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Transforming Police Culture

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Many say we have a serious police problem in America. But, this is not true. Our police are doing what we have asked of them, even though they are neither trained nor equipped to perform many of those tasks. This paper will explore the work culture in law enforcement, specifically in police departments, and its impact on officers both physically and psychologically. It will then look at what is and what could be done to improve the work culture. Finally, a specific type of staff development training will be presented that could be key to transforming police work culture to better meet the needs of officers and the communities in which they serve.

We dismantled our community mental health system and left it up to the police. We criminalized the mental health problem of addiction and left it up to police. We have a serious homeless problem, and rather than deal with the cause, especially with veterans, we left it up to the police. It is estimated that only 4% of police time is spent on apprehending criminals. We as a community have abdicated our responsibility to handle our own problems. A noisy neighbor – call 911. Kids playing in the street – call 911. Family conflict – call 911. Current efforts are focused on how to relieve police of these responsibilities, and this is good. However, there is a deeper problem, that of a toxic work culture within police departments. We react strongly when an officer abuses his/her authority or kills an unarmed person. We say that officer is one of a few “bad apples.” Getting rid of those officers is important, but of more importance is the culture that allows them to function in the first place. This paper will look at the work culture of police, its impact on the officers and what can be done to improve or transform the culture to one that is less warrior oriented and more guardian oriented, less occupier and more partner with the communities in which they serve, and one that meets the needs of the officers themselves.

Types of Work Cultures

The National Institute of Corrections in its series on “Culture and Change Management” describes four types of working cultures. These have been modified and adapted to police agencies. They are: task, team, service and innovation. The task culture focuses on officer safety and favors authority, warrior mentality, para-military structure, efficiency, coordination, control, has a short-term focus and relies on tradition. The team culture values connection, cooperation, inclusion, communication, mentoring, community, family orientation and staff empowerment. The service culture is results-oriented, i.e., what is the final product or outcome of the service offered. This would include community partnering, service integration, interagency cooperation with the mission of being a guardian. Finally, the innovation culture is focused on creativity, risk taking, growth, cutting edge services, interagency collaboration, current research awareness and has a long-range vision. The task culture must be present, because without officer safety, chaos will follow. However, if officer safety is the only focus, the working culture will become coercive.

Structure	Flexible	Team Connection, cooperation, inclusion, communication, mentoring, community, family oriented, staff empowerment	Innovation Creativity, risk taking, growth, cutting edge, interagency collaboration, research awareness, long-range vision
	Stable	Task Authority, officer safety, warrior, individuality, para-military orientation, structure, efficiency, coordination, control, short-term focus, tradition	Service Results oriented, guardian mission, community partnering, services integration, interagency cooperation
		Inward	Outward

Focus

To the foundation of officer safety [task] must be added elements of the team culture, which values staff, the most important asset of a police agency. All too often staff are viewed as expendable rather than essential. When a well-functioning staff exists, attention can be drawn to developing the service culture elements or partnering with the community to improve the life of its members. Now, with a focus on partnership from a base of safety, the creative elements of the innovation culture can be explored. When all four cultures are present, the police agency will be a high functioning organization that values staff and produces meaningful results and its image in the community will be transformed. This must be our long-term goal; an organization that is highly prized and respected and as a place where people want to work. Turnover will dramatically drop and staff shortages will be a thing of the past. All four quadrants will promote officer safety, community safety and community empowerment.

