

THE READY RESPONDER

HOW PHYSICAL & MENTAL
WELL-BEING AFFECTS
PERFORMANCE



DISCLAIMER

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TODAY'S PRESENTERS



DAVID BLACK, PHD
Chief Executive Officer
Cordico



GORDON GRAHAM
Co-Founder
Lexipol



LOIS JAMES, PHD
Assistant Director for
Research
Washington State University
College of Nursing
Sleep and Performance
Research Center



JON SHEINBERG, MD
Chief Medical Officer
Sigma Tactical Wellness
Lieutenant, Lakeway (TX) Police
Department

DEFINING WELLNESS FOR FIRST RESPONDERS



1. TRAUMA



2. HEART DISEASE

- Heart attacks are the leading cause of fireground deaths
- Average age of a law enforcement officer with heart attack is almost **20 years younger** than non-LEO
- 29-45% of heart attacks in law enforcement officers occur at younger than age 45, compared to just 7% of non-LEOs
- One study of white male officers in Buffalo, NY, showed an average life expectancy of more than **20 years less** than non-LEOs

3. PHYSICAL FITNESS



4. OBESITY

- 70% of U.S. firefighters are obese or overweight
- 40% of U.S. law enforcement officers are obese and 80% are overweight

5. MENTAL HEALTH

First responders experience diminished social bonding, depression, substance abuse and sleep problems when compared to the general population

THE IMPACT OF FATIGUE

Day-to-day impacts of sleep deprivation:

- Impairs decision making in complex, stressful situations
- Degrades ability to self-monitor
- Reduces perspective and understanding
- Narrows perception
- Increases fearfulness, irritability, hostility, and bias
- Worsens mood

DROWSY DRIVING

- 89% of police believe drowsy driving to be as dangerous as drunk driving (AAA Foundation, 2004)
- 50% police officers have fallen asleep while driving
 - ✓ 25% one to two times *per* month (Rajaratnam et al., 2011)

FATIGUE VS. ALCOHOL IMPAIRMENT

Scientific studies compared effects of fatigue vs. alcohol on:

- Alertness
- Cognition
- Hand-eye coordination
- Task speed and accuracy

Results:

- 17-19 hours awake = .05% BAC
- 24 hours awake = .10% BAC



(Williamson & Feyer 2000, Dawson & Reid 1997, Rohrs 1994)

IMPACT OF FATIGUE & SHIFT ON DEADLY FORCE

- Compared to day shift officers, those on night shifts:
 - ✓ Are quicker to fire their weapons
 - ✓ Fire more shots
- Fatigued officers are quicker to shoot and more prone to error
- What does this mean for threat perception and reduced moral decision-making threshold?



FATIGUE & IMPLICIT BIAS

- Implicit bias is unconscious bias that we may not even be aware of (associations we make between concepts)
- Sleep-deprived officers show *more* implicit bias against Black civilians (associating them with weapons)
- Does fatigue impair our ability to control our biases?

