Applying Adlerian Principles to Proactive Protection of the Mental Health of Police and Military Personnel

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Abstract

Due to high levels of chronic and acute stress in law enforcement and military careers, effective methods of preventive mental health services must be considered. Several Adlerian concepts apply which are useful in promoting mental health for these personnel. Increasing social interest by strengthening the senses of belonging, encouragement, and contributing is vital for this population. Leaders and counselors working with military and law enforcement personnel are encouraged to promote (a) cooperation over competition, and (b) the adoption of a world-view which is inclusive of all human beings. Ideas on how to develop positive coping skills within stressful careers are also discussed.
Applying Adlerian Principles to Proactive Protection of the Mental Health of Police and Military Personnel

Introduction

Personnel involved in military or law enforcement careers experience higher levels of chronic and situational stress than members of many other careers. Such stress means that members of these groups are more at risk for poor job performance, increased accidents, sleep disturbances, marital problems, divorce, alcohol and substance abuse, digestive and respiratory ailments, cancer, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), suicide, depression, and domestic violence (Ussery & Waters, 2006; Castellano & Plionis, 2006). The mental health of military and para-military institutions, such as law enforcement agencies, would be well served by following Adlerian principles. Employing Adlerian principles to provide proactive mental health services to these personnel would help protect our law enforcement and military forces from the harmful effects of acute and chronic job stress.

Types of Job Stressors. The types of stress that law enforcement personnel encounter are unique to their professions. Police officers are expected to respond to all types of emergencies at all hours and are expected to handle crisis situations with diplomacy while dealing with members of the public who are experiencing the worst incidents of their lives. In addition to the occurrences that police officers typically face, such as accidents, drunken drivers, robberies, and domestic violence, they are exposed to extremely disturbing situations such as the death of a child or survivors of vehicle crashes (National Institute of Justice [NIJ], 2000).

Personnel usually go into the law enforcement profession with the understanding that they will face these types of stressors only to find additional unexpected sources of job stress. Mandatory rotating work shifts, negative public perception of police performance, and lack of
administrative support have all been reported as stressors that impact officers (NIJ, 2000). Probation and parole officers report the main stressors in their jobs are not the dangerous parts in which they face violent offenders and put themselves in harm’s way, but high caseloads, paperwork, and poor relationships with their supervisors (NIJ, 2005).

Military occupation stress is similar to that of law enforcement in that the demands are unique and some of the most stressful situations are the least obviously traumatic: work responsibilities, work hours or poor relationships with supervisors. Increased levels of psychological distress have been correlated with experiencing combat, exposure to heavy casualties, and unexpected deployments (Greenberg, 2007). According to Whiteaker (2008) 68% of US troops serving in the Iraq war have seen dead or seriously injured Americans and 100% of those deployed have seen human corpses. Although this type of acute trauma is anticipated by troops serving during times of military crisis, chronic stressors also exist for military personnel who are not serving in war-torn areas. Major sources of chronic job stress include inadequate staffing, work load, long duty hours, and difficulty with supervisors (Pflanz & Ogle, 2006).

*Impact of Stress on Personnel.* Although job stress exists in all careers and lines of work in industrialized nations, the unique aspects of military and law enforcement service appear to impact personnel in distinct and serious ways. Ussery and Waters (2006) noted a paradox regarding the health and fitness levels of law enforcement officers. Police officers and military personnel are required to undergo medical examinations, physical fitness screenings and trainings before they are hired or allowed to pass probationary periods of employment. Therefore, these personnel begin their careers as the healthiest and most physically fit individuals of any profession. However, studies indicate that police officers die younger than others, and are more likely to become incapacitated by health problems such as heart attacks, ulcers, chronic
headaches, depression, and suicide (Ussery & Waters, 2006.) This phenomenon is even more puzzling when considering that law enforcement provides a relatively safe working environment involving no contact with noxious chemicals or poisons, nor is use of heavy equipment required which might fail or lead to accidents and injuries.

In addition to the negative impact job stress has on the physical health of personnel, satisfaction in marital or other close relationships may be affected. One study indicates that general trauma symptoms resulting from serving in combat duty negatively affect couple relationships and lead to lower relationship satisfaction (Nelson Goff, et al., 2007). These results indicate that the impact of combat trauma is not restricted to the individual and affects the important social support that close relationships provide for military personnel. The National Institute of Justice (2000) reported that a very large percentage of police spouses stated that they experience unusually high levels of stress because of the officers’ jobs which can lead to a stressful home environment that can adversely affect the officers’ job performance. Decreased relationship satisfaction may lead to higher levels of divorce and domestic violence which are of significant concern to law enforcement couples (Ussery & Waters, 2006).

Long-term psychiatric problems and higher morbidity rates after returning to civilian life may also be a result of the chronic stressors of military service. In one study, 7 of 399 veterans who had reported experiencing stress during their military service died (4 from suicide and the other 3 from accidents) compared to 0 of 1,535 veterans who had not reported experiencing stress symptoms (Hageman, et al., 2008). The combination of combat stress reaction (CSR) and other stressful life events including negative childhood experiences, divorce, termination of employment, and medical complaints seems to be particularly damaging to the mental health of war veterans (Solomon, et al., 2008). Law enforcement officers also suffer from higher rates of
premature death than personnel from other occupations including suicide levels which were three times that of a comparison group of municipal employees (Anderson & Bauer, 1987).

Costs of Negative Stress Reactions on Personnel and Organizations. Job stress is not unique to military and law enforcement agencies. They share, for example, many universal costs to employers: loss of the investment of time and money necessary for proper recruiting, screening, and training of employees, increased use of sick time which may increase the workload of other employees, and decreased productivity (NIJ, 2005). The overall financial losses from work stress are significant in non-military or law enforcement industries. Those losses have been estimated at $150 billion per year (Pflanz & Ogle, 2006). Military personnel who describe themselves as suffering from high levels of job stress report experiencing more work days of decreased productivity, reporting late for work, being hurt in more job-related accidents, and more likelihood of missing work due to injury or illness than those with lower levels of job stress (Hourani, et al., 2006).

Chronic and acute stress for law enforcement officers may accumulate resulting in case errors, poor work quality, and deterioration of home and workplace relationships. Fatigue may also wear down officers’ normal defenses, resulting in more vulnerability to stress, illness and failure (Miller, 1995). Poor work performance in law enforcement officers can have disastrous effects as police encounter situations in which death or injury to themselves or others may occur when their quality of work decreases (Sarason, et al., 1979). Other costs to the departments are not as obvious, but are equally significant: performance inadequacies may lead to friction between labor and management, civil lawsuits, or poor public relations following incidents perceived as police brutality (NIJ, 2000).
Stigma in Seeking Psychological Help. The concept that weakness is not acceptable leads to cultural stigma against seeking help, especially for mental health concerns. This idea is then reinforced by organizational policies such as one which allocates a larger portion of the law enforcement budget to firearms training than to mental health needs (Ussery & Waters, 2006). Somatization of symptoms may occur because personnel are more likely to report physical symptoms and follow through with referrals for medical services, rather than psychological concerns (Greenberg, et al., 2007). Personnel who feel ashamed of needing help deny taking responsibility for seeking services by stating that they were directed to counseling by their supervisors or family members (Kureczka, 2002). This cultural stigma is so strong that even police recruits believed that participating in stress management training during police academy coursework implied some sort of weakness or deficiency (Sarason, et al., 1979).

