



Resiliency for First Responders

*Developing an Effective Stress
Management Toolkit*

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Experienced in Critical Incident Stress Management, Peer support, mindfulness meditation instructor.



Disclaimer

The topics and ideas expressed in this presentation are not representative of the policy, procedures, viewpoints or official stance of the any government agency, organization or entity.



The ideas and viewpoints are that of the presenter, based on direct lived experience, knowledge, training and education.



*“Awareness and
Compassion are Gateways
to Performance”*

- Richard Goerling, Mindful
Badge

A look at the numbers....

30% of first responders will develop behavioral health conditions, which includes depression and PTSD (source: SAMHSA)

LEO/Police officers on average are exposed to 178 critical incidents over a career compared to 2-3 in the life of an average person (source: FBI/LEB article dated 7/11/2023)

LEO/Police Suicide in 2020- 116 officers reported vs 113 line of duty deaths (source: Boston University Article, T. Ford) 54% increase in suicide risk over the average population

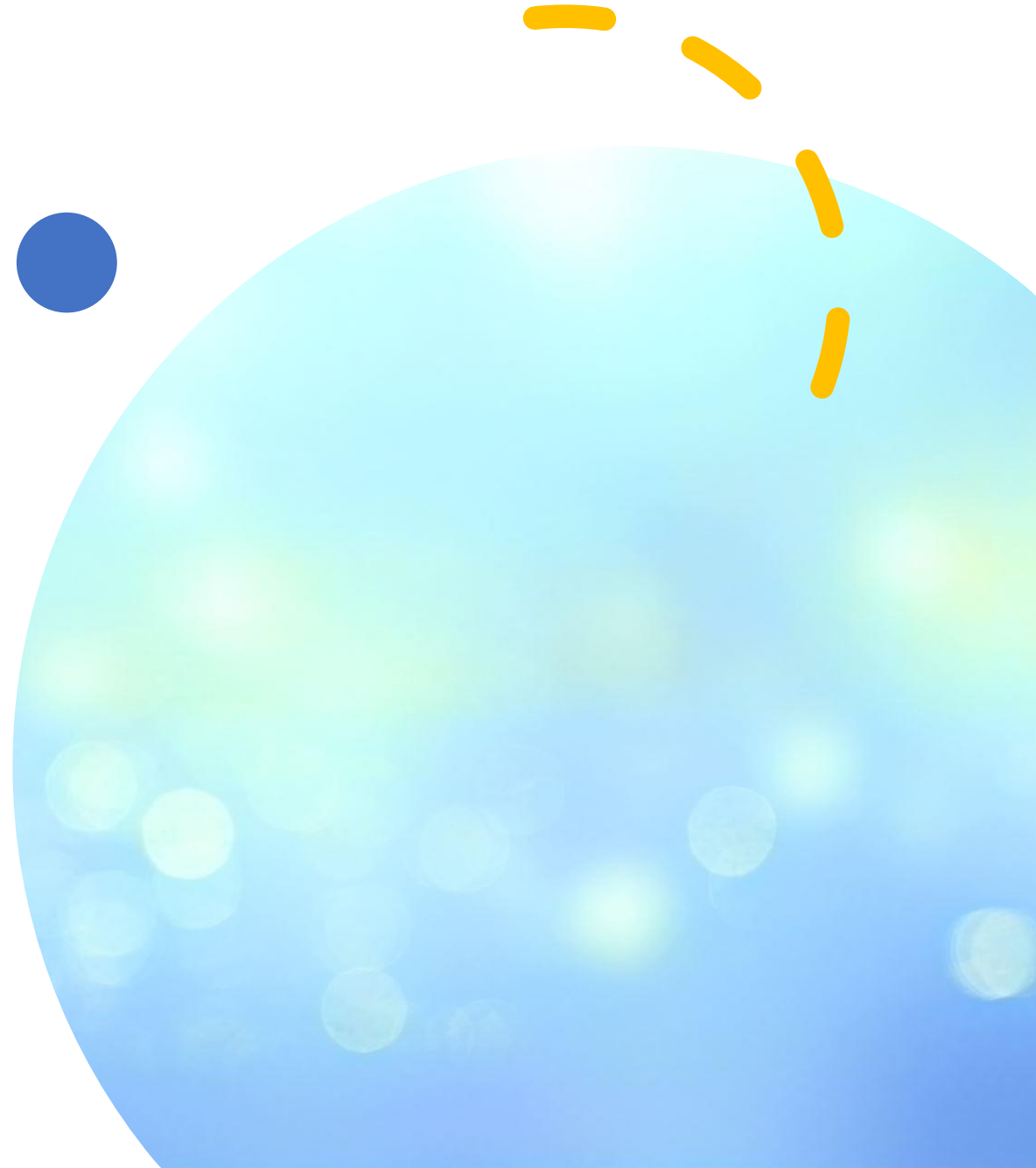
Firefighter/EMS Suicides in 2020- 127 cases (source: EMSWorld article)