FATIGUE & DE-ESCALATION

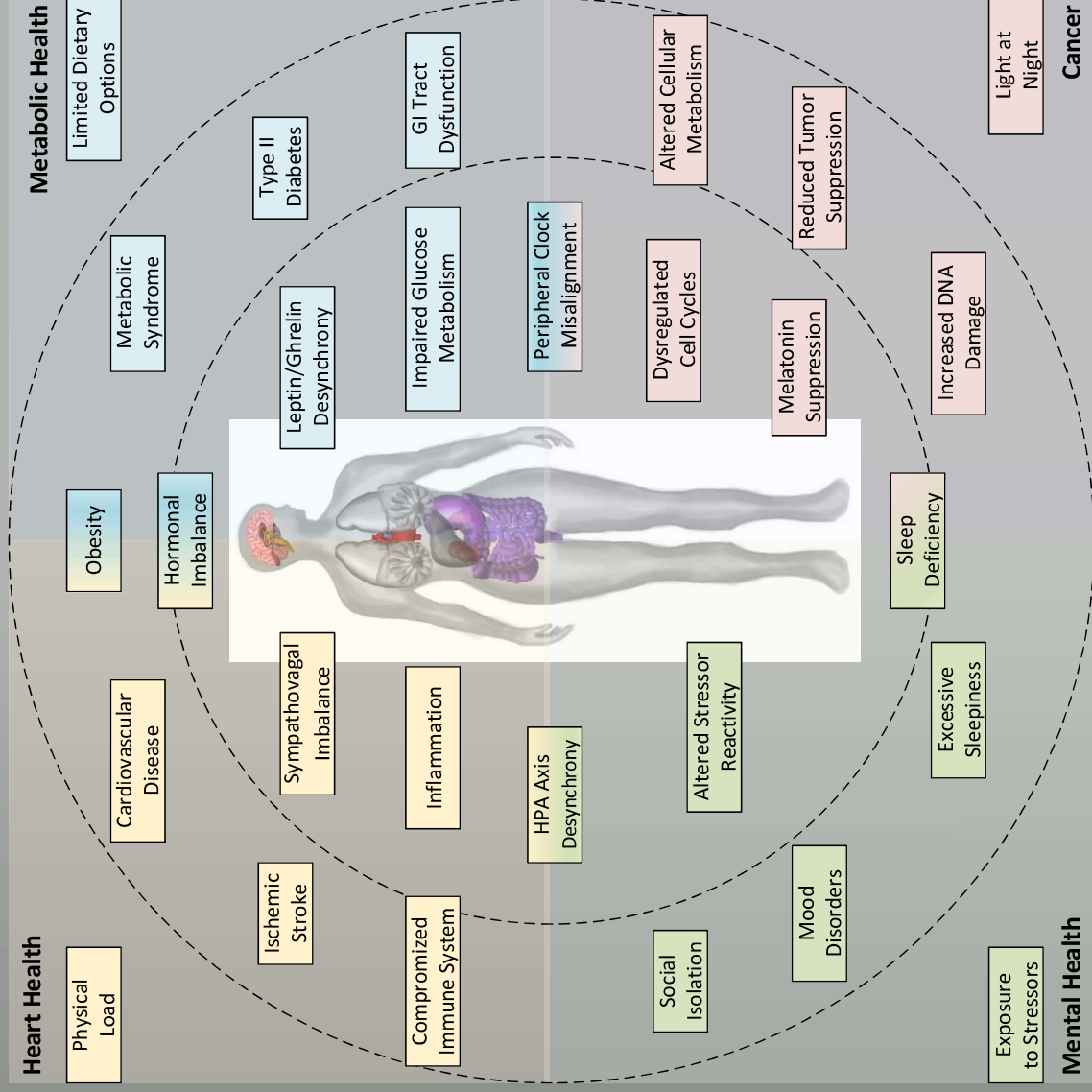
Night-shift officers are:

- Less likely to verbally de-escalate, adapt tactics and empathize with citizens
- More likely to escalate force than day-shift officers (one cause is fatigue)

CUMULATIVE IMPACT OF SLEEP DEPRIVATION

- Cardiovascular, gastrointestinal & metabolic diseases
- Chronic insomnia, sleep apnea & other sleep disorders
- Psychological disorders, depression, suicide & family dysfunction

