



# BACKING the BADGE®

*"Serving those that serve us."®*

backingthebadge.com

(800)788-8630



## Law Enforcement Stress and Resiliency

by Stephen Darling, Coordinator of Law Enforcement Wellness, BACKING the BADGE

As a police officer, you understand that stress related events in law enforcement has the potential to contribute to debilitating or life altering changes in you. You may have already accepted the fact that stress in law enforcement is unique and that its causes and effects have been investigated for decades.

Regardless of where an officer works, their rank, or time in service, a time may come in their career when their innate coping abilities are overwhelmed and their ability to function has been compromised. I'm sure we have all heard stories of officers who had a difficult time getting past an event, or that the event changed them in some way. Amidst research, books, articles and other publications on police stress, or police trauma, the concept of resiliency also appears.

Resiliency is an ability for mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical strength to overcome work related stress, adversities or trauma. Put another way, resiliency is the ability to bounce back from stressful or traumatic events. What is important to consider is that we all experience and react to stressful events differently and in discerning degrees. The differences are not so much the in physical reactions, but what occurs internally. Knowing about and understanding the ability to bounce back, is advantageous in assisting law enforcement officers further develop stress and trauma survival resources. A proactive approach to managing stress in law enforcement officers lives has the capacity to save their career, or possibly their life.

Psychological resiliency is an individual's tendency to cope with stress and adversity. This coping may result in the individual "bouncing back" to a previous state of normal functioning, or simply not demonstrating negative effects.

**The American Psychological Association suggests "10 Ways to Build Resilience", which are:**

- **Maintaining good relationships with close family members, friends and others;**
- **To avoid seeing crises or stressful events as unbearable problems;**
- **To accept circumstances that cannot be changed;**
- **To develop realistic goals and move towards them;**
- **To take decisive actions in adverse situations;**
- **To look for opportunities of self-discovery after a struggle with loss and developing self-confidence**
- **To keep a long-term perspective and consider the stressful event in a broader context;**
- **To maintain a hopeful outlook, expecting good things and visualizing what is wished;**
- **To take care of one's mind and body, exercising regularly, paying attention to one's own needs and feelings.**

**These are great steps to build resilience but, the next step is implementing these 10 suggestions, into an already busy calendar.**