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Post-traumatic Growth
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Sorrows come to stretch out spaces in the heart for joy.
~ Edwin Markham

While getting knocked on the ground by two offenders, CO Smith was able to hit his radio button. The chaos that ensued remains a blur for him to this day. But he still cannot forget his feelings of amazement and relief when he heard coworkers running toward the melee. His amazement—nearly disbelief, really—got even greater when it registered in his mind that the first person who came to his aid—and running all out with every ounce of his strength—was one of the COs with whom he'd "buted heads" numerous times before, and whom he had made no secret that he particularly disliked. The first CO's furious arrival caused the offenders to back off. CO Smith felt a wave of inexpressible gratitude wash over him. Later on, when he

had been cleared by medical, he looked for the other staff who rushed to help him. CO Smith felt embarrassed that he had often been cold and dismissive in his interactions with other staff. He made a point to especially thank profusely the CO he used to especially dislike. Yes, he used to. From that day on he treated coworkers with a newfound sense of appreciation and respect. He also was the first to intercept and confront snide remarks about coworkers and supervisors whenever they were within his ear shot. CO Smith became a big proponent of teamwork and informal peer support. The change for the better was hard to miss by all at work who had known him for a while. Interestingly, his valuing relationships more also spread to his interactions with family members at home. It was as if his values underwent a very positive overhaul.

Yes, positives CAN emerge from negatives. I dare say that strongly embraced and passionately held positive values and attitudes perhaps more often than not emerge from dire and even horrific circumstances, where they are forged in the fire, so to speak.

This phenomenon was described and labeled Post-traumatic Growth¹ by psychologists Tedeschi and Calhoun in 1996. The construct of Post-traumatic Growth describes positive personal changes that can be the result of exposure to harrowing traumatic events. This was not a new discovery. History is replete with examples of brave and noble people who made tremendous positive contributions to their communities following traumatic experiences and even unspeakable loss. Such people's actions inspire us all and teach us how to best respond to trauma and loss. What Tedeschi and Calhoun did was to formalize and quantify such observations through scientific research by designing the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI), a validated assessment instrument that captures these changes.

According to the PTGI, following traumatic exposure, measurable changes can occur along the following five factors/scales:

1. Relating to Others: knowing that one can count on others; experiencing a sense of closeness with others; having compassion for others; learning how wonderful people can be; and accepting that one needs others.
2. New Possibilities: developing new interests as a result of the traumatic experience; establishing a new path in one's life; realizing that one has new opportunities available to them which they would not have had if they had not been exposed to trauma; and being more likely to act to change what needs to be changed.
3. Personal Strength: a feeling of self-reliance; knowing that one can handle difficult situations; being able to accept how things work out; and discovering that one is stronger than they thought they were.
4. Spiritual Change: having a better comprehension of spiritual matters; and developing a stronger religious faith.

5. Appreciation of Life: one's priorities about what is important in life; appreciating the value of one's own life; and appreciating each day.

What may help promote Post-traumatic Growth? Here are three possible ingredients:

1. Determination to see good come out of one's heartbreak, instead of it merely remaining a tragic or horrific story;
2. Belief—faith—that good can indeed come out of painful circumstances, and casting a vision of that happening; and
3. Resolve to continue using one's experiences to benefit others and to grow personally, in spite of and in the midst of one's own pain and struggles.

So as a result of how traumatic experiences are processed, people may experience positive transformations of their person and their sense of self. They may report that they have developed the capacity to love more deeply; to be more compassionate; to forgive more thoroughly; to appreciate positives more; to depend on something/someone greater than themselves; to be more grateful for aspects of life that up to that point they took for granted. And even if a person suffers from Post-traumatic Stress symptoms, they can still enjoy the positives of Post-traumatic Growth.

In the Middle Ages, scientists and philosophers engaged in the science of alchemy. Their efforts involved attempting to change lesser metals into gold. Post-traumatic Growth can be viewed as a similar pursuit, only at the psychological and spiritual levels: seeking ways to transmute negative experiences into psycho-spiritual gold. Another, less glorifying metaphor, is learning how to use the manure that happens in our life as fertilizer—for our own growth and for others' benefit. May we all continue to learn how to do this, and then role model it by setting the example and leading with courage.