SHIFT WORK IMPACTS HEALTH

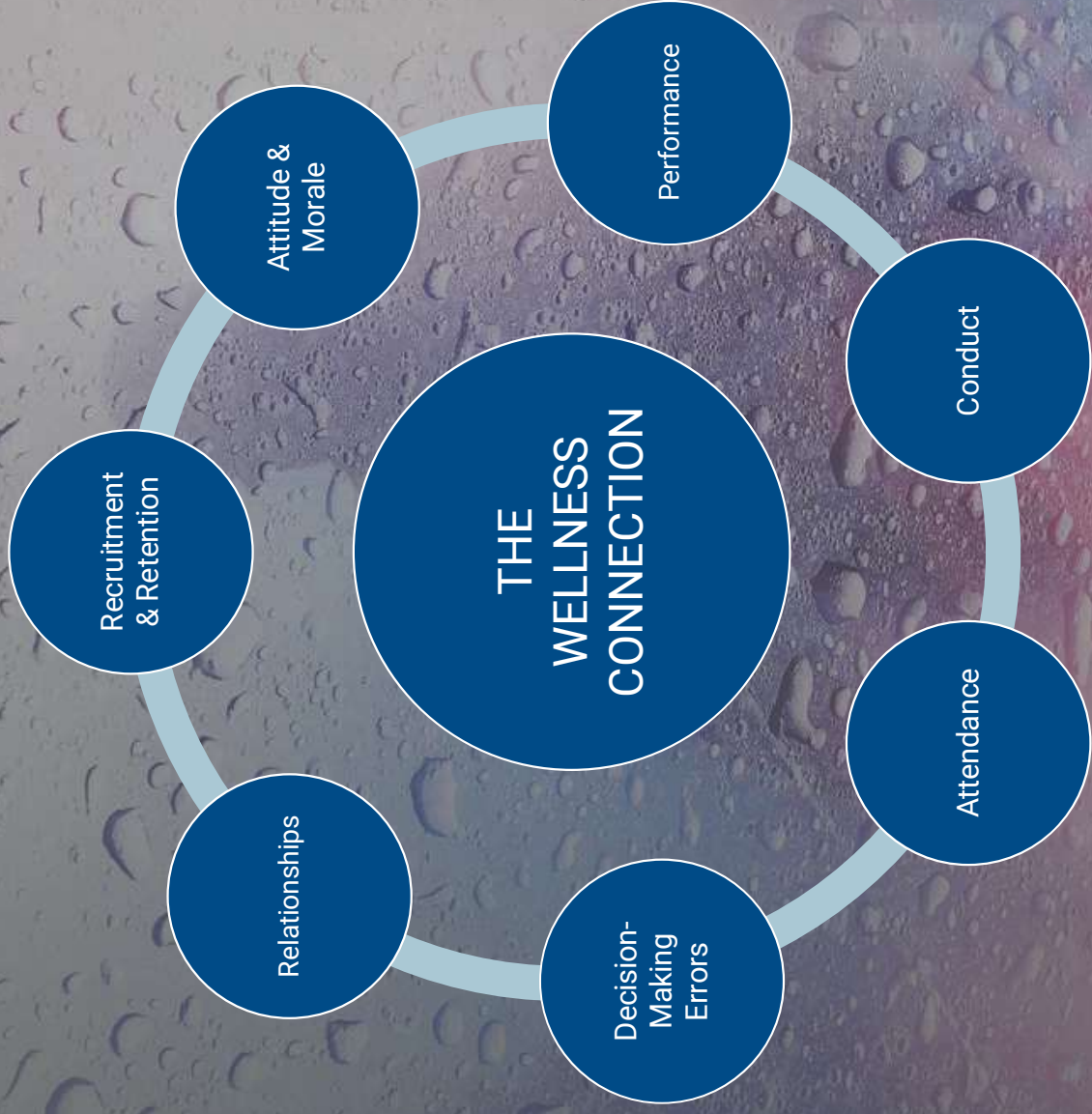


COMPARISON TO ELITE ATHLETES

- Opportunity to heal
- Decompression between shifts
- Decompression between traumatic calls
- Increased sleep needs
- Similarities between shift work and jet lag

EMOTIONAL PREPAREDNESS

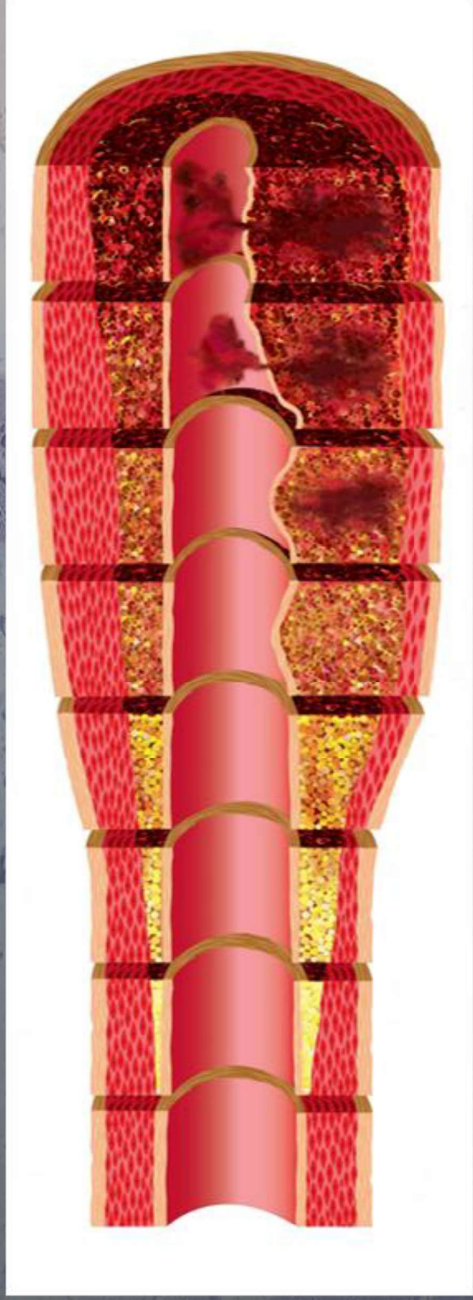
- Critical incident – defined as an incident that overwhelms your ability to cope
- First responders experience significantly more critical incidents than the average person
 - ✓ Law enforcement officers experience 188 critical incidents over the course of a career