Current Police Work Culture

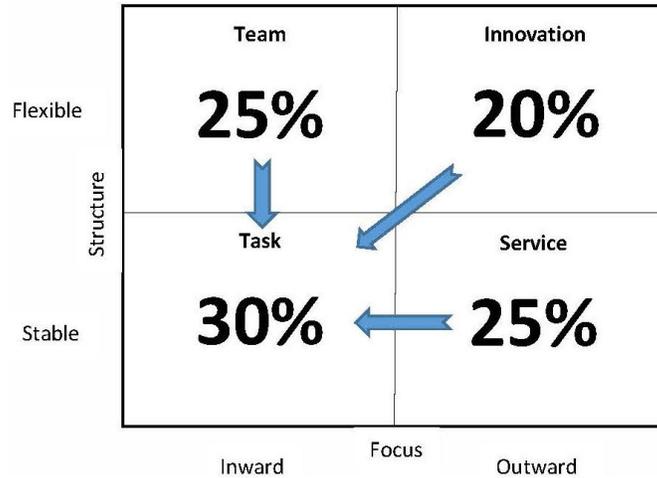
The current focus of police departments is primarily on safety of officers using the most up-to-date equipment, some of which has been purchased from the military. This culture is primarily focused on the task type of culture, that of warrior. The proportions might look like this:

		Focus	
		Inward	Outward
Structure	Flexible	Team 10%	Innovation 0%
	Stable	Task 70%	Service 20%

This work culture has serious consequences for police officers, both physical and psychological. These will be discussed later. A number of police departments are trying to change this focus to one of guardian, i.e., guarding the constitutional rights of the community and its members. This change in focus could look like this:

		Focus	
		Inward	Outward
Structure	Flexible	Team 25%	Innovation 20%
	Stable	Task 30%	Service 25%

This approach still has a major focus on safety, but increases focus on the staff, service to the community and creativity utilizing current research and innovations. What is interesting with this refocus is that now all quadrants improve safety in the community and wellbeing of officers. This is a win/win for the community and officers.



Officer Stress and Its Impact

The law enforcement profession is one of the highest stress jobs in America. It demands “long hours, exposure to bad weather, unrelenting stress, hurried meals or meals skipped entirely, frustration, separation from loved ones, lack of opportunity for regular exercise, physical exhaustion, the threat of communicable disease, alienation, alcohol abuse, sleeplessness, insomnia, inadequate sleep, inadequate time off, and more.” (Marshall 2006) Add to this the continual exposure to traumatic events most people will not experience in a lifetime. Police are trained to dissociate from their emotions in order to function. This does not mean they get used to the trauma, just that they suppress or deny the emotion, but the trauma is not forgotten and does have long lasting negative effects on the brain. (Marshall 2006)

Every day a police officer experiences chronic stress, regardless if they witness or experience a trauma. This chronic stress puts the brain on high alert producing cortisol. Cortisol is produced for emergencies and life threatening situations. When it is continuously produced, it literally changes the structure of the brain causing the amygdala to enlarge and the hippocampus to shrink and reduces the level of serotonin, the feel good hormone, causing depression. The amygdala is the fear/fight/flight part of the brain and the hippocampus is the memory and emotional management part giving an event context by indicating if in the past this event has been dangerous or not. A loud noise fires the amygdala and the hippocampus lets us know it is just a door slamming and not a threat, so we relax. When the amygdala enlarges, it becomes the primary response organ and the hippocampus is less functional; therefore the logical part of the brain [prefrontal cortex] is literally cut off. Thus, when stressed, police may do very illogical things due to only seeing a threat. The good news is that the changes in the brain are not permanent. New neuropathways can be created, but first the amygdala has to be quieted. This is called neuroplasticity. More on this later.

These changes in the brains of police can result in over use of force, unnecessary shootings, interpersonal difficulties at work and at home, domestic violence, child abuse, aggressive driving, and verbal abuse, among other potentially dangerous and stressful behaviors. (Marshall 2019) Dr. Ellen Marshall had developed the theory of Cumulative Career Traumatic Stress [CCTS], which is similar but not the same as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder [PTSD]. Although most law enforcement officers will not experience PTSD, they may suffer from some or all of the

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symptoms of PTSD with varying degrees of intensity and occurrences throughout their career. (Marshall 2006)

