection has long fascinated popular culture, with the iconic image of a suspect hooked up to a polygraph—a device measuring heart rate, blood pressure, respiration, and skin conductivity. While many law enforcement officers are familiar with the polygraph as part of employment screenings, its history is less well known.

The polygraph's roots trace back to the 1880s, when Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso studied how a suspect's pulse and blood pressure changed during questioning. Harvard-trained psychologist William Marston later popularized the device with his systolic blood pressure test, observing that emotional states, like excitement or anger, could raise blood pressure.

John Larson, a police officer and forensic psychiatrist, improved on Marston's work and created the "**Cardio-Pneumo Psychograph**" in 1921, which drew public attention. Though Marston's promotional efforts were more visible, he is perhaps best remembered for his cultural impact: he created Wonder Woman in 1941, drawing inspiration from his advocacy for women's rights. Her "Lasso of Truth" became a lasting symbol of truth-telling in popular culture.

Today, the polygraph remains a tool used in criminal investigations, though its accuracy is debated. Like Wonder Woman's Lasso of Truth, the pursuit of detecting deception continues to evolve with time.



MEET THE AUTHOR



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POLICING DURING AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH: UNDERSTANDING, COMPASSION, AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Jordan Pate-Garrett, LMHC



April is **Autism Awareness Month**, a time to reflect on the importance of understanding and supporting individuals living with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Law enforcement professionals are often called to interact with people from all walks of life, including those on the autism spectrum. Given that autism affects social communication, behavior, and sensory processing, these interactions can sometimes present unique challenges. However, with the right knowledge and approach, officers can help ensure these encounters are safe, respectful, and productive.


UNDERSTANDING AUTISM IN THE CONTEXT OF POLICING


Autism is a neurological condition that affects one in every 54 children in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Individuals with autism may experience challenges in verbal and non-verbal communication, difficulty with social interactions, and unusual responses to sensory stimuli. These characteristics can sometimes make it difficult for them to respond to typical social cues or even to understand verbal commands in a stressful or unfamiliar situation.


As police officers, **it's important to recognize that behaviors such as avoiding eye contact, speaking in a monotone voice, or showing distress in crowded environments are not signs of defiance or aggression but rather symptoms of autism.** By adopting a more understanding and patient approach, we can avoid escalating potentially difficult situations.


TIPS FOR INTERACTING WITH SOMEONE ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM





 **Stay Calm and Clear:** When speaking to someone with autism, use simple, direct language and give them time to process what you're saying. Avoid complex questions or commands. Stay calm and patient, and try not to raise your voice or make sudden movements.

 **Use Visual Cues:** Individuals with autism may respond better to visual cues. If possible, use gestures or show them a badge or ID rather than relying solely on verbal communication.

 **Avoid Overloading the Senses:** Many people with autism are sensitive to light, noise, or touch. If you're in a busy or loud environment, try to move the person to a quieter, more controlled space to reduce sensory overload.

 **Allow Extra Time:** People with autism may need more time to respond to questions or directions. Give them space to process, and avoid rushing or pressuring them to respond immediately.

 **Be Aware of Their Behavior:** Unusual behaviors, like repetitive movements (e.g., hand-flapping or rocking), may be calming mechanisms. These behaviors are not threats and should not be misinterpreted as signs of aggression.

 **Avoid Physical Contact if Possible:** Many individuals with autism are sensitive to touch. If you need to physically assist them, be sure to ask for their consent first and explain what you are doing.

Policing during Autism Awareness Month—and throughout the year—requires not just awareness, but action. Equipping yourself with knowledge can improve outcomes during interactions, reduce unnecessary confrontations, and provide more compassionate support to vulnerable members of the community.

RESOURCES FOR LEARNING MORE

- [Autism Speaks](#)
- [The National Autism Association](#)
- [The Crisis Intervention Team \(CIT\) International](#)
- [The International Police Training Academy \(IPTA\)](#)

MEET THE AUTHOR



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