BARRIERS TO GETTING HELP

- Cultural stigma
- Fear of retribution/being labeled unfit for duty
- Lack of high-quality resources
- Poor past experiences

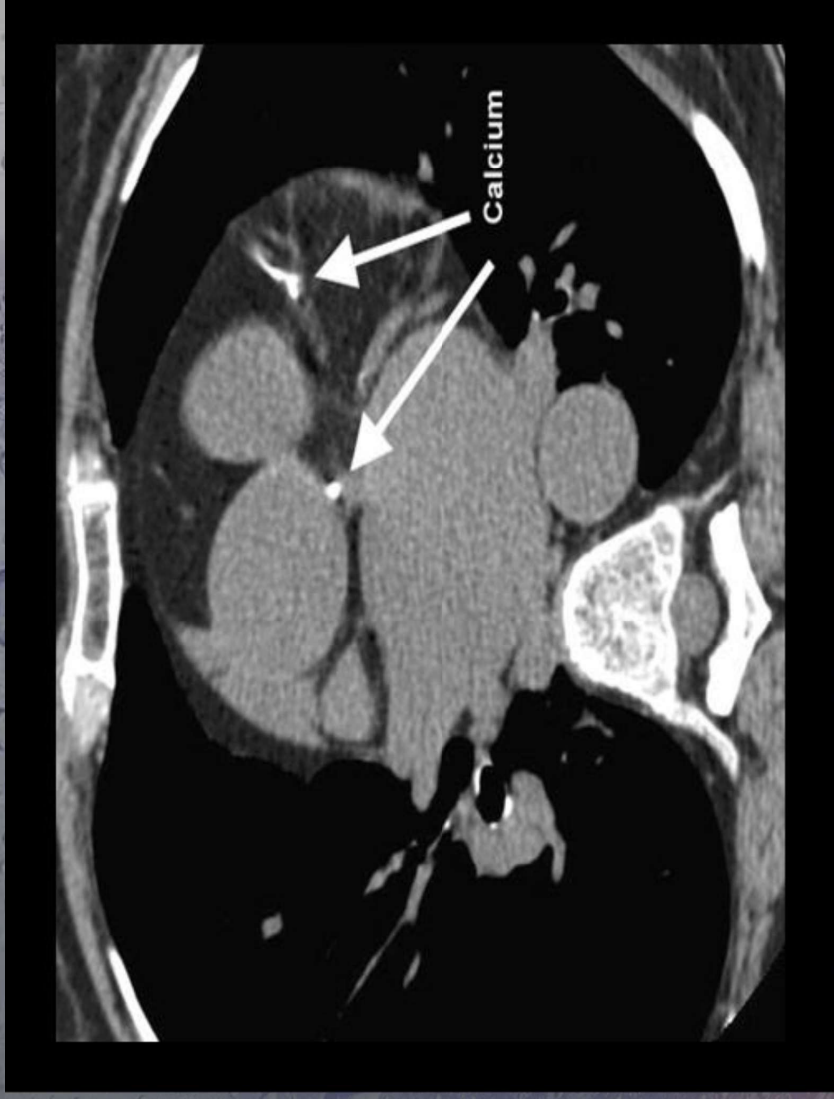
SOLUTIONS – CARDIAC HEALTH



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AFTER DETECTION

- Lifestyle – exercise
- Medication/therapy
- Nutritional therapy

MORE INFORMATION ON TACTICAL WELLNESS

- Identify high-risk individuals
- Successfully manage known cardiac illness
- Prevent early onset heart disease in younger populations

SIGMA



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SOLUTIONS – FATIGUE MANAGEMENT

- Take (and allow) naps
- Sleep hygiene
- Monitor sleep and fatigue levels
- Smart shift scheduling
- Match workers to shifts

THE ART OF NAPPING

- Quiet, dark, cool environment (use foam ear plugs and sleep mask if necessary)
- Between 1200-1400 HRS is best; avoid after 1600 HRS
- Split sleep (night shift)
- Longer naps (90 mins is ideal) improve alertness, but...
- More than 30 mins. interferes with night sleep and requires time to wake back up
- Power nap = 20 mins

SLEEP HYGIENE

- Where possible, establish a sleep and nap routine
- Monitor “sleep debt” and catch up (pay back one hour for every two hours lost)
- Limit technology before bed
- Allow sufficient time to wind down after shift (approx. 60 mins)
- Limit alcohol, tobacco, & caffeine before bed
- Don't train just before bed (keep body temp low)
- Keep your bedroom cool, dark and quiet!!

MONITOR SLEEP & FATIGUE LEVELS

- Wearables (e.g. Fitbit, Garmin, Apple Watch)
- Sleep diary (pen and paper, available online)

SMART SHIFT SCHEDULING

- Leave time for 8 hours of sleep between shift
- At least 12 hours off between shifts
- At least 2 days off after a series of night shifts
- No more than 12 hours on duty (except emergencies)
- 9-hour max. is better, especially for day sleepers
- Slow rotation or rapid forward rotation)

MATCH WORKERS TO SHIFTS

- Morning types “larks” = day shift
- Evening types “owls” = evening / night shift
- Younger officers = typically better suited to nights than older officers
- But ... family considerations (not just biology)

FATIGUE & LIABILITY

INCREASE SUPERVISION	EMERGENCY ONLY	STOP
SELF-CHECK	INCREASE SUPERVISION	EMERGENCY ONLY
GOOD TO GO	SELF-CHECK	INCREASE SUPERVISION

FATIGUE

LIABILITY

OTHER MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

- Limit overtime (especially mandatory)
- Consider implementing napping policies
- Change the culture towards promotion of sleep health
- Provide sleep education / fatigue management training

SOLUTIONS – MENTAL WELLNESS

- Agency culture
 - ✓ You have a right to be happy. It's not normal not to be.
 - ✓ Lead by example (e.g., talking about accessing resources)
- Connect mental health and getting help to toughness and readiness
 - ✓ Mental health is part of your PPE

SOLUTIONS – MENTAL WELLNESS

Work to make resources:

- Accessible
 - ✓ All in one place, easy to find
- Confidential
 - ✓ Anonymous; no threat of retaliation or fallout
- High-quality
 - ✓ Vetted therapists
 - ✓ First-responder specific

THERAPIST VETTING

DEDICATION

DEPENDABILITY

Availability &
Responsiveness

Confidentiality &
Discretion

Cultural
Competence

Therapist Quality

PROFESSIONALISM

SKILL

IMPLEMENT PEER SUPPORT

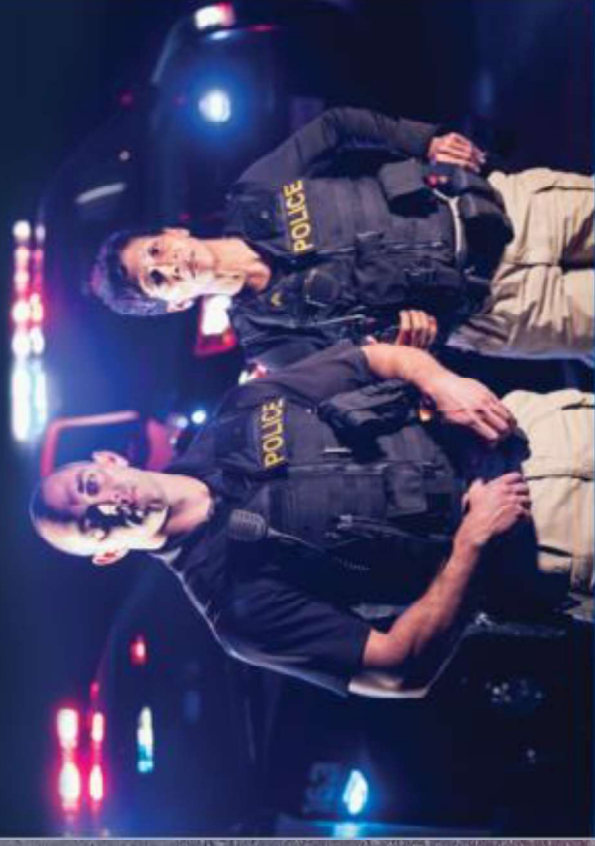
[https://info.lexipol.com/
le-peer-support-qa](https://info.lexipol.com/le-peer-support-qa)



BUILDING SUPPORT

**Why peer support teams are at the
heart of a healthy agency**

A Q&A with Dr. David Black



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- It's not part of the job to die young
- Leaders are sometimes the source of stress
- Leaders must challenge the status quo (e.g., devoting resources to screenings, allowing naps)
- Individuals must make a personal commitment (e.g., eating right, exercising, asking for help)

QUESTIONS?

webinars@lexipol.com

DAVID BLACK

david.black@cordico.com

GORDON GRAHAM

ggraham@lexipol.com

LOIS JAMES

lois_james@wsu.edu

JON SHEINBERG

jon@sigmacoaching.com

FOR MORE INFORMATION

info.lexipol.com/ready-responder

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