“CCTS symptoms are intrusive thoughts, flashbacks, emotional numbing, moodiness, anxiety, avoiding reminders of incidents, loss of hope, hypervigilance, memory and/or concentration problems, sleep and/or eating problems, disconnection from family and friends, and hyper-arousal among others.” (Marshall 2006) Behavioral problems are marital difficulties, alcoholism, burnout, loss of social contacts, suicide, abusive behavior on the job, sexual promiscuity, and stress disorders. (Marshall 2006) In her study of traumatic stress in law enforcement, Marshall reported the following psychological changes:

- 96% reported that their opinions of others had changed
- 92% reported they no longer trusted others
- 82% believe the world to be an unsafe place
- 88% experienced prejudices they did not hold prior to the job
- 54% reported that job stress affected their relationships
- 53% reported that their faith or religious beliefs had changed
- 51% experienced appetite changes
- 47% lost interest in pleasurable activities
- 31% experienced intense fear, helplessness or horror
- 35% used alcohol to relax and
- 11% reported experiencing suicidal ideation.

A significant impact of chronic stress and of officers being trained to dissociate from their emotions is that it greatly decreases or eliminates their ability to experience empathy, which is essential in interpersonal relationships and the ability to read other’s intentions. This has serious consequences on the job and in home life, often resulting in marital and family problems. Also of concern is that empathy and morality reside in the same part of the brain, so a reduction in empathy may result in a reduction in moral behavior, especially when faced with a perceived threat. The “us vs. them” mentality trained into law enforcement increases anxiety, depression and decreases empathy, (Segal 79) and is particularly strong when there is a social aversion to a particular group, such as a prejudice based on race or ethnicity or stigma related to social outcasts. (Segal 78)

The Work Culture and Stress

Stress is a part of the job; however, the most damaging stress often comes from within the agency. Factors such as a non-supportive management, ineffective departmental communications, rigid organizational structure, lack of opportunities for advancement, shift work, excessive overtime, workplace discrimination/harassment and heavy workload add to the stress officers experience. (Gershon 276) These organizational stressors, not critical incidents, are most strongly associated with perceived police stress. This could also be explained by officers expecting that line-of-duty critical incidents will occur, but not expecting to be treated unfairly by their departments, even feeling a betrayal of trust in their leadership. (Gershon 284) Michael

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Wood of the Baltimore police department stated in a TEDx talk that he never feared the streets, but he feared other officers (Wood) and that veteran officers may “test” new officers to see if they are tough enough and can handle the job. (Cohen 223)

“In many American police agencies, the hierarchical top-down control model remains the predominant structure both in the station and on the street. We do not encourage the rank and file to question authority. We cling to the belief that fear of punishment for rule violations leads to greater rule adherence and better police performance. Though well intentioned, this style of leadership has the unintended but powerful consequence of conveying a distrust of officers by their leaders. It is no wonder that one of the hallmarks of law enforcement culture is the reciprocated distrust and disdain of police leadership by rank and file officers.” (Rahr 6) When this lack of departmental trust occurs, along with not feeling supported by their families who do not fully understand the pressures of the job and with whom they are not able to share their job stress, it can stretch their resilience to the limit resulting in alcohol abuse, domestic violence, overaggressive policing, even suicide. (President’s 63)

Normally, people process stress and trauma by talking about it in a safe place. The “Code of Silence” within law enforcement does not support this. Police are expected to be emotionally tough, controlled, and resilient, which prevents many officers from being willing to seek out services or discuss their feelings with other officers when stressed and/or burned out. (Cohen 215) The presumption within the culture is often that the mere presence of an emotional problem indicates a weakness and can make the officer vulnerable, even to the point of losing their job. (Heyman 31) There is the perception that honesty around mental illness could be “career destroying.” (Heyman 25)

The Psychological and Physical Toll on Officers

The toll on officers from this toxic stress is both psychological and physical. Officers are 25 times more likely to die from cardiovascular disease than from the actions of a suspect. (Practices 7) 50% of law enforcement retirees will die from a heart disease within five years of retirement. A civilian’s probability of dying at the age of 55-59 is just 1.5% compared to 56% for an officer. 45% of officers will have a heart attack before age 45, compared to less than 7% for the general population. (Improving 29) In one study, officers who did not have any symptoms or evidence of existing cardiovascular disease found that greater than 50% of the more than 750 officers screened had evidence of coronary artery disease. Although the initial development of heart disease can potentially be detected readily, early screening is vital. Unfortunately, younger individuals without symptoms are less likely to see their physician, and this age group is precisely the population that includes most police officers. (Improving 29)