¹Tedeschi, R.G., and Calhoun, L.G. (1996). The Posttraumatic Growth Inventory: Measuring the positive legacy of trauma. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 9, 455-471.

Police Primary Danger and Police Secondary Danger Jack A. Digliani, PhD, EdD

Primary Danger

The primary danger of policing has two components: (1) physical primary danger, and (2) psychological primary danger.

Physical primary danger: The physical primary danger of policing is comprised of the inherent, potentially life-threatening risks of the job, such as working in motor vehicle traffic, operating an emergency vehicle, responding to domestic disturbances, and confronting violent and armed persons.

Psychological primary danger: The psychological primary danger of policing is related to, but distinguishable from the physical primary danger of policing. The psychological primary danger

of policing is represented in the increased probability that due to the nature of policing, officers will be exposed to critical incidents, work-related cumulative stress, and human tragedy. This higher probability of exposure results in an increased likelihood that officers will suffer psychological traumatization and stressor-related disorders. It is this increased likelihood of psychological traumatization and the increased likelihood of experiencing stressor-related disorders that comprises the psychological primary danger of policing. Another way of saying this is that the physical primary danger of policing constitutes a work environment that generates the psychological primary danger of policing.

Secondary Danger

There is also an insidious and lesser known secondary danger of policing. The secondary danger of policing is often unspecified and seldom discussed. It is an artifact of the police culture and is frequently reinforced by police officers themselves. It is the idea that equates “asking for help” with “personal and professional weakness.”

Secondary danger has been implicated in perhaps the most startling of all police fatality statistics, the frequency of police officer suicide. The National Study of Police Suicides (NSOPS) reported that 126 police officers killed themselves in 2012. As tragic as this is, it represents the first decline in police officer suicides since the study began in 2008, when 141 officer suicides were reported. By comparison, in 2009, 143 officer suicides were recorded. In one sense, when compared to the number of officers killed by felonious assault and killed by accident, suicide is truly the number one killer of police officers. In fact, for the years 2008, 2009, and 2012 of NSOPS officer-suicide data, the number of police suicides exceeded the number of officer deaths from felonious assault and accidents combined. (These figures are based upon statistics reported by Officer Down Memorial Page, and exclude officers that died as a result of 9/11/2001-related illness and heart attack).

Dr. Digliani is a licensed psychologist and former deputy sheriff, police officer and detective. He has authored the books “Reflections of a Police Psychologist,” and “Contemporary Issues in Police Psychology.” For more information, please go to www.jackdigliani.com.

Editor’s comment: Dr. Digliani’s observations regarding occupational primary and secondary danger also apply to corrections professionals in general and to corrections officers in particular. C.S.

Make it Safe Police Officer Initiative
Jack A. Digliani, PhD, EdD

In the previous article I discussed the primary and secondary dangers of policing. To review, the primary danger of policing consists of the inherent risks of the job, and it is comprised of physical primary danger and psychological primary danger. Sadly, there is an insidious and lesser known secondary danger in policing which is an artifact of the law enforcement culture and is frequently reinforced by officers themselves. It is the idea that equates “asking for help” with “personal and professional weakness.” In one sense, it is the number one killer of law enforcement officers.

The Make it Safe Police Officer Initiative was designed to address the secondary danger of policing. It is comprised of twelve elements.

The Make it Safe Police Officer Initiative encourages:

