



# TRAUMA AND FIRST RESPONDERS



# OBJECTIVES

- Defining “trauma”
- Signs and symptoms of PTS(D)
- Best practices for assisting First Responders through trauma exposures



# VIDEO

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VkqFjvoa6iQ>

# WHAT IS TRAUMA?

- A sudden, intense physically, emotionally, or psychologically distressful event.
- Perceived or experienced as a threat to one's safety or stability.
- Single event or an accumulation of events.
- Any event that has sufficient impact to overwhelm the usually effective coping skills of either an individual or a group.
- What is traumatic to one person, may or may not be traumatic to someone else.



# EXAMPLES OF TRAUMATIC EVENTS

- Sexual Abuse or Assault
- Physical Abuse or Assault
- Emotional Abuse/Psychological Maltreatment
- Neglect
- Serious Accident or Illness/Medical Procedure
- Natural or Man-made Disasters
- Death of a loved one
- War
- Witnessing an act of violence/abuse

# VICARIOUS TRAUMA

The emotional residue of exposure or witnessing the pain, fear, and terror that trauma survivors have endured.



# SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA EXPOSURE

- Trauma survivors can begin to display symptoms soon after the traumatic experience has occurred or they can display symptoms years later.
- These symptoms can manifest in several different ways:
  - Emotional
  - Physical
  - Cognitive
  - Behavioral
  - Relationship difficulties







# SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

## Emotional

- Denial
- Anger
- Sadness
- Emotional outbursts
- Self-blame, guilt and shame
- Agitation

## Physical

- Insomnia or nightmares
- Being startled easily
- Racing heartbeat or trouble breathing
- Aches and pains
- Fatigue
- Muscle tension

# SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

## Cognitive

- Lack of concentration
- Difficulty remembering
- Difficulty making healthy decisions
- Easily distracted

## Behavioral

- Addictive and compulsive behaviors with:
  - Alcohol
  - Drugs
  - Food
  - Sex
  - Gambling



# SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

## Relationships

- Arguments
  - Conflict
  - Hostility
  - Isolation
- Sexual problems
- Attempting to control others