Studies have shown that 35% of officers have PTSD, 31% have depression (Heyman 12) and 40% are obese (Heyman 18). Research conducted across nine Midwestern states found that nearly 83% of officers were overweight. (Improving 30) Those who are obese are more likely to have metabolic syndromes, including high blood pressure, high blood sugar, and abnormal cholesterol with higher risk of heart attacks and sleep disorders. (Practices 2) One-third of police officers reported sleeping less than six hours in a 24-hour period. Chronic sleep loss can lead to excessive fatigue and alertness. (Hartley 211) After 17 hours of continuous wakefulness, an individual

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experiences a decrease in performance equal to blood alcohol concentration of .05% and after 24 hours it increases to .10%. (Practices 4) It is no wonder that a significant number of police officers die in traffic accidents.

Finally, the ultimate toll is that their life expectancy of white police officers is 21.9 years less than the U.S. white population. (Violanti)

There has been a lot of attention given to police suicides lately. Blue H.E.L.P. reported that in 2018 there were 172 officer suicides in the US and in 2019 there were 228. That is a 32.6% increase. Chuck Wexler, executive director of the Police Executive Research Forum says these statistics are undoubtedly underreported. He also stated that suicide is the number one officer safety issue.(Barr) About twice as many officers die by suicide than are killed by gunshot and traffic accidents combined. (Heyman 27) Moral Injury may be a significant factor in suicides. The military has found there to be a definite relationship. Moral Injury is experienced when an officer perpetrates, observes, hears about or fails to prevent an action that violates their moral values. The symptoms are similar to PTSD, but the treatment is not. It may be helpful to view officer suicide as a wake-up call, or the “canary in the mine.”

One of the things we know is that people who are contemplating suicide feel alone without the resources to deal with their situation and that there is only one way out. The combination of the macho image, the lack of empathy and the code of silence can contribute to this feeling of hopelessness. The rate of marital conflict and divorce can be much more serious for an officer than the general public. If an officer feels unconnected at work and at home, they are much more susceptible to suicide. One officer struggling with suicide made the statement that, “I feel like an orphan in my own department.” (Heyman 25) Finally, people often develop suicidal ideation in the mid to long term, not in the immediate aftermath of a crisis event. (Improving 37) This means ongoing support and not just immediate intervention is critically important.

What Can and Is Being Done

In order for our police departments to be transformed, there are three areas of focus: leadership, duties and training. Leadership can foster positive culture change and refocus officer duties so that what is expected of them is what they are trained to accomplish. Redesign training to be more effective and provide the skills necessary for the agency transformation, including the relationship of the police to the community.

Real change comes from a new approach to leadership and to developing positive, supportive relationships across the organization. (Cohen 223) Creating an organization and culture where members truly feel supported and safe is required if the organization is truly going to be successful in keeping all police officers healthy. (Cohen 223) The transformational model of police leadership focuses on developing subordinates through encouraging behaviors and making everyone in the organization feel more valued. Leaders lead by inspiring those in the organization, motivating subordinates, and working to develop and support others. They help all employees develop professionally and personally and have a true desire to fulfill the professional potential of their subordinates, which includes not just the officer’s physical wellbeing, but the officer’s emotional and psychological wellbeing as well. The capacity of police organizations to become transformative organizations is challenging because developing participatory forms of management involve the redistribution and sharing of power between organizational members, which is not typical in hierarchical organizations, such as the police. (Cohen 223)

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Leadership is in a position to create top-down conditions for bottom-up change, but there must also be buy-in from officers. When supervisors believe it is less important to be in charge than it is to empower those in their charge, this type of bottom-up change can occur. It is important for supervisors to personally care for and about those in their charge. It is said that employees do not leave the organization, they leave their supervisors.