1. Every officer to “self-monitor” and to take personal responsibility for his or her mental wellness.
2. Every officer to seek psychological support when confronting potentially overwhelming difficulties (officers do not have to “go it alone”).
3. Every officer to diminish the sometimes deadly effects of secondary danger by reaching out to other officers known to be facing difficult circumstances.
4. Veteran and ranking officers to use their status to help reduce secondary danger. They can do so by openly discussing it, appropriately sharing selected personal experiences, avoiding the use of pejorative terms to describe officers seeking or engaging psychological support, and talking about the acceptability of seeking psychological support when confronting stressful circumstances.
5. Law enforcement administrators to better educate themselves about the nature of secondary danger and to take the lead in secondary danger reduction.
6. Law enforcement administrators to issue a departmental memo encouraging officers to engage psychological support services when confronting potentially overwhelming stress. The memo should include information about confidentiality and available support resources.
7. Basic training in stress management, stress inoculation, critical incidents, posttraumatic stress, police family dynamics, substance use and addiction, and the warning signs of depression and suicide.
8. The development of programs that engage pre-emptive, early-warning, and periodic department-wide officer support interventions. These can include, for example, proactive annual check-in, “early warning” policies designed to support officers displaying signs of stress, and regularly scheduled stress inoculation and critical incident stressor management training.
9. Law enforcement agencies to initiate incident-specific protocols to support officers and their families when officers are involved in critical incidents.
10. Law enforcement agencies to create appropriately structured, properly trained, and clinically supervised peer support teams.
11. Law enforcement agencies to provide easy and confidential access to counseling and specialized police psychological support services.
12. Police officers at all levels of the organization to enhance the agency climate so that others

are encouraged to ask for help when experiencing psychological or emotional difficulties instead of keeping and perhaps acting out a deadly secret.

If law enforcement officers wish to do the best for themselves and other officers, it's time to make a change. It's time to make a difference.

How serious is police secondary danger? So serious that some officers will choose suicide over asking for help.

www.jackdigliani.com

As noted at the end of the prior article by Dr. Digliani, his observations and recommendations clearly apply to corrections settings of all types—institutional and community-based. C.S.

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The Keepers of This Town
Anonymous

They finally caught the killer and the key has been thrown away.

You can erase him from the headlines and go on about your day.

I hope you feel safer and I hope you get more sleep.
I'll take it from here, as this killer I will keep.
I'll leave my gun outside the door and holster up my wits.
I'll step into a town of hate and knives and balled-up fists.
I'll bust the drugs and stop the hit and keep the weak from rape.
I'll call the day a good one if we all go home after our eight.
I walk alone amongst the criminals, sometimes two hundred strong.
No doors to separate us.....just a radio to make a call.
They see the car I drive to work, they know my name and face.
And some of us are hunted down when we leave this place.
I do a job that most can't do and some quit out of frustration or fear.
And I take pride as I serve and protect the ones that you hold dear.
To get to you they have to go through me, and I will not lie down.
So spare a thought or prayer for us, the keepers of this town.

BOOK

Staying Well: Strategies for Corrections Staff, 2nd Edition, by Caterina Spinaris, PhD

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“The information in this booklet should be shared in every academy and training that occurs in local, state and federal prisons and jails. It is accurate, concise, insightful, and comes from years of information gathering.” ~ T.C. Brown, Corrections Professional

Teaching Emotional Intelligence Skills
2006, 2016 © Caterina Spinaris, PhD

A prior version of this article appeared in the August 2006 issue of the Correctional Oasis.

*Teaching and modeling non-forceful ways for officers to resolve conflict is crucial because the unnecessary or excessive use of force and weapons provokes broader violence.*¹

Training for officers must improve so that they are better prepared to interact effectively with prisoners from diverse backgrounds. The skills and capacities of lieutenants, captains, and wardens—staff who have the greatest influence on the culture of prisons and jails day to day—

*must be developed.*²

Working in a correctional environment requires a complex set of self-management and interpersonal skills (which have been called Emotional Intelligence skills) which cannot be mastered at the Training Academy, if they are taught there at all. Rather, these skills are developed over time through ongoing training, supervised practice, and mentoring. These skills can make the difference between life and death, or between the retention and loss of valuable staff.

The traditional approach of teaching interpersonal skills has been to tell trainees about those skills, offer some examples, and, perhaps, do some role plays. After that, the trainees are on their own. In a matter of days most of them are likely to forget the vast majority of the training's content. Consequently, the new tools they have been given to use are rarely transferred to the workplace and incorporated in one's daily exchanges with offenders and other staff.

Learning how to manage one's own and others' emotions, attitudes and reactions effectively requires a very different kind of learning than acquiring factual information. In history and arithmetic we are given information to understand intellectually or to memorize. Two plus two equals four. The attack on Pearl Harbor took place on December 7, 1941. This information is plain and simple. It is devoid of emotional slants, perspectives, values, biases, prejudices, and attitudes. To learn it, all that is needed is logical thinking and rote memorization.

