

KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS OF BURNOUT

Emotional symptoms include lack of motivation, the feeling of just trying to get by, no longer enjoying work, thoughts of quitting, irritability and a lack of patience, and feelings of hopelessness. Additional emotional symptoms can include a loss of interest in socializing, personal hobbies, and participating in recreational activities.

Physical symptoms can include body aches, headaches, constantly feeling tired, inability to focus, and high blood pressure, among others.

Self-care is key. Physical and mental fitness are not luxuries for police officers, rather necessities. Physical exercise provides officers a much-needed outlet for the effects of general stress, as well as a host of other physical and mental health benefits. It also helps officers maintain an overall wellness-based lifestyle. The mind and body are one, and taking care of the body helps take care of the mind.

Most people don't need to be convinced of the benefits of self-care, but they do need help making it a regular part of their daily routine. The Health and Wellness Section has a variety of resources from videos to customized nutrition and workout plans to encourage and promote whole-body wellness.

RESOURCE NUMBERS

Health and Wellness Section

90 Church Street
New York, NY 10007
646-610-4862

Interim and Critical Incident Support Services

137 Centre Street, 2nd FL
New York, NY 10013
212-343-3701

Chaplains Unit

130 Ave C. Rm. 409
New York, NY 11218
212-473-2363

Counseling

Services Unit
1 Lefrak City Plaza, 15th FL
Corona, NY 11368
718-760-7557



Employee Assistance Unit

The Employee Assistance Unit (EAU) is designed to assist Members of the Service who are experiencing personal and/or professional problems. The early identification and resolution of these problems can minimize the impact on a member's career or home life.

Referrals are accepted from fellow Members of the Service, unions and fraternal organizations, family, and friends.

Our unit is **NOT** a disciplinary arm of the department. Communications between EAU personnel and Members of the Service remain **CONFIDENTIAL**, EXCEPT in cases of criminality or suicidality.

EAU IS AVAILABLE 24/7 by phone or in person. Peer counselors will meet you, and care for you, where and how you are most comfortable.

If it's important to you,
it's important to us.

Employee Assistance Unit

90 Church Street
Suite 1209
New York, NY 10007
646-610-6730

Employee Assistance Unit

Burnout



WHAT IS BURNOUT?

Burnout is not classified as a medical condition, but as an occupational phenomenon defined by three factors:

- Feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion
- Increased mental distance from one's job/
Feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job
- Reduced professional efficacy

Our bodies and minds can only keep up with mental, physical, and emotional demands for so long. After reaching our limit, we may experience mental, physical, and emotional symptoms as warning signs. When left unchecked, those warning signs can turn into mental health disorders and/or physical conditions.



HYPERVIGILANCE AND BURNOUT

Hypervigilance is the state of being highly alert to potential danger or threat. Being hypervigilant is necessary for a police officer at work. In a split second, a “routine” call can turn into a life or death situation.

Controlling a scene is what we’re trained to do. Sometimes that means temporarily suppressing our own emotions. Creating distance and shutting down may seem like an effective way to avoid facing uncomfortable emotions, especially when handling one job after another.

Being in a constant state of hypervigilance outside of work, however, takes a heavy emotional toll on a police officer’s personal life. If we can’t turn off our hypervigilant emotional state at home, we may become disappointed or depressed when there is no threat to respond to. Or worse, we may shut out the people who love and support us.

HOW DO WE GET BURNED OUT?

Police officers often see humanity at its worst or lowest point. Constantly seeing people in this state may eventually lead to the cynical worldview. The reality is the category of people who call the police in times of crisis represent a very small percentage of the public. Checking in and being honest with ourselves and each other is one way to mitigate becoming overly cynical.

Police work is what we do, not who we are.

When we start defining ourselves by our occupation, we lose sight of everything that makes us unique. Preventing burnout becomes more and more difficult as we stop participating in recreational activities that act as an outlet for relief from job-related stress.

Associating with fellow officers can be a great way to let off steam and decompress after a long day. It builds personal relationships and boosts morale. The problem arises when cops stop associating with friends and family outside police work. Cops may feel like people who aren’t police officers don’t understand our profession, and can’t relate to the things a police officer deals with on a daily basis.

This is true, and can be a good thing in the context of a healthy, positive relationship. Friends and family who know us outside of being police officers help give us perspective and broaden our worldview, so that it doesn’t become narrowed by cynicism. They keep us anchored to the “real world” by reminding us that policing may be our profession, but it doesn’t define us as a whole.

HOW DO WE PREVENT BURNOUT?

Denial can be deadly. It leads to the false belief that an issue in one area of our lives is completely unrelated to other areas of our lives. Police work is dangerous by nature.

Continuous exposure to traumatic events, day after day, leads to a buildup of occupational trauma over time. Even if a police officer doesn’t find a job itself to be particularly distressing, having to manage others’ emotions in a highly charged environment can still have emotional consequences.



"It can't happen to me." The false belief that we are unaffected by the nature of police work can lead to denial, and potentially to burnout. By taking initiative to take care of ourselves, we take back control over our personal lives.

Be the change. We can only control what we can control. While we don’t have control over the culture of law enforcement as a whole, we do have control over ourselves. Together, we can end the stigma surrounding mental health and burnout by openly talking about it with people we trust, maintaining a broad worldview and not being afraid to ask for help. You are not alone.

As Dr. Kevin Gilmartin says in his book, *Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement*, “Victims focus on what they do not control. Survivors focus on what they do control.” Knowing what areas of our lives we control, and taking responsibility for those areas, helps us build resilience and minimizes the effects of burnout.

**SUPPORT IS
AVAILABLE 24/7
CALL ANY TIME
646-610-6730**