One major concern that keeps personnel from reporting psychological concerns is the fear that exhibiting these problems will adversely affect their careers. Greenberg (2007) reports that at least one US staff sergeant was originally charged with cowardice when he sought help for a combat stress reaction. Thompson (2008) referred to mental health professionals in the military as magicians because those personnel who sought help “disappeared,” never to return to their units. Others who are dedicated to finding appropriate help will pay for services outside the military rather than risk seeking free services which might leave a paper trail and impact their career goals (Thompson, 2008). Even those individuals who think that stress is acceptable for military personnel, in general, to experience during military duty may be concerned that others would judge them harshly for expressing their own stressful experiences; or they may believe that they have let their buddies down by seeking support from professionals outside their peer group (Greenberg, et al., 2007).
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Current Mental Health Models. Much work has been done to provide reactive mental health services to military and law enforcement personnel who have experienced trauma during their courses of duty. Mental health professionals in the military have studied the effects of war on soldiers and have adjusted treatment programs throughout the 20\textsuperscript{th} and 21\textsuperscript{st} centuries in order to reduce the effects of war trauma on soldiers’ mental health (Pols & Oak, 2007). More recently, a focus on providing preventive mental health services for members of the military and law enforcement has emerged in the literature. Some of the methods employed so far are providing education on job stress and how to combat it; providing mental health services for family members who provide social support; and encouragement from supervisors.

Proactive Stress Management Programs. Preventive stress management programs have proven to be beneficial for military and law enforcement personnel in terms of increased physical health and better job performance. Zach and Raviv (2007) demonstrated that standard military training for basic physical tasks, motor skills, and physical fitness are sufficient to improve trainee’s abilities. However, more training was needed to improve trainee’s abilities in performing more complex and psychological tasks under stressful conditions. The authors emphasized the importance of providing training that included simulated stressful conditions similar to those that the trainees would be likely to encounter while performing their duties. This recommendation is echoed in research by Sarason, et al. (1979) who also found that stress management training for law enforcement officers was most effective when the program targets specific situations that the recruits are likely to encounter during their regular duties. Kamiyama, et al. (2004) also noted the importance of practicing stress-management techniques rather than simply providing education to marine recruits regarding stress and its effects on performance and
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health concerns. Experiencing first-hand how deep-breathing and other relaxing techniques affect individuals provides incentive for practicing the techniques to relieve stress.

Cost benefits for providing stress management programs have been found in both the law enforcement and military professions. The National Institute of Justice (2000) recommends providing stress-reduction programs for law enforcement personnel because stress affects an agency’s bottom line by increasing employee turnover, early retirements, and long-term disability use. While recognizing a significant initial cost to establish and maintain such programs, the NIJ finds that one dollar invested in preventive mental health services can save hundreds of thousands down the road because so much money is invested in hiring and retaining law enforcement officers (NIJ, 2000). One preventive mental health program provided for US Naval recruits was estimated to save $18.6 million per year and proposed to decrease attrition, increase recruit performance levels, and provide a cost-effective method of recruit retention (Williams, et al., 2007).

Personnel who are not provided with stress management training are left to rely on their own resources and coping styles to deal with the anxiety they experience on the job. Research shows that individuals experiencing stress tend to become self-preoccupied and may employ self-defeating and interfering thoughts which might detract from their ability to focus on how to accomplish the task at hand (Sarason, et al., 1979). This effect of stress on performance was also noted by Zach and Raviv (2007) who reported that stress can cause people to direct their abilities to processing the stress they are experiencing rather than resolving the problem they are facing. Unfortunately, one common method of dealing with police job stress is the use (or abuse) of alcohol and many law enforcement officers frequently stop at the local bar after the end of their shifts to have a drink and discuss the day’s events with coworkers. The use of alcohol by police
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Advertising officers has been found to be prevalent and may play a role in the health risks accompanying police work while exacerbating the potential for poor mental health and relationship dissatisfaction (Anderson & Bauer, 1987).

Turning to alcohol to relieve job stress may reflect a negative coping style that some people have developed in order to combat daily stress. All individuals have a practiced coping style which helps them deal with life stressors; this set of coping strategies may be positive or negative. Positive coping styles include activities such as: (a) being physically active, (b) seeking social support, (c) creating a plan of action and focusing on the problem, and (d) positive appraisal and acceptance of the problem. Maintaining physical fitness and engaging in physical activity have been correlated with the acquisition of physical and psychological resources as well as a sense of control, self-image, and self-efficacy (Zach & Raviv, 2007).

Negative coping styles incorporate behaviors such as: (a) mentally disengaging through chemical use, sleeping, or working more, (b) denying or avoiding the problem, and (c) venting negative emotions. The misuse of alcohol may appear to be a useful coping strategy in the short-term where avoiding stress with chemical use actually masks indicators of stress or depression. Deahl, et al (2000) found a surprisingly low level of PTSD symptoms as well as widespread indicators of alcohol misuse in their sample of veterans returning from UN peacekeeping duties. However, individuals experiencing job stress who utilized negative coping styles showed an increase in complaints of physical and health-related problems where those with positive coping styles showed no relation to the same type of complaints (Day & Livingstone, 2001). Visiting a bar with shift-mates after work to vent about the events of the day over an alcoholic beverage incorporates most, if not all, of the negative coping styles which result in adverse health conditions. However, many law enforcement and military personnel routinely engage in just this
type of behavior with the thought that it is the most appropriate way to deal with the unique stresses of their work environments.

**Adlerian Perspective**

Law enforcement and military personnel would not only be well-served by working for institutions that follow Adlerian principles, but they would also benefit from receiving support from mental health providers who apply Adlerian principles as part of therapeutic treatment. Even the standard, reactive, model for effective treatment of combat stress can be viewed from an Adlerian perspective. Soldiers are treated as close to their unit as is safely possible, which allows for a continuing sense of belonging to the unit; encouragement is provided in the form of therapy, hot meals, showers, and a safe place to sleep; and contributing is stressed through reassurance that the soldier will be able to return to participate in the unit’s important mission as soon as possible. Greater application of social interest and encouragement in law enforcement and military institutions would aid in protecting the mental health of the personnel involved in these professions. The Adlerian principles being discussed in this paper frequently overlap one another so that arbitrary decisions about the placement of some recommendations within one principle versus another have been made.

**Operating on the Vertical Plane.** Military and law enforcement organizational structures emphasize success along the vertical plane in which striving for superiority over others is promoted; this type of thinking encourages dichotomous categorizing of people as superior or inferior, above or below, or better or worse (Carlson, et al., 2006). Such models tempt individuals to compare themselves to others and compete with, rather than complement the strengths of others. The belief that one must always be superior to others leads to isolation rather
than common bonds with other humans. Those who operate on the vertical plane experience less of a sense of belonging and community spirit.

Individuals who routinely compare themselves to others and rank all people as better or worse tend to develop a feeling of “me against them.” This sense is reinforced in military and law enforcement cultures because the demands placed on them to engage in their careers are so unique that others find it difficult or distasteful to understand them. Personnel are routinely expected to present a calm leadership presence while encountering civilians at their worst, in times of crisis, and as victims or perpetrators of crimes. This creates an altered view of reality, themselves, and others which contributes to feelings of isolation. Law enforcement officers in particular segregate themselves from “outsiders” by socializing only with others from their profession. Participating in law enforcement or military careers allows individuals who already view the world as “me against them” to shift their view to “us against them.” These personnel may begin to believe they are a special group with superhuman powers and no weaknesses (Ussery & Waters, 2006). The distrust of outsiders also leads personnel to hesitate before seeking help from professionals outside of law enforcement or military circles.

*Operating on the Horizontal Plane.* Although these institutions employ a hierarchical structure, flexibility exists for individuals to succeed along a horizontal, rather than vertical plane. Military training programs already encourage belonging as they build unit cohesiveness, and promote contribution to the greater good by stressing the importance of the unit’s mission (Cameron, 2007). Those who strive for superiority along the horizontal plane work to improve themselves and overcome feelings of inferiority by completing goals and accomplishing tasks they were unable to complete before (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 103). “Horizontal thinking sees people as fundamentally different, but equal, with each [person] contributing
something unique and useful to the group” (Carlson, et al., 2006, p. 87). Even though military and para-military groups are created with a hierarchical system of power, their fundamental structure is not incompatible with success along the horizontal plane. Promoting few personnel into leadership positions over many lower-ranking personnel can be viewed as an opportunity for individuals to excel at leadership roles which may not be appropriate for others whose talents lie elsewhere.

**Social Interest.** Social interest encourages participation in life tasks along the horizontal plane while incorporating the world view that all human beings are dependent upon one another. Participating in life’s tasks from a social interest perspective requires a sense of understanding and empathy for others: “To see with the eyes of another, to hear with the ears of another, to feel with the heart of another” (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 135). Operating on the horizontal plane, means “to participate, to contribute, to share; to feel accepted, appreciated, and loved, as well as to accept, appreciate, and love other people” (Oberst & Stewart, 2003, p. 17). Individuals with a strong sense of social interest feel that any activities that they pursue which promote the betterment of others will also benefit themselves.

A career in law enforcement requires personnel to dedicate their efforts to the service of others; individuals who choose this profession may be strongly motivated by a desire to help others, no matter what the circumstances. “Such men and women go into this line of work with the worthiest of motives, and they are usually rewarded at first with a sense of satisfaction at helping others” (Linton, 1995, p. 567). A review of inherent personality traits in law enforcement officers indicates that those who are drawn to this profession may have a stronger underlying sense of social interest in which they opt to routinely help others while putting themselves at possible personal risk (Linton, 1995).
Although the capacity for social interest is inherent in all human beings, it must be reinforced in order to thrive and grow; if it is not encouraged, people may decide to participate in only what is useful for them. Therefore, it is imperative for law enforcement and military personnel to feel reinforced by supervisors, family members, and the public at large in their ongoing efforts to assist others. This discovery was made during the Viet Nam War when negative public perception of US participation in the war led to condemnation of the soldiers who returned from combat duty (Pols & Oak, 2007). Even though law enforcement officers may be more likely to have a strong, underlying sense of social interest (Linton, 1995), they must receive some sort of personal reward related to helping others if they are to continue serving the public while putting their own safety at risk. Mediocre pay and dangerous conditions are common to both the military and law enforcement working experience, yet many individuals immerse themselves in these careers while excluding many other life experiences and interests.

Social interest not only requires belonging, contributing, and encouragement but it reinforces these concepts at the same time.

Social interest is reinforced when individuals believe that (1) they belong to others, (2) they contribute something useful which benefits others, and (3) they encourage others to be the best people they can be. Although law enforcement officers may begin their careers with increased social interest, it may not be reinforced because of the cultural focus on operating on the vertical plane. Utilizing a hierarchical power structure with a few personnel “in command” of many “lower-ranking” officers is just the beginning. Cops are expected to get the “bad guys” and help the “good guys” but no definite list exists of people who belong in each of these categories. Military personnel may face much steeper challenges when they are expected to kill people who
have been designated by others as enemies especially when they have trouble determining who is an enemy and who may simply be a local resident.

Officers are expected to shoot “bad guys” who aim weapons at officers; however, they are also expected to render first aid to “good guys” that are injured. How are cops expected to react when the same “bad guys” who aim weapons at officers become “good guy” victims in need of medical attention after the officers shoot them? How are officers expected to make sense of the “scum bag” arrested yesterday for selling drugs who is now calling for help because his child was injured in a hit-and-run accident? What are officers expected to contribute to this situation when they lack clarity as to which group everyone belongs? What challenges do military officers face when they are expected to kill people who have parents, siblings, and other community members that care about them?

Peer support plays an important role in reinforcing social interest. A study of US naval recruits provided peer support intervention during trainees’ group work and found that peers not only encouraged one another when there were fears of upcoming tests or qualifications for skills requirements, but also supported those who were experiencing difficulty in dealing with the rigors of training (Williams, et al., 2004). Peer guidance following critical incident stress debriefing (CISD) in which law enforcement clients are matched with individuals who have experienced similar traumatic incidents leads to reassurance because this person has “been there,” survived, and thrived (McNally & Solomon, 1999). Peer support may be vital in circumstances where professional services are limited by geography and nature of duty. Many Naval personnel are restricted to resources that are available on ships in the ocean and one study found that 98% of UK peacekeepers spoke informally about operational stress to friends or peers
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(Greenberg, et al., 2007). These researchers also recommended programs to increase peers’ ability to help those who are in distress while at sea (Greenberg, et al., 2007).

Family support is vital for law enforcement and military personnel in order to continue performing well in challenging occupations. Effective CISD programs have been developed in which families of clients who have been involved in traumatic incidents are brought together to understand how the affected family member may be thinking, feeling, and reacting to the critical incident. Sharing the families’ experiences with one another also leads to normalization of their reactions to the affected family member (McNally & Solomon, 1999). Similar programs for military families have been suggested and promoted (Ussery & Waters, 2006). Understanding and normalization allow the clients and their family members to provide and seek out support from one another in the aftermath of a traumatic incident which often leads to isolation and misunderstanding.

The importance of strong family support was stressed in a study of resilience in military personnel in South Africa (Van Breda, 2008). Many of the existing South African cultures embrace a strong sense of family cohesiveness which can act as a buffer against the strain of being away from home and performing high-risk, military duties.

Personnel who have obtained a stable support system come to rely on a sense of well-being and become free to think outside themselves and pay attention to the world around them as well as provide for the well-being of others. Arriving at a place where personnel are free to focus on the well-being of others as well as themselves is of primary importance because they must do so much for others while maintaining their own safety, just as a matter of course in their careers. Building a sense of social interest in which personnel come to understand that helping others is good for themselves as well as serving a greater good is vital to inoculating them against
negative aspects of their careers which can lead to isolation, burn-out, chemical dependency, poor physical health, and suicide.

Contribute. The sense that one’s actions are useful and beneficial to others within a society is essential in order for law enforcement and military personnel to continue contributing their efforts within challenging careers. Determining if human behavior is useful must be done from a societal standpoint; the behavior must be useful for others as well as for the individual (Oberst & Stewart, 2003, p. 26). Those drawn to military or emergency services occupations may seek fulfillment in a career in which their work truly “matters” to others or society at large. Thompson (2008) reported that one WWII veteran, after over 60 years, still considers his combat experience to be the best time of his life because he was participating in activities that were truly important to his family, community, and the world. As with social interest, those who are drawn to military and law enforcement careers may have an inherent need for a sense that they are contributing something important to their environment.

Personnel must understand which of their actions are useful because human beings only repeat behaviors they find to be useful in attaining their goals (conscious or unconscious). Individuals must also be able to assign meaning to those actions in order for them to understand that these actions are useful for themselves as well as for others. Similarly, if personnel feel appreciation for providing actions on behalf of others they will be more likely to continue engaging in the useful actions.

Law enforcement and military personnel routinely engage in activities required by their jobs that would be considered dangerous and distasteful by many people not involved in these careers. Why do participants of these careers continue to perform such duties? There must be a sense of purpose, meaning, and reward attached to these activities that encourages personnel to
continue in this line of work. “A soldier’s first questions after enemy contact are about the status of his or her ‘buddies’ and about the success of the mission. The unit can serve as an extension of individual pride, with the soldier’s self-esteem becoming linked to the reputation of the unit, which provides additional motivation” (Cameron Ritchie, 2007, p. 12).

Law enforcement officers maintain a similar sense that performing their duties is of utmost importance to providing safety and security to the community at large. One of the fundamental tasks of a law enforcement officer is to “secure the scene” by any means necessary to neutralize any threats to human life that exist or have been created. Law enforcement officers may call upon fire fighters or other emergency personnel in response to fires, explosions, or hazardous chemicals which pose a danger to others, but often step in to rescue citizens before other personnel have arrived. Once specialists are on scene to contain the threat, law enforcement officers work hard to evacuate people from the area and make sure that no one enters zones designated as hazardous. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, law enforcement personnel suffered significant amounts of stress because they had not been able to secure the scene during this natural disaster (Castellano & Plionis, 2006).

Conflict may also arise for personnel who find that they are charged with mutually exclusive duties simultaneously. Another major stressor for law enforcement personnel in the wake of Hurricane Katrina was that they were required to choose between ensuring the safety of their families and responding to the community crisis (Castellano & Plionis, 2006). In this situation law enforcement officers found themselves in the unusual situation of being victim and emergency responder at the same time. Many officers reported difficulty in resolving the internal conflict they felt at choosing to respond to one sense of duty while effectively ignoring another.
Actions alone are not enough to provide a sense of contributing to one’s community. There must be meaning attached to the actions, which designates them as worthwhile. Soldiers who experienced higher levels of mental health and found some protection against the stressors of deployment stated that they were proud to be soldiers (Van Breda, 2008). Other personal beliefs also acted as buffers against the rigors of military duty such as a sense that one’s family is appreciated by others and that members of one’s community will help during an emergency (Van Breda, 2008).

During WWII President Roosevelt readied an army between 1939 and 1941 in response to the participation of other nations in war. Nearly 750,000 troops were activated and deployed, but they had no combat duties while the US tried to remain neutral. Troops had no purpose other than to watch and wait which took a toll on their morale, including a suicide rate which escalated to new heights during this period. The US Army took a unique approach to boosting morale and promoting a sense of contribution by sending blueprints for a musical production to troops overseas who were not easy to reach by conventional entertainment. The production included motivational songs: “Well, darn it, I’m going to make the best of it even though I’m in the mud, I’m fighting in the mud, I guess I’ll stay there until this thing is done,” “This is the biggest, the toughest, the ruggedest and the roughest. The most important job I ever had” (Hunter, History Detectives, 2008). Such propaganda was designed to remind military personnel that there was important meaning assigned to the actions they were being asked to perform, even if the actions were not required immediately.

More recent researchers have confirmed this need for meaning and action, finding that isolation, ambiguity, powerlessness, boredom, and danger are stressors which are specific to the deployed environment that affect psychological and physical health not only during deployment,
but after personnel return home (Adler & Dolan, 2006). Meaning can also be found in the political ideology that a soldier embraces. Many wars have been fought and won against significant odds when one group maintains a belief system that allows it to continue fighting when others who do not have such strong beliefs in the purpose of the war would retreat. The Viet Nam War is a good example of people who were militarily overpowered but were able to continue fighting because of the belief that they were protecting their homeland from foreign invaders. The invading US troops, who encountered decreasing public support for the war effort, found little sense of meaning behind the military actions that were required of them and were less successful.

Political ideology and commitment to one’s mission can act as a buffer against psychological trauma during military deployment (Shechner, et al., 2007). Research regarding mental health of military personnel performing various duties during the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the Gaza strip showed that soldiers whose ideology matched the intent of their assigned mission experienced better mental health than those whose ideology was opposed to their assigned duties. Those who were charged with removing residents from their homes found the duty less stressful if the soldiers held the personal belief that the residents did not belong there (Shechner, et al., 2007). As a preventive measure, military leaders could determine the political ideology of their personnel and assign duties accordingly.

Not only is it important for law enforcement and military personnel to ascribe worthwhile meaning to their job duties, but family support of these duties is also essential. In one study of UK soldiers serving in the Iraq war, reservists, rather than career military personnel, were more likely to report that their families were proud of their contributions (Browne, et al., 2007). Family support is considered so vital to the overall mental health of South African soldiers that
an entire measure of family resilience levels was developed to add to other screening tools
designed to assess recruits’ mental health levels (Van Breda, 2008).

**Belonging.** Belonging is a sense that one “fits in” with others as one is contributing to
society’s best interest, and is encouraged by a sense of community, all of which builds and
reinforces social interest. Military training is based on the creation of unit cohesiveness and the
buddy system. Especially in combat, personnel understand that their lives are truly dependent on
trusting others in their units. Police officers must also rely on their peers for security and support
during life-threatening situations and begin to bond closely with those individuals who have
shared similar experiences. A sense of belonging in a larger society is crucial to maintaining
mental health, but must be open enough to understand that humans all belong to the same
community regardless of gender, race, nationality, or occupation.

Military training teaches personnel to rely on the buddy system. In preparing for combat
it is vital to understand that one’s life depends on trusting the other members in one’s unit. This
also means that the rest of one’s unit depends on you for their survival. Such training, especially
when reinforced with combat experience, leads to a deep sense of belonging to one’s unit. For
men this may be one of the few times in their lives when they feel a real sense of community
(Thompson, 2008). Within this community exists an understanding based on shared language
and experiences which lead to short-hand communication in which soldiers do not have to
explain things to one another.

Having such strong bonds within a military unit can decrease an individual’s sense of
belonging to family members back home. This is especially pronounced between six and nine
months following the return from deployment. At this point soldiers find that their family
members have changed, the family dynamics have changed, the tasks they once performed
within the family may have been taken over by others, and civilians do not understand them the way that their buddies did. Personnel in these situations may disengage from their families, preferring to spend time with their combat buddies (Thompson, 2008).

Police officers develop a similar sense of belonging with others in their profession because they rely on their colleagues for safety. Belonging provides a sense that “we’re in this together” and leads to increased interest in helping and providing peer support for others when needed (Williams, et al., 2004). When police personnel reach out for emotional support “callers seem universally relieved to find another person on the hotline who has ‘been there,’ speaks the same language, and instantly recognizes their problems” (Ussery & Waters, 2006, p. 77). Not only does a common language lead to shorter assessments and therapeutic processes, it increases the likelihood of successful mental health outcomes (Ussery & Waters, 2006).

Research has proven that the buddy system is important not only for physical survival, but for mental health as well. During WWII soldiers were deployed with the units they had trained and served with, and were returned from duty as a group via slower means of transportation. Such transportation allowed for personnel to be observed by supervisors and mental health personnel while they transitioned from military life to civilian life (Thompson, 2008). This transition time also allowed personnel to process their experiences with one another and to develop a sense that they shared common problems that were the result of serving in the war. Due to changes in the transportation and military systems in the 1960’s and 1970’s, most soldiers serving in Viet Nam entered and left combat as individuals rather than as parts of long-standing units. Viet Nam vets returned home, alone, to be attacked by anti-war protesters who lashed out at individuals rather than the military as a whole. Isolation set in immediately as
soldiers sensed that their problems were unique and the community they were returning to would not understand these problems (Pols & Oak, 2007).

One study regarding the mental health of UK reservists showed that they suffered poorer mental health than career military personnel. One cause may be lower levels of unit cohesiveness experienced because reservists often deploy as individuals within units made up of regular personnel, and in many cases they will not have prior knowledge of many of these comrades (Browne, et al., 2007). According to the researchers, “Unit cohesion has been shown to be the single most important sustaining and motivating force among troops, and psychiatric injuries are more prevalent in personnel who do not form close relationships within their unit” (Browne, et al., 2007, p. 487). Feelings of isolation and lack of unit cohesion are likely to have detrimental effects upon psychological health and may also have contributed to poorer relationships with military leaders and supervisors (Browne, et al., 2007).

A study of US naval recruits provided peer support intervention during training (Williams, et al., 2004). The BOOT STRAP (Boot Camp Survival Training for Navy Recruits-A Prescription) peer support intervention for naval recruits which involved group work led to emotional support which fostered a sense of belonging and helped recruits form secure attachments. Researchers found that this group work and sense of belonging instilled a sense of universality to their experiences rather than feelings of isolation due to a sense that the individual’s problems were unique. High levels of belonging meant recruits were more likely to complete training in their original units, were transferred less often to other units, performed better on written tests and were held back less often during training (Williams, et al., 2004).

Participants in the BOOT STRAP intervention “experienced less loneliness, used more problem-solving coping skills, and decreased insecure attachment by the end of recruit training.”
Belonging was measured using the Sense of Belonging Inventory-Psychological (SOBI-P) which asks participants whether they agree with statements such as, “I feel like a piece of a jig-saw puzzle that doesn’t fit into the puzzle” and “I have qualities that can be important to others” (Williams, et al., 2004, p. 816). Participants who felt supported by their peers were more likely to reach out to others and offer encouragement. Conversely, reservists who experienced low levels of group cohesiveness reported poorer relationships with their chain of command (Browne, et al., 2007). It is likely, therefore, that personnel who feel more support from their peers and leaders will support and encourage other members of their community.

Fostering a sense of belonging within law enforcement communities has also proven effective. Following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on 9/11, New Jersey Task Force 1 was deployed to ground zero for search and rescue duty. Sent with this team were New Jersey State Police Employee Assistance Program personnel. Employee assistance workers created a sense of belonging with the task force personnel by living in a tent in the area where task force members were housed in similar conditions, wearing the same type of clothing, dining with the task force, and creating a daily religious service. This was a unique approach to providing on-the-spot mental health services to personnel involved in very traumatic experiences and circumstances. The employee assistance team provided short-term mental health strategies intended to address significant trauma immediately, and were successful in assisting personnel to process trauma as it was experienced (Castellano & Plionis, 2006).

One of the most effective strategies used by the employee assistance team was group training about traumatic experiences provided for the search and rescue workers in order to reduce the stigma of addressing individuals in a therapeutic manner. This training normalized reactions and feelings, built informal support networks with others who “were there,” and taught...
practical coping skills. Normalization and network building led to the sense of belonging to other rescue workers. This belonging decreased feelings of isolation, and negated the idea that one’s problems and reactions are unique and would not be understood by others – especially survivor guilt and grief (Castellano & Plionis, 2006).

*Encouragement.* Encouragement is a way of interacting with others in which the focus is on the positive aspects of people and the efforts they are making, rather than on their shortcomings or the end results of their efforts. This ideal promotes interacting along the horizontal plane, stimulates social interest, avoids comparing a person with others, and refrains from making external judgments of actions and accomplishments (Oberst & Stewart, 2003, p. 113). Reporting a lack of administrative support for police efforts as a major source of job stress indicates that encouragement is particularly important for law enforcement personnel (NIJ, 2005). Military personnel also rely heavily on encouragement from others in order to effectively perform their duties. According to Pols and Oak (2007, p. 2136), “soldiers were not primarily motivated by hatred of the enemy or the ideals of liberty and democracy, but by the bonds with their buddies and regard for their officers.” One of the major lessons gained from the Viet Nam War was that public support from the home front was vital for soldiers to perceive their efforts as worthwhile and promote mental health, especially in the face of severely traumatic events (Pols & Oak, 2007).

Even as far back as WWII the importance of encouragement for military personnel was evident. During the war, only about 40% of all cases of nervous breakdowns occurred overseas, and only a fraction of those involved personnel who were serving on the front lines. The majority of those facing mental illness were performing their duties within the US. One group that experienced high rates of poor mental health was the African American contingent, which was
segregated from the rest of the armed forces, endured discrimination and was ascribed lower status as soldiers (Pols & Oak, 2007). This group would have benefited from the encouragement received from an appreciative public and military system. This example highlights the importance of encouraging all human beings regardless of race, national origin, sex, or socio-economic status.

Media coverage and support can lead to a sense of encouragement from one’s community. For one search and rescue team working at ground zero following the 9/11 attacks, encouragement from the public at large was received through television sets placed outside the team’s base of operations which provided on-going media coverage of the rescue efforts (Castellano & Plionis, 2006). A negative example of public perception highlighted the importance of media and public support following Hurricane Katrina when such reports were critical of the handling of this natural disaster. Law enforcement personnel suffered psychologically from having their motives and actions questioned by the public (Castellano & Plionis, 2006).

Encouragement in the form of social support from others has been found to help prevent development of PTSD symptoms. The quality of supportive relationships appears to be key because having at least one person available who is encouraging is more important than having several acquaintances who may not be as supportive. The reverse also holds true in that negative social support leads to an increase in PTSD symptoms (Whealin, et al, 2008).

Research shows that repeated separation of personnel from families is highly stressful for all members of the families and may cause harm to those who are already vulnerable to poor mental health. Measuring family strength and determining if personnel receive encouragement from their families can be accomplished by responding to statements such as “My family thinks
that deployments create opportunities for me to grow and develop,” “My family thinks deployments are important,” and “My family is proud that I am a soldier” (Van Breda, 2008, p. 485).

In addition to family support, encouragement from supervisors is also vital for law enforcement personnel. Stress inherent in probation officers’ work can be exacerbated by poor relationships with superiors. One study found that 87% of officers reported that they disliked their supervisor, and those reporting their supervisors as a major source of stress related the reason as a failure to recognize a job well-done (NIJ, 2005). Additional research shows that leaders who actively nurture personnel involved in traumatic incidents find the recovery rate is much quicker, whereas additional stress may be placed on personnel who perceive their managers as distant or insensitive to their feelings and experiences (McNally & Solomon, 1999).

The FBI understands the importance of encouragement for law enforcement personnel who have been impacted by the stress of critical incidents. Critical incident stress management team members maintain confidentiality, support, and respect for colleagues without judgment of their feelings or reactions. These teams also offer various interventions aimed at immediate and long-term support such as critical incident stress debriefing, family outreach, and support for the managers of personnel affected by traumatic incidents (McNally & Solomon, 1999).

Additional methods of providing encouragement can include spiritual support and formal recognition ceremonies. The search and rescue team at ground zero benefited from the stabilizing influence of regular spiritual leadership. More encouragement was provided to the 9/11 workers by holding a “farewell ceremony” during which a psychologist specializing in law enforcement spoke. At this ceremony the team was also prepared for returning to pre-9/11 life with education,
spiritual grounding, and plans for reunification with their families on site later in the day (Castellano & Plionis, 2006).

**Recommendations**

This section will provide prescriptions for therapists and other personnel who are willing and interested in providing Adlerian-based counseling services to members of the military and law enforcement professions as well as their families. Some therapeutic techniques may recommend looking into clients’ past experiences, but the majority will focus on looking toward and planning for the future.

**Social Interest.** Increasing a sense of social interest in clients who are involved in military or law enforcement careers will help them meet the challenges of their careers while experiencing a sense of contribution to others. Individuals often do not want to contribute to others when they believe that they do not belong to the same group, so clinicians can encourage their clients to focus on the similarities they share with others rather than on the differences. Discriminating against others based on characteristics or traits is an example of operating on the vertical plane and lacking social interest. This leads to a lack of encouragement towards those that individuals identify as “others” and not worthy of effort and contribution. Military leaders employ vertical thinking when training soldiers to kill people who have been deemed “the enemy,” as well as horizontal thinking by encouraging troops to focus on helping those who are seeking freedom and democracy “just like us.” Bringing clients into a human-based world view in which all people are “just like us” is challenging and requires shifting long-held perceptions.

Shifting the focus to operating on the horizontal plane will help alleviate this confusion. Understanding that humans are all part of the same group and all need encouragement will go a long way toward feeling like all of the officers’ efforts are important contributions to the well-
being of all members of society. Helping military personnel comprehend that being part of the
deaths of other human beings is never easy or pleasant, but may be necessary under certain
circumstances while focusing on any positive contributions the military made to a greater group
of people can help assimilate traumatic experiences. “It may be helpful to guide peace-keepers to
focus their cognitions on thoughts such as ‘I am reducing, even by a little, the loss of life from
ethnic violence’ or ‘If I can help even one person that will make it worth it” (Whealin, et al.,
2008, p. 108). Law enforcement officers are trained to think in terms of doing whatever is
necessary to survive the day and return home, unharmed. In preparing cops for the potentiality of
shooting an armed suspect in the line of duty, police officers are encouraged to think about who
should survive the confrontation. Will it be the person who engaged in behaviors that were
threatening to others, or the cop who was brought in to restore peace?

The first step in helping clients develop social interest involves encouraging military or
law enforcement personnel to seek out support from and provide support for others that
participate in the same or similar professions. Law enforcement and military institutions could
establish systems where recruits are assigned to a seasoned “buddy” who has more life
experience and can act as a mentor. Such a relationship would benefit both members of the team
because helping others within the group and receiving support from those who understand
because they have been there are vital to the ongoing mental health of service personnel.
Research has found that “strong support systems and effective coping skills can improve the
officer’s ability [sic] function effectively on the job and reduce tension at home” (Ussery &
(CISD) encourage members to share (a) their experiences and feelings regarding the incident (b)
the stress they have been dealing with and (c) how have they been dealing with it. All of which
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aids the normalization of thoughts, feelings, and reactions regarding the incident. This type of group work leads to operating on the horizontal plane where all are accepted regardless of how they respond to the incident (McNally & Solomon, 1999).

Once adequate peer support has been established, clinicians and organizational leaders can move on to encouraging personnel to increase the support they give to and receive from their families. In the Van Breda (2008) study the level of family support that personnel already felt was measured by asking participants to respond yes or no to the following: “In my family we know that other people love us,” “Assistance from others adds value to family life,” “There are a variety of support systems available to my family,” “My family is satisfied with their support systems,” “My family provides assistance to others,” and “My family often spends time with others” (Van Breda, 2008, p. 485). Leaders and counselors who encourage personnel to seek out ways to engage in activities which allow them to answer “yes” to all these statements will be assisting the personnel in broadening their sense of social interest to their families as well as their larger community support systems. As individuals begin to comprehend that they have the support of their families and important members of their communities, they can begin to relate to others outside their small circles and may provide and seek out support from those people as well.

Contributing. All human beings need to feel that they are contributing to others in order to feel worthwhile and a sense of belonging to something greater than themselves. There are many strategies which can be used to help military and law enforcement personnel believe that their actions, both at work and in their personal lives, are significant and useful to others. Counselors as well as leaders in these occupations will be doing great work if they help law
enforcement and military personnel focus on the important contributions these personnel make to the lives of others.

Law enforcement and military leaders can promote a sense of contribution in personnel by helping them reframe challenging or distasteful duties in terms that give them more meaning and purpose. Personnel who are assigned to body-handling duty following natural or other disasters may experience negative emotions if they perceive the responsibility as picking up pieces of humans who had lives “just like mine.” However, reframing the duty and putting the job into a broader perspective such as, “I’m providing an honorable service that may be of some comfort to families” may allow personnel to endure the emotional toll of such work (Whealin, et al., 2008, p. 108).

Other researchers found that promoting hardiness in military personnel protects mental health even under stressful deployment situations. Hardiness incorporates three components: 1) commitment – the ability to feel deeply involved in the activities in life; 2) control – the belief that one can control or influence the events in one’s experience; and 3) challenge – the sense of anticipation of change as an exciting challenge to further personal development (Adler & Dolan, 2006). Counselors as well as law enforcement and military leaders can use cognitive behavioral therapy techniques to assist personnel in developing thought processes which develop psychological hardiness. In one military study, high levels of deployment stress paired with high levels of hardiness were correlated with good mental health both during and after deployment (Adler & Dolan, 2006).

Many military personnel face real challenges in understanding how their actions can still contribute meaningfully after they have returned from combat. Those who were charged with protecting or saving lives on a daily basis may struggle to find meaning in supervising the late-
night crew at a fast-food restaurant. Moving from being referred to as a combat hero to returning to domestic life in which all family members are likely under-appreciated can negatively impact a soldier’s mental health. Counselors and military leaders can work to help returning veterans find meaning and purpose in their civilian lives so they can begin to appreciate how they make less-obvious contributions to their communities and the world (Thompson, 2008). Social organizations for veterans such as VFW and American Legion posts provide ongoing support and understanding of the changing roles that military personnel encounter.

In addition to finding new meaning by reframing everyday contributions, being surrounded by supportive family who also ascribe value to law enforcement and military efforts is vital. In one study involving UK military personnel serving in Iraq, reservists were more likely to report feelings of pride from their family members than career military personnel. However, these same reservists were more likely to report marital dissatisfaction upon their return from duty. This study also found that PTSD the reservists suffered was most strongly accounted for by problems at home during and after deployment. The researchers suggested that some reservists who had poorer marriages prior to deployment might have volunteered for duty to escape problems at home (Browne, et al., 2007). Keeping this in mind, counselors and military leaders can work with military personnel and their families to develop strong family support systems which will help protect personnel from PTSD and other mental health concerns.

Although individuals determine whether their efforts are of benefit to others, sensing appreciation from others for their efforts is also valuable, “People desire appreciation and acknowledgement of their contributions to a group’s accomplishments” (Sewell, 2006, p. 3). One activity that can be encouraged by either counselors or leadership is having personnel write down their experiences in performing the duties required of them over the course of their careers. This
task can be looked at as providing a written record of historical (even local) events, a therapeutic
exercise, and an opportunity for those not familiar with these careers to understand and
appreciate the actions of others that have proven beneficial for society. Such an activity brings
routine services into a broader perspective allowing for wider appreciation of the services from
family, members of the community, the public at large, and those who were personally involved.
Recently, records have been made of the personal experiences of those who were involved in
combat during World War II. These records have brought family members closer because others
could relate to the traumatic situations as well as the positive contributions the veterans
experienced while being part of such an important piece of history.

Effective communication and understanding of personnel involved in law enforcement or
military organizations are vital to providing a positive work environment as well as protecting
their mental health, “Knowing and focusing on employees – their strengths, weaknesses, career
aspirations, and families – can lead to effective workplace communication” (Sewell, 2006, p. 4).
This author goes on to recommend that managers use this knowledge to “appropriately assign
tasks and responsibilities and ensure that employees perceive their work as meaningful and
valuable” (Sewell, 2006, p. 4).

**Belonging.** Leaders of military and law enforcement personnel can foster a sense of
belonging by providing group situations that can be packaged as educational but will allow for
therapeutic outcomes. Search and rescue personnel working at ground zero described such
groups as the “first supportive group experience they had where they could discuss the traumatic
events associated with the 9/11 disaster” (Castellano & Plionis, 2006, p. 332). A peer member of
a critical incident stress debriefing team described the group setting as extremely useful because
each person is allowed and encouraged to tell about their experiences regarding a traumatic
event. Each participant has an individual story regarding their piece of the larger story, and hearing the entire tale provides a beginning, middle, and end for all those involved. This can be most useful for dispatch personnel who usually participate in only the beginning of an incident and rarely know what happens after they pass the call on to other personnel. The group encounter can provide closure for those who were lacking information regarding other parts of the incident (S. Giles, personal communication, March 11, 2009).

Military leaders and counselors can provide education to military personnel who are preparing to leave combat duty and return to their home communities regarding the human need to belong to others. Training can include information regarding the importance of the bonds personnel have developed with their unit and caution that they will likely not feel such strong bonds with their families at first. An important message to include is that these bonds will feel different, but that they are equally important for the overall well-being of personnel returning from combat duty. Leaders can then encourage personnel to find ways of bonding with their families once they have returned home, and warn about the dangers of maintaining bonds with members of the unit at the expense of family closeness. Education for the families of personnel who are due to return home would also be extremely useful as families can benefit from understanding the type of bonds formed during combat and how the bonds with family will have changed during separation.

Another way to reinforce the cycle of belonging for law enforcement officers is through the development and use of crisis phone lines for personnel and their families. Some of these lines are staffed entirely by retired officers to provide the shared language, experience, and shorter assessment processes for personnel who are seeking help. Such phone lines provide confidential peer support and referrals to counselors who are open to working with law
enforcement personnel and their families. Counselors and leaders can encourage retiring officers to participate as peer counselors so that they continue to benefit from the sense of community with other officers as well as build a sense of belonging for those officers who need the crisis line (Ussery & Waters, 2006).

Encouragement. Encouragement in the form of supportive leadership has great impact on mental health and stress management for law enforcement and military personnel. Military personnel who receive supportive leadership benefit from greater unit cohesiveness by getting along better with their peers, and experiencing a shared sense of value, mission, and priorities. Other benefits include having a better understanding of their job requirements which leads to increased feelings of competence and increased sense of contributing to the greater good by their actions. Supportive leadership consists of providing psychological support for personnel, especially under stressful physical or emotional circumstances. One example of this type of support is showing concern for the well-being of their colleagues (Britt, et al., 2004). Another example is leaders who take an interest in getting to know their subordinates’ strengths, weaknesses, and support systems outside of the military system.

Effective leadership protects the mental health of personnel who may lack unit cohesiveness, a sense of contributing, or who have a high workload. Military personnel reported a higher level of commitment to their careers when they also experienced supportive leadership even when they reported interpersonal conflict within their unit. Personnel who stated that they perceived their job roles as insignificant also reported lower levels of hostility if they felt that their leaders were supportive. The impact of stress due to high workload was mitigated by the influence of supportive leadership (Britt, et al., 2004). This study indicated that supportive leadership may either provide personnel with a sense of contributing, cohesiveness, and
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compotence or such leadership can mitigate the negative impact encountered when those concepts are lacking.

Counselors and leaders who are not sure how to provide support may best be able to help military and law enforcement personnel by asking what it is that the personnel think they need and what will help them the most in improving their mental health. For law enforcement personnel who were active during Hurricane Katrina, small gestures of encouragement were appreciated such as having outsiders remove garbage from temporary work areas or provide clean shirts for team members (Castellano & Plionis, 2006). This type of support may not be obvious to those trying to reach out, but are easy to provide to personnel in need of encouragement.