Acquiring and mastering Emotional Intelligence skills, on the other hand, follows a very different "brain route." This learning touches the heart (emotions and values we hold dear) as well as the mind, and it requires the engagement of both mind and heart for it to happen well.

In the process of learning Emotional Intelligence skills, our core beliefs get stirred up, as well as our fears, resentments and issues about which we feel passionate. These skills involve concepts which are intricately interwoven with established and deeply ingrained "blueprints" regarding our perception of our identity, our worldview, and our philosophy of life. Unless a trainer is highly skilled in "putting out fires" during the training, and addressing people's unease and anxieties about handling situations in new ways, some participants may shut down and not embrace the material.

For example, realizing that we have difficulty identifying our own emotions can be an unpleasant surprise. Moreover, having someone else pinpoint our emotions accurately while we are unable to identify them ourselves can leave us feeling exposed and vulnerable. Or having sorrow well up in us when the concept of empathy is discussed (for example, we may realize for the first time how much we longed to be treated with empathy as children, but were not) can result in our feeling stripped of our defenses and embarrassed. Alternatively, learning how to deescalate a conflict through the use of validation may feel uncomfortable and "soft" at first, as if we are wimps to have to resort to these tools instead of using old ways of gruffness, use of force, or walking off in a huff. So, teaching Emotional Intelligence skills requires skillfully addressing discomfort and overcoming resistance in the audience.

Yes, acquiring Emotional Intelligence skills may run counter to our old ways of managing ourselves and handling situations. We might have to unlearn counterproductive behavioral patterns and replace them with more effective methods and techniques. And since the old patterns are overlearned and ingrained, to overcome them we have to practice the new skills over and over, fine-tuning them. Essentially, Emotional Intelligence learning involves forming new habits of managing ourselves and others. This kind of learning requires practice, correction, repetition, adjustment, and more practice. It works just like building muscle at the gym through repetition of weight-training routines. It also resembles mastering the game of golf—there is always room for improving one’s swing. The investment and patience required for the process of learning “new tricks” may discourage us and tempt us to give up.

However, the payoff of this kind of learning is well worth it. When implemented organization-wide, it can increase morale and productivity through improvement of the workplace climate. And multiple studies have shown that about 20 to 30 percent of a company’s performance is accounted for by the organization’s climate—by how employees view or feel about their workplace.³

Desert Waters has been developing Emotional Intelligence trainings, such as Skillful Self-control and Skillful Conflict Management, that are to be used facility-wide or office-wide. We recommend that these be accompanied by a suggested periodic practice schedule for the skills to become an integral part of the facility’s or office’s culture. You can find more information on our website under [Trainings](#). Or you can call us at 719-784-4727 or [email](#) us.

REFERENCES

¹http://www.prisoncommission.org/pdfs/Confronting_Confinement.pdf, p. 12.

² Ibid., p. 15.

³ Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R., & McKee, A. *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing, 2002, p. 17-18.

BOOK

[Passing It Along](#): Wisdom from Corrections Staff, by Caterina Spinaris, PhD, Editor

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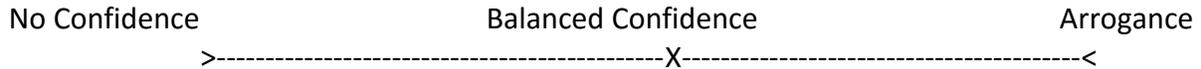
Confidence versus Arrogance by Joe Bouchard

Some of us are, for a lack of a better term, rocks. We have the confidence to stay in the middle of the stream, facing the steady flow of water in an unwavering manner. True, pressures of the flow can erode the confidence of many. But resolute strength keeps the confident in the game.

Confidence is a wonderful quality. It is a state of assurance or competence. Most of us would

agree that confidence is preferable over fear or arrogance. Balanced confidence is the center point in the attitude continuum. It is confidence based on skill and realistic evaluation of our abilities and character. And it is a foundation for safety in corