

# What's In It for Me?

By Dr. Alison Brown

Stressful situations 'hijack' our ability to pay attention to our thoughts and the 'fight or flight' syndrome results. As you well know, your training is essential and kicks in during stressful situations. Depending upon the severity of the stressor or event, descriptions from involved LEOs varies and may include tunnel vision, temporary loss of hearing and a host of other physiological and protective reactions.

The biological basis of these reactions is fundamental. Depending upon the event, our body responds to enable us to fight or flee.

Then, when it is time to be 'off-duty' we simply don't come equipped with an 'off-switch.' So what can we do to ease the events from the day, stop replaying frustrating scenarios and better cope with the inevitable stressors as we transition from work to home/personal. While talking with other co-workers is helpful at some point, we come face to face with our own thoughts.

Enter the time-tested concept of mindfulness. Simply stated, mindfulness is paying attention, on purpose, or with intent, to the thoughts you are having in the present moment. With practice, this important concept may help you to better enjoy what life has to offer outside of law enforcement. Jon Kabat-Zinn popularized the concept of mindfulness in the early 80's with "Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction" or MBSR. While there are numerous books and workshops on mindfulness, only you can control your thoughts. Period.

Just as training is imperative for the high-risk and demanding situations confronted by LEOS, managing your thoughts to improve your overall quality of life is vital. This is BIOLOGY, and only you can take charge. Learning how to manage intrusive, disturbing thoughts and reduce stress has huge payoffs!

So what's in it for you? By maintaining greater awareness of your thoughts, and learning ways to shifting your focus, you are likelier to improve your health, enhance your marriage, enrich your career and ALL the elements of life that you value most. When you are in a stressful, dangerous and/or challenging situation at work, your ability to think clearly and quickly saves your life. The same principles hold true when you are off duty.

If you'd like to find out more information about this, or other topics to impact officer wellness, please contact us at: (800)788-8630, or, [abrown@encompass.us.com](mailto:abrown@encompass.us.com).