“The impact of supervisors goes beyond establishing effective interpersonal communications. That is necessary, but it is not sufficient. Good supervisors have rapport with and praise for their staff. Even more important, they care about their employees and strive to meet their needs. Ninety-five percent of the reasons people leave their employ are preventable. Of that 95%, more than 70% of the reasons are related to factors that are controllable by their direct supervisor. One of those factors is empowerment, that supervisors replace supervisor control with self-control . . . employees who reported higher levels of care from immediate supervisors had higher levels of job satisfaction. In that report, care is defined as interest in one’s life outside the scope of work. This would include such things as asking questions about family, activities outside of work and general concern for overall employee wellbeing.”
(Shuford 2020, 34-35)

A number of programs have been introduced to help reduce officer stress, among them are Cop2Cop, peer support and crisis intervention support initiatives. These may be valuable, but they are not the answer in themselves. Existing literature on crisis-focused psychological intervention programs, including both Critical Incident Stress Debriefing and Critical Incident Stress Management lack rigorous research making it difficult to attribute any positive findings about the effects of this intervention. (Cohen 221) Further, a meta-analysis of stress management interventions failed to identify any significant effects of those interventions on physical, behavioral and physiological forms of stress. (Cohen 216) These interventions focus on the damaging effects of stress rather than preventing the stress from occurring in the first place, which would be to transform the work culture itself.

One approach to stress management that shows a lot of promise is mindfulness. This practice used to be viewed as too new age to be considered by mainstream America. However, recent research shows that it is effective at lowering stress, increasing empathy and improving thinking, by creating new neuropathways in the brain resulting in new ways of thinking, feeling and behaving. Mindfulness practice slows the fear-based fight/flight response just enough to allow rational thought to take place. All that is needed is at least twenty-minutes of quiet along time each day. (Marshall 2019, 79) A number of agencies have also implemented wellness programs focusing on exercise and diet. These can also lower officer stress and promote healthy habits.

There have been very promising approaches assessing and modifying what duties we want our police to perform. Eugene, Oregon established the CAHOOTS service thirty years ago, which pairs medical and mental health experienced teams to respond to calls otherwise referred to police. Of the 24,000 calls in 2019 (20% of total calls), only 150 required police back-up saving the city \$22,500,000. Denver and Olympia WA have developed services modeled on CAHOOTS, which provides a broad range of services, including: crisis counseling; suicide prevention, assessment, and intervention; conflict resolution and mediation; grief and loss; substance abuse; housing crisis, first aid and non-emergency medical care; resource connection and referrals; and transportation services. (Andrews)

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Another approach, which is not new, but might be getting more attention now is community policing, where police focus more on being of service, i.e., being guardian rather than warrior. Bend OR police department sets goals not on enforcement [stops, tickets, arrests], but on engagements [how many community contacts made]. The chief reflected that it has improved morale and wellness within the department as appreciation from the community increases. Officers are given the authority to get city workers to clean up trash and get community to cooperate and help. Not only is this important for officer mental health, but more than a century of research shows that informal social control is a much more powerful mechanism for crime control and reduction than is formal punishment. (President's 43)

Community policing cannot be a program, unit, strategy or tactic. It must be the core principle that lies at the foundation of the police department's culture. The only way to significantly reduce fear, crime, and disorder and then sustain these gains is to leverage the force multiplier: the people of the community. (President's 43) Every officer is expected to get to know the residents, business, community groups, churches, and schools on their beat and work with them to identify and address public safety challenges, including quality of life issues. Officers remain in the same beat or district for several years or more – which builds familiarity and trust. (President's 43) Hiring, training, evaluating and promoting officers based on their ability and track record in community engagement – not just traditional measures of policing such as arrests, ticket, or tactical skills – is an equally important component of the successful infusion of community policing throughout an organization. (President's 43) Community policing is not just about the behavior and tactics of police, it is also about the civic engagement and capacity of communities to improve their own neighborhoods, their quality of life, and their sense of safety and wellbeing. (President's 46)

The Key to Culture Change is Training

When implementing new policies, if they conflict with the existing culture, these new policies no matter how beneficial they are, will be resisted and probably not be institutionalized and behavior will not change. In police work, the vast majority of an officer's work is done independently outside the immediate oversight of a superior. (President's 12) One administrator put it this way, "Organizational culture eats policy for lunch." (President's 11) In order to get staff buy-in, preservice training and inservice training must be revised.