Leaders can also provide support for personnel by instituting gradual training programs that provide opportunities for success before moving on to more stressful and realistic situations. Such training is encouraging for personnel because they develop the beliefs that they are successful and capable as they master encounters of ever-increasing difficulty. Increased confidence leads to optimistic views of their abilities to handle more difficult situations (Zach & Raviv, 2007). This type of training can help personnel develop the perception that change and new situations are challenges to be faced and mastered, rather than feared.

Summary and Conclusions

Providing mental health services that use an Adlerian perspective for military and law enforcement personnel will greatly increase a positive sense of self, promote healthy family relationships, and provide a sense of unity within different communities. Military and law enforcement leaders, counselors and therapists can use concrete methods to increase the sense of belonging, contributing, and encouragement needed by such personnel. This will increase
personnel’s levels of social interest which will begin a self-reinforcing cycle of encouragement and contribution to the greater good of society. Additional motivation for the leaders of such personnel to provide Adlerian support for their subordinates lies in the cost-benefit analysis of proactive mental health services. Keeping personnel healthy will decrease turnover, use of sick time, and will increase productivity thereby saving money (NIJ, 2000).

Before using such mental health interventions with law enforcement officers, the police personality must be considered. Many are inherently suspicious people who find it difficult to confide in others and who isolate their feelings. Such isolation can lead to the abuse of sick leave policies, aggressive behavior, and loss of employment, as well as high rates of divorce, suicide, and substance abuse. Intertwined with these feelings and behaviors is a stigma against seeking psychological support from peers, family or professionals (Kureczka, 2002). Providing an environment of open communication, non-judgment, and trust are vital in overcoming the obstacles regarding the police personality. Less-documented, similar personality traits exist in military personnel and need to be considered as well.

Career training regarding job stress, as well as anger awareness and management, is strongly recommended. Providing anger management training for law enforcement officers has been shown to be effective, but the timing is crucial. Veteran officers have reported that they would have preferred to have training earlier in their careers (Abernethy, 1995). Sarason, et al. (1979) state that stress-management programs will likely have more validity for officers who have experienced typical job stressors, than for new recruits who are unaware of exactly what challenges their new careers will entail. Some stigma is indicated by recruits who resist such training as implying weakness or that they will be unable to handle the stress of their careers.
The National Institute of Justice (2000) suggests introducing stress-management training after officers have completed approximately six to eight months on the job.

Another important aspect of an effective program is one that is tailored to the specific requirements of the job. Personnel must be able to relate to the stressful situations being discussed and trained for (Sarason, et al., 1979). Research also indicates that training that is specific to particular job duties and career requirements improves performance (Zach & Raviv, 2007). Therefore, stress-management training and preventive mental health services for law enforcement officers should be delayed until new personnel have acclimated to the demands of the job, and experienced routine stress levels, so that they will believe that learning how to manage job stress will be beneficial for them.

Providing stress and anger management training is not enough. Personnel must be able to apply and practice the techniques they are taught (Kamiyama, et al., 2004). For military personnel, psychoeducation alone in the form of pre-deployment stress briefing has been found to be ineffective in protecting against the negative effects of combat duty. Psychoeducation as part of critical incident stress debriefing (CISD) has been shown to be effective, but that is within a group context which creates a therapeutic environment. One study found that providing only psychoeducation regarding stress after trauma to accident victims increased their levels of mental distress after short-term follow-up (Sharpley, et al., 2008). Training programs incorporating job-specific circumstances with increasing levels of realistic stress provide personnel an opportunity to master skills slowly and understand that they possess the ability to be successful even when under significant stress (Zach & Raviv, 2007).

Social support for military and law enforcement personnel is vital. Leaders, counselors and therapists need to address family strengths, health and support in order to promote mental
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Resilience, social support and problem solving are building blocks that Van Breda (2008) identified which can be utilized or developed. Families may be the first to notice negative stress reactions in personnel and can provide early interventions to protect mental health. Military and law enforcement families will also suffer some of the impact of such stressful careers (NIJ, 2000). It is important to serve not only affected personnel, but also their families to reduce their stress levels (NIJ, 2000).

Providing education and understanding of the human need to belong is also vital for military and law enforcement personnel. It is important for personnel and their families to know what types of bonds are formed under stressful career situations and how these bonds can be balanced with healthy bonds to family and community members outside of these professions. Leaders, counselors, and therapists can work with personnel to explore the healthy aspects of their relationships with peers, family, and their communities, as well as the aspects that may lead to isolation and viewing the world in terms of “us versus them.” The idea that the bonds personnel share with peers are different, but equally important as the bonds they share with others, needs to be presented and reinforced.

Another way to foster bonds outside a limited peer network is through group work and support. Utilizing crisis phone lines staffed with retired personnel provides opportunities to relate to others who have shared similar experiences but who are not part of an insular group. Providing group experiences for families of military and law enforcement personnel presents opportunities for everyone to understand that their experiences are not unique to their family or situation, and can promote bonds with others in the community. Crisis incident stress debriefing (CISD) which allows all personnel affected by a traumatic incident to tell their side of the story provides an opportunity for personnel to hear about the experiences and feelings of others who
are impacted in situations even if they do not perform the same duties (S. Giles, personal communication, March 11, 2009).

Even though bonding with others and group support are important, leaders, counselors, and therapists need to work with personnel on the use of positive coping strategies to deal with stress and negative job experiences. Helping personnel find healthy outlets for their stress and negative emotions will protect their mental health. The time-honored tradition of meeting with co-workers after the shift has concluded to discuss the events of the day over an alcoholic beverage is a coping strategy, but a negative one which will not increase mental health in the long-term (Zach & Raviv, 2007).

The final key in protecting the mental health of military and law enforcement personnel lies in providing effective leadership for such stressful careers. Effective leadership acts as a buffer against the negative psychological impact of military combat. Providing psychological support as well as clearly establishing job expectations and a sense of unity with other personnel will increase job performance while reducing stress and negative psychological symptoms (Britt, et al., 2004). Supportive management and effective leadership are also important for law enforcement personnel who report their supervisors as a major source of stress because the leaders failed to recognize a job well done (NIJ, 2005). Additional research shows that leaders who actively nurture personnel involved in traumatic incidents find the recovery rate is much quicker, whereas additional stress may be placed on personnel who perceive their managers as distant or insensitive to their feelings and experiences (McNally & Solomon, 1999).

Because law enforcement and military careers are more community oriented than other careers, addressing this population using Adler’s perspective of social-psychology is especially appropriate. Counselors and job leaders will be most effective when helping such personnel
strengthen their ties to the communities they serve and create healthy relationships with the support systems that are already in place. Encouraging social interest in this group is also important because many of these personnel possess an inherent need to contribute and encourage others which may be why they chose to enter such professions. Promoting Adler’s ideas in this population will benefit not only the personnel and their leaders, but also the agencies that employ them, and the communities that are served by these important people.
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