Sympathetic
Nervous System-
"Fight or Flight"
aka a state of
hypervigilance

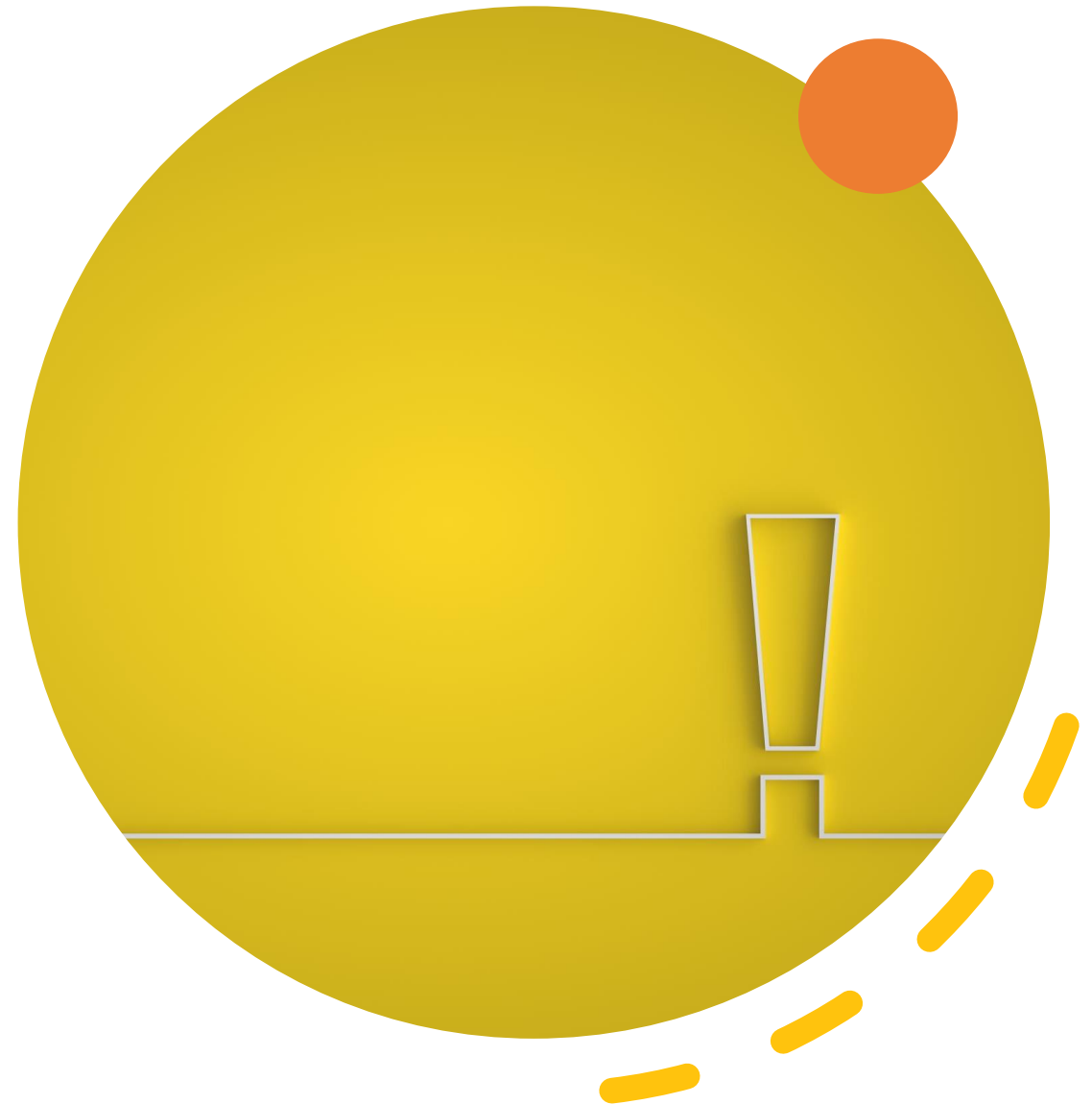


Parasympathetic
Nervous System-
*"Rest and
Digest"*



Stress

- **Operational Stress**: High Op-tempo, Short staffing, Critical Incidents, Shift work- weekends and holidays
- **Administrative Stress**: Office Politics, Policy, Toxic Organizational Behavior
- **Stress of world events**: War and Conflict, COVID-19, Uprisings, Civil Disobedience, Mass shootings, Public perception of First Responders and health care workers.
- **Health Related Stress**: *Injury*, Medical Diagnosis of yourself or a family member/loved one, moral and stress injury.
- **Financial Stress**: Debt, General financial pressures, constant worry about making "ends meet."



Stress (continued..)

- **Mental and Behavioral Health Related Stress** – PTSD, TBI, addictions- including socially acceptable addictions such as Workaholism, Energy Drinks, Social Media- Scrolling, Tobacco use, binge watching, fast-food etc.
- **Chronic Sleep issues/Sleep Deprivation** – shift work, unpredictable schedules.
- **Relationship Stress**- strained relationships with family, friends and co-workers.



“Vulnerability is Strength”

“Remember teamwork begins with trust. And the way to do that is to overcome our need for invulnerability”

- Patrick Lencioni, 5 Dysfunctions of a Team



“Your lifestyle will determine your death style” - Unknown

“Watch your thoughts, they become your words; watch your words, they become your actions, they become, your habits; they become your character, watch your character; it becomes your destiny”

– Lao Tzu



Resilience: *noun*

1. *The capacity to withstand or to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness.*
2. *The ability of a substance or object to spring back into shape, elasticity.*