"Why are we training police officers like soldiers?" Although police officers wear uniforms and carry weapons, the similarity ends there. The missions and rules of engagement are completely different. The soldier's mission is that of a warrior: to conquer. The rules of engagement are decided before the battle. The police officer's mission is that of a guardian: to protect. The rules of engagement evolve as the incident unfolds. Soldiers must follow orders. Police officers must make independent decisions. Soldiers come into communities as an outside, occupying force. Guardians are members of the community, protecting from within. (President's 11)

An FBI report on recruit training states that classic stress training has proven to be not only ineffective, but to actually be counterproductive. Because this type of training undermines and damages self-esteem, it results in low motivation and poor performance, and is one of the primary reasons for attrition of adult learners. What benefits it shows are short lived. When the recruit leaves the training academy and the fear induced by the instructor is gone, performance

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deteriorates due to the continuing low self-esteem and motivation. The paramilitary training methods of the past are obviously disconnected from the public and community service missions of law enforcement agencies today. (Shuford 2020, 33) The paramilitary methods need to be updated to the adult-learning principles and learning techniques conducive to an educational environment. (Shuford 2020, 33)

Adult learning principles emphasize the importance of experiential learning, and it is even more crucial when considering the development of empathy and empathy skills. Experiential learning is the most effective way to increase empathy for others, especially those perceived as different. Lecture has proven not to be very effective, because attitudes do not originate in the conscious part of the brain, but in the subconscious or limbic part of the brain; experiential learning is the most effective way to have a meaningful and lasting effect. Moreover, the relationship is circular and mutually reinforcing. Increased empathy leads to increased understanding, which in turn leads to more increased empathy. This is not to say that policy changes will not increase empathy. They will, but over a much longer period of time. As officer behavior changes, their experiences will change and that could increase empathy. However, as mentioned previously, if staff are not open to change, new policies may have minimal impact. (Segal 96)

Emotional Intelligence Training

The design or method of training is important, but of equal if not more importance is the content of training. Police are in the people business, so people skills are essential for dealing effectively with the community as well as with fellow officers. People skills are also known as emotional intelligence skills, or EQ. These should be considered essential skills of policing, because they are critical for transforming the culture within a police agency and for effective police-community relations, which is foundational to community policing. These skills can be taught in as few as three days if presented experientially, which means the participants actually experience the skills rather than being lectured about them.

A number of progressive administrators and policy makers realize the importance of teaching emotional intelligence skills to police officers. This is because, as studies have shown, an officer's job is only 5% apprehending suspects and the rest involves report writing, investigations and interacting with the public. Their training, however, is not focused on emotional intelligence skills. This means officers are not trained with the skills to be successful. When considering incorporating emotional intelligence in officer orientation and in-service training it is critical to understand that the training methodology used to train police as warriors is not going to work with emotional intelligence training. It has to be a completely different approach, both structurally and functionally.

The current focus on changing officer behaviors may be politically expedient, but it is only looking at a symptom of a greater issue; that of the overall work culture within police departments. It is the relationships between officers, officers and supervisors, and staff with administration that are creating the problems. Those relationships are the cause of high turnover, over aggressiveness, marital problems including divorce, suicide, health problems [high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes] and a life expectancy 20 years shorter than the general public. If policy makers want to truly turn things around, they must focus on officer wellbeing, rather than just the symptoms of stress and "bad" officers causing conflict with the public. Policy

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makers must look beyond those symptoms to the cause; the toxic work culture within the department. This cannot be accomplished by simply providing interpersonal skills training.

Emotional intelligence is much more than learning interpersonal skills. It is about attitude or the mindset of the officer. This comes from the subconscious or limbic system in the brain. Lecture and even practice in the classroom will not immediately impact the limbic system. These techniques will not transform relationships. Teaching emotional intelligence must be done from a base of self-awareness, which is the foundational skill. Without establishing self-awareness first, emotional intelligence will just be interpersonal skills and can easily be used as manipulation lacking empathy or a sense of social responsibility. The key to training in emotional intelligence is the awareness that direct experience comes before understanding. Actually experiencing an emotionally intelligent work culture precedes understanding the depth and power of a transformed work culture. Knowing a particular skill does not mean you have the cultural awareness to use it appropriately.

A number of training academies with California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation found staff highly resistant to emotional intelligence training. They were using the traditional style of training, lecture and skill practice without the foundation of self-awareness. Also, the title of the training is critical. Calling it Emotional Intelligence or Soft-Skills training will come up against the warrior identity of many officers and be highly resisted. Teambuilding or officer wellness is a much more effective title for the training and it should begin with developing safety by having the trainees learn about each other and have activities that are fun with a lot of movement.

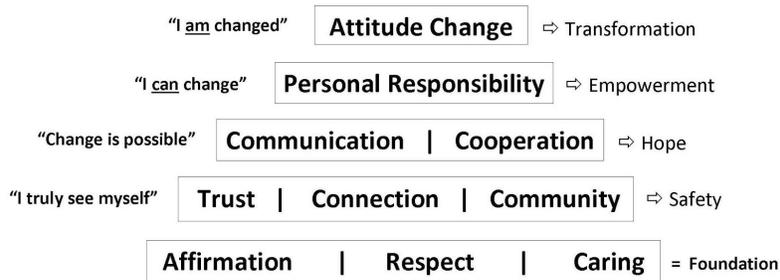
Emotional Intelligence Training Model

A training model that has been effective for 26 years in training correctional officers in emotional intelligence is the two or three day Teambuilding Attitude Conflict Transformation[®] [TACT[®]] training. It is designed with certain building blocks that facilitate the learning process and is supported by current research in adult learning principles. A foundation of affirmation, respect and caring is established in the first session. This can be accomplished by engaging participants in experiential interpersonal exercises, not by lecture. The participants need to feel the trainer respects and cares about them as a group and individually, and is not just “doing their job.”

With this foundation, the participants will feel a sense of safety built on trust, connection and community; which is the second building block. This sense of safety is critically important for many reasons. Participants will comfortably let their barriers down and be more open to seeing themselves honestly, be more open to new ideas and information without being defensive, and connect with others in a positive, reinforcing community with a strong bond. This connection crosses department boundaries improving cooperation and collaboration. Individuals now feel connected and relationships that have been conflicted often are repaired. The sense of connection to others is one of our basic human needs. (Shuford 2020, 37)

Teambuilding Attitude Conflict Transformation Trainings

Building Blocks



Once a sense of safety has been created in the training, the skills of effective communication and cooperation are taught, which will give staff the sense of hope that the working culture can actually be changed. This sense of hope is absolutely necessary in order for old established behavioral patterns to change. These skills, which are taught experientially, include listening, assertiveness, problem solving and conflict transformation [resolution and prevention]. These emotional intelligence skills are the third building block of the training. Now that the participants have the tools and have actually experienced the change in culture within the training itself, they will naturally feel empowered and a sense of personal responsibility to make changes in their work setting; which is the fourth building block.

Some may think they cannot change the work culture in the entire department, but they certainly can with those whom they work and when enough staff experience this attitude change, work culture transformation gradually takes place. This process is organic, even with staff who come to this type of training skeptical or even defiant to change. The result of this process is the fifth building block, which is personal transformation. Now staff have the attitude, experience and skills necessary to transform the work culture in the department. This personal transformation is not temporary as indicated by one large city jail system where six months post training, 82%-85% of staff reported continuing to use the skills compared with traditional teaching strategies showing a 10%-30% rate. (Shuford 2020)

The results of this type of training are remarkable when incorporated in basic orientation and inservice training. Because the intention of this training model is to change attitudes, the impact on staff has been dramatic at work with co-workers and supervisors and in their personal lives, especially at home. The TACT[®] training methodology above has been serving agencies for 26 years. TACT[®] trainings have helped rebuild an emotionally devastated staff after four staff were brutally murdered in 2017, healed damaged relationships between departments, transformed and revitalized a dysfunctional training academy, turned an anger prone problem employee into an employee of the year, improved the working cultures in numerous agencies, re-energized a burned-out 18-year employee, transformed a problem supervisor and reduced employee grievances in one prison to an all-time low.

Content Areas of TACT[®] Training

TACT[®] trainings can be viewed as an emotional intelligence inoculation, beginning the process of transformation. The primary areas covered in this training are:

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Attitude Skills

- ❖ Self-awareness
- ❖ Empathy
- ❖ Personal Responsibility
 - Initiative (What I do matters)
 - Integrity
 - Interconnectedness with others
- ❖ Emotional Management

Interpersonal Skills

- ❖ Active Listening Skills
- ❖ Assertiveness Skills
- ❖ Problem Solving Skills
- ❖ Transforming Power (Prevention and Conflict Transformation)

Community Building Skills

- ❖ Trust
- ❖ Respect
- ❖ Inclusiveness

Emotional Intelligence Systemic Approach

There is a lot more to learning emotional intelligence than one training. It must be incorporated in the total training program and repeated with regular refreshers. One possible systemic approach could be TACT[®] training for all staff, which would be mandatory. As shown above, staff appreciate and value this training even when they come with resistant attitudes. Adding to this could be a training focused on personal self-awareness. This second training should be voluntary, because it would be deeper and more intense facilitating further personal growth accelerating the learnings of the first training. Supervisors would benefit from this level of training. Like the basic TACT[®] training, staff enjoy and express gratitude for being offered it.

A third training could be a bias awareness training that would include community members. [Note: although well accepted, implicit bias training has not proven to be effective at changing behaviors.] All three trainings would be highly experiential, positive and engaging. This training approach would strongly improve the efforts of community policing; transforming relationships and empowering both police and community to develop creative and innovative strategies to make our communities safer, healthier along with improving the health and wellbeing of our police force.

To show how important these EQ skills are, these are some typical comments from staff:

“This training was life altering. Best I have ever had in my 25 years with the state;” “Not only equipped me to be a better manager, but also a better person;” “I now know how to deal with problems in a different way than I learned in the past;” “I learned to trust when I didn’t

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think I could;” “Life transforming. I will carry this training for the rest of my career;” “I ask why? Why did this training take twenty-eight years to come into play with the department?”

From the director of a training academy, *“Words cannot express the value of the training you have conducted at the Academy. There is actually a paradigm shift from the rigidity and inflexibility ingrained in law enforcement, to the understanding and acceptance of the value of community and teamwork.”*

And from an agency director, *“It is generally thought to be the best training program that staff has participated in. The labor unions are strong supporters of it and employee grievances have dropped to an all time low. Thank you for helping us change the culture. It is the best investment of resources that we have ever made.” (Shuford 2019)*

When staff experience this type of training, their motivation and wellbeing will improve, they will be more receptive to new ideas and new ways of doing things and they will be more resilient with a reduced level of stress. They will be able to support each other in ways they had not before, thus making existing trainings, programs and services more effective and likely better utilized. Without this change in attitude and relationship, the culture and code of silence will undermine good programs meant to reduce stress. Emotional intelligence skills building trainings, when coupled with progressive policy changes, can transform a police agency into the public service provider that enhances the community, is highly respected and valued by those it serves. Any serious effort to incorporate emotional intelligence into law enforcement must be systemic, well thought out and not piecemeal. The potential for transformation is unlimited.

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