Stressful/Traumatic Event  
or  
Stressful/Traumatic Triggers

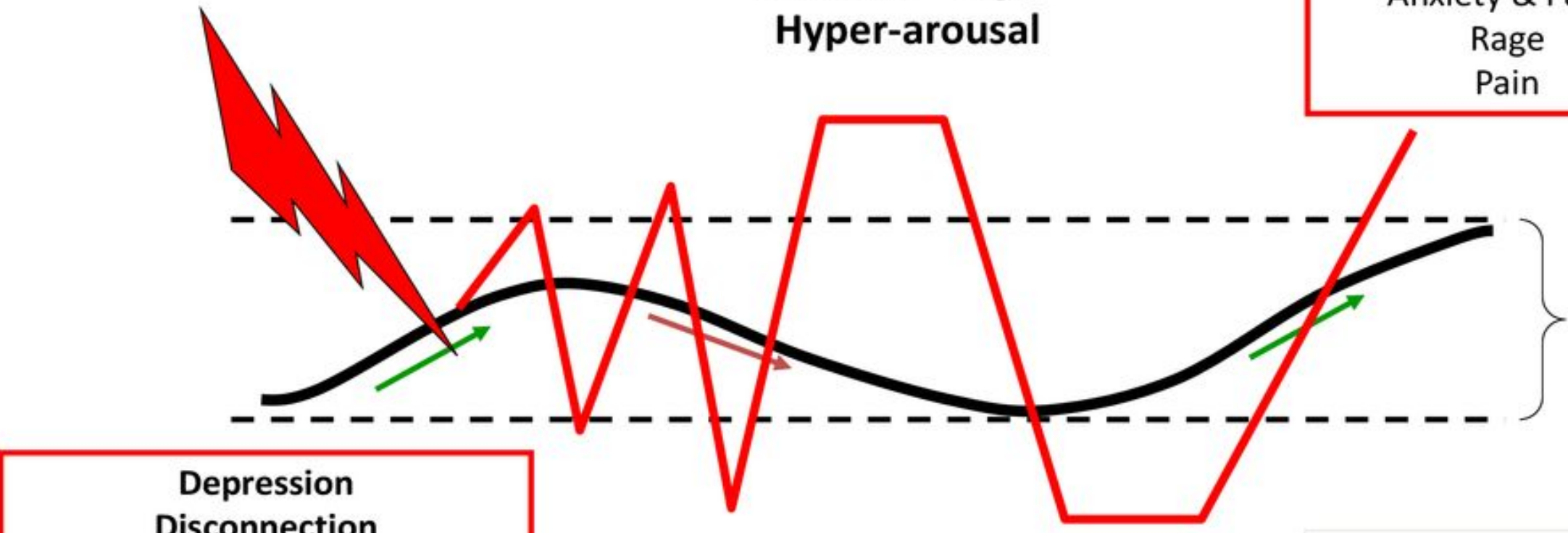
Stuck on "High"  
Hyper-arousal

Hyperactivity  
Hypervigilance  
Mania  
Anxiety & Panic  
Rage  
Pain

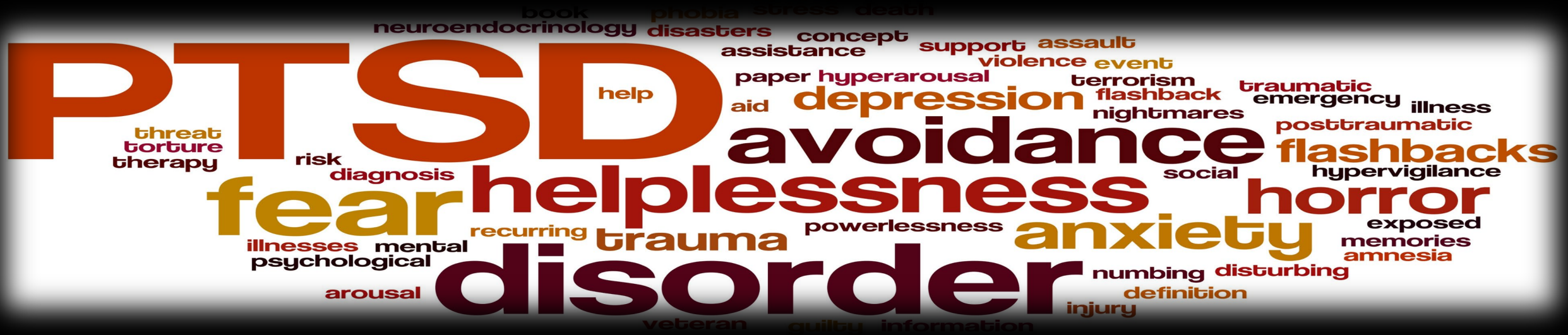
resilient zone

Depression  
Disconnection  
Exhaustion/Fatigue  
Numbness

Stuck on "Low"  
Hypo-arousal







- **Most people** experience a traumatic event in their lifetime (90%!)
  - May experience **PTSD symptoms**
  - PTSD develops when symptoms:
    - **Persist** over time
    - **Affect functioning**
- Risk for developing PTSD increases with **more extreme and prolonged trauma**.
- **Early identification and treatment of symptoms** decreases risk for developing PTSD.

# SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF PTSD

- Intrusive memories
- Insomnia
- Dreams/Nightmares
- Flashbacks
- Increased anxiety
- Hyper-vigilance
- Avoidance
- Emotionally numb
- Irritability
- Angry outbursts
- Difficulty remembering the traumatic event
- Strained relationships



# PREVALENCE OF PTSD IN LAW ENFORCEMENT...

- Higher risk for developing PTSD
- The rate of police officers with duty-related PTSD is estimated at 15-18%.

**Remember, if you don't address TRAUMA  
it could turn into PTSD.**

**Help officers get the help they need!**

# TREATMENTS

- Outpatient Psychotherapy (CBT, EMDR)
- Outpatient Psychiatry (medication)
- Inpatient behavioral health treatment (if person is a danger to self or others)
- Residential or outpatient substance use treatment
- Peer Support contact
- Faith based support
- Alternative therapies: massage, floating, etc...



# DEPARTMENT BEST PRACTICES

- Required Critical Incident Debriefing
- Peer Support
- Easy access to mental health professionals without going through command staff
- Post Critical Incident Seminars
- Separating “Fit for Duty” assessments from those needed to work through critical incidents
- Family/Spouse support events/trainings

# RESOURCES

- Your local Community Mental Health Liaison

<https://www.missouricit.org/cmhl>

- The Specialized First Responder Provider Network

<https://www.missouricit.org/first-responders>

- MSHP Post Critical Incident Seminar

<https://apps.mshp.dps.mo.gov/MSHPWeb/PatrolDivisions/HRD/PCIS/index.html>



# RESOURCES

## **ACI (Access Crisis Intervention)**

888-279-8188 Crisis Line

Local crisis line available 24/7 to provide clinical support. Mobile crisis support available when needed to meet with individuals in the community and assess their safety.

## **Community Mental Health Liaison – specific to service areas**

Local mental health resource specifically for law enforcement and courts that is intended to assist in linking individuals to resources, assisting with assessing safety, creating a safety plan, and providing free mental health training.

## **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Veterans should press “1” to speak to a specially trained counselor.

<http://veteranscrisisline.net/>

## **Veteran’s Administration**

<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/>

## **National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder**

<http://www.ncptsd.va.gov> or 802-296-6300

## **National Resource Center for Child Traumatic Stress Network**

<http://www.nctsn.org/>

## **Center for Mental Health Services – Emergency Services and Disaster Relief Branch**

<http://www.nehands.nebraska.edu/files/SPMI%20&%20Disaster%20Health.pdf>

Provides an outline of how to respond to the needs of people with serious and persistent mental illness in times of major disaster.

## **National Empowerment Center**

<http://www.power2u.org/>

## **Post-Traumatic Stress – Moodjuice Self-Help Guide**

<http://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/posttrauma.asp>

Provides a guide with warning signs for PTSD, a checklist to monitor symptoms, and various techniques for how to manage symptoms.

## **Badge of Life**

<http://www.badgeoflife.com>

## **Concerns of Police Survivors – COPS**

<http://nationalcops.org>

## **Copline**

1-800-267-5463 or <http://copline.org>

National hotline exclusively for law enforcement and their families. Staffed by retired officers and therapists with law enforcement experience.

## **Code 9 Officer Needs Assistance**

<http://vimeo.com/26689571>

Video describing the challenges related to trauma that is often experienced by law enforcement while on the job and how we can prevent cop suicide.





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