5 Domains of Wellness:

1. Mind

2. Body

3. Spirit

4. Community/Relationships

5. Finances

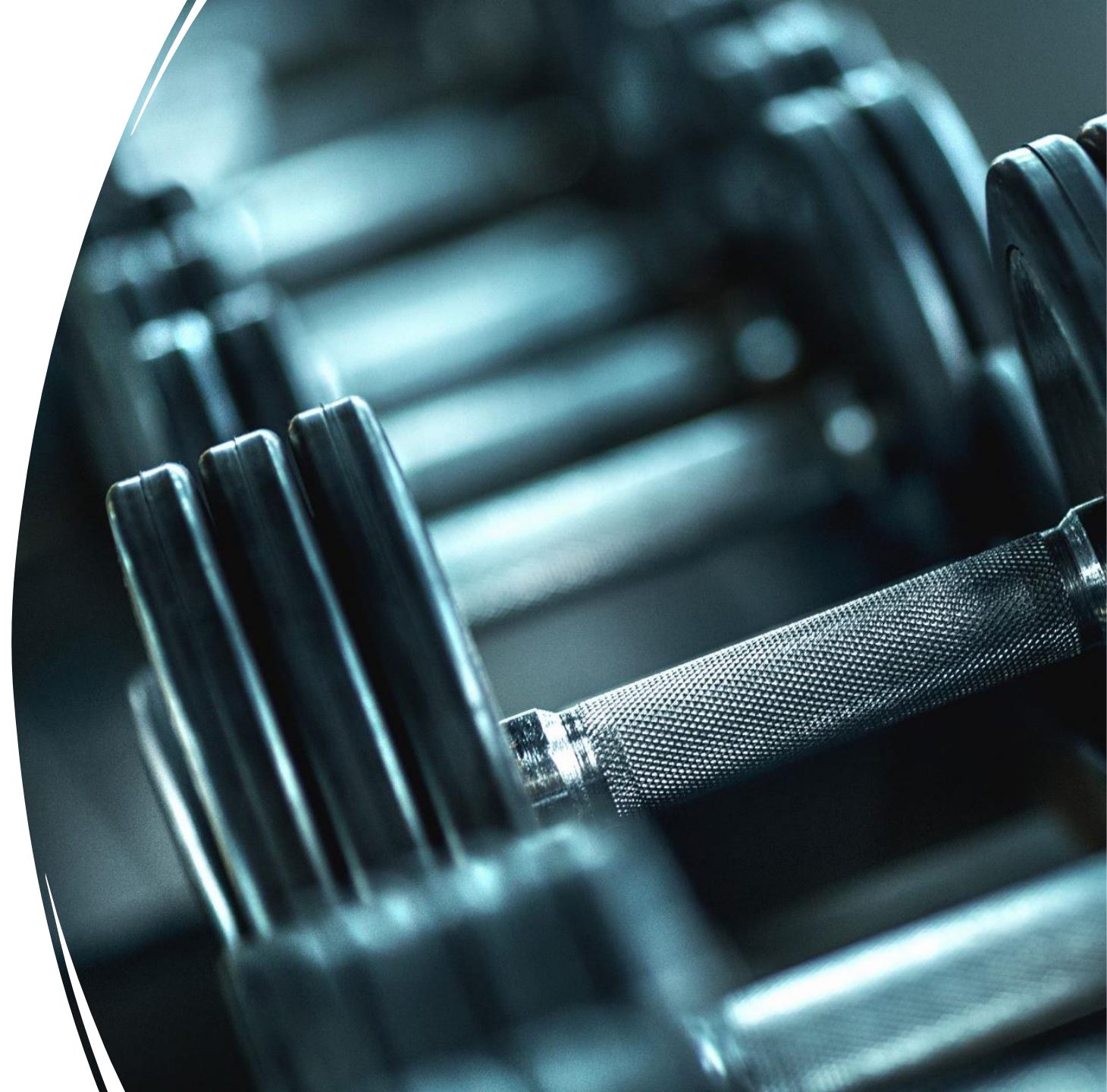


Mind

- Establish an effective and powerful mindset-PMA etc.
- “Own the morning, own the day.” Develop a strong morning routine.
- Talk with a professional- seek counseling, CBT, EMDR.
- * Participate in Peer support programs *
- Read, make time and prioritizing reading sessions.
- Journaling/Writing- engaging in “Gratitude Practice.”
- Cultivate creativity and creative activities.
- Put boundaries around screen time, consider a “digital detox.”

Body

- Regular exercise including strength and mobility work
- Daily walks/ steps
- Quality and consistent sleep, 7-8 hours per 24, utilize "sleep hygiene" practices.
- Mindful Movement practices- Yoga, Tai-Chi, Qi-gong, Jiu Jitsu and other martial arts.
- Healthy diet and nutrition- H2O, abundant fruits and vegetables, minimal processed foods.
- Moderation in alcohol consumption or sobriety.





Spirit

- Meditation and mindfulness practices
- Prayer
- Time in nature*
- Mentor
- Give back- selfless service- help a neighbor, volunteer- with no expectation of anything in return
- Spend time with animals, dogs and horses etc.
- Music



Community/Relationships

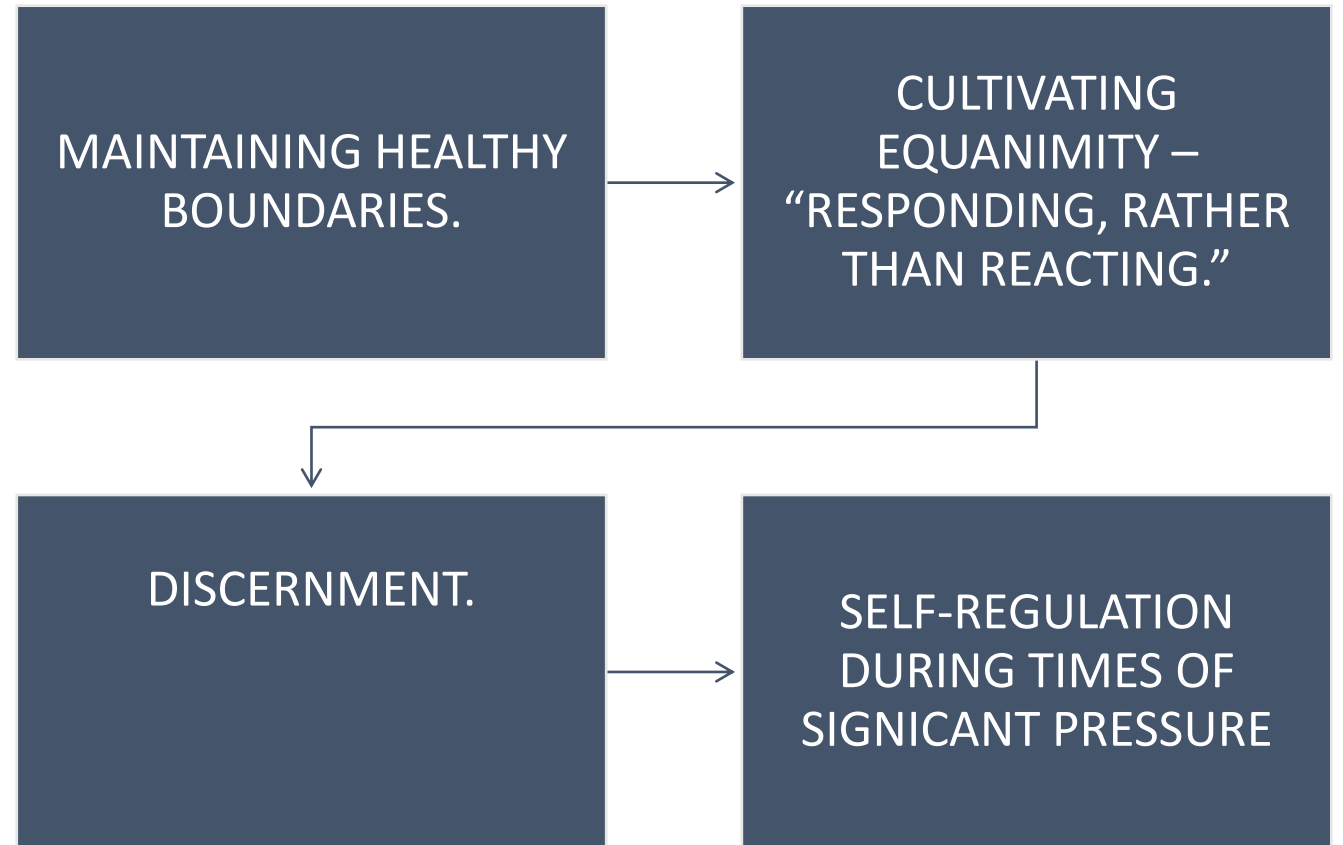
- Develop your “3-5”, Council or Personal board of directors - “The ride or die.” Cultivate a deep support network.
- Engage in meaningful conversations and active listening
- “The Campfire”
- Mentor
- Date night
- Travel with or to see friends and loved ones

Finances

- Pay yourself first.
- Live within your means.
- Eliminate unnecessary debt.
- Create an emergency fund.



Benefits to wellness and mindset practices



We have a responsibility to break the stigma regarding mental health issues and wellness in the first responder community.

Strengthen yourself and your team. Talk about stress and challenges openly, be authentic with each other, ask questions, seek help.





- *“Shame cannot survive being spoken. It cannot tolerate having words wrapped around it. What it craves is secrecy, silence and judgement. If you stay quiet, you stay in a lot of self-judgement.” –Brene Brown*

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- Yoga For First Responders, www.yogaforfirstresponders.org
- Book: Transforming Trauma with Jiu-Jitsu, Jamie Marich PhD, Anna Pirki, LMFT.





“Thriving, not just surviving”

You can still be a warrior and protector and take good care of yourself- it's about achieving balance.

Thank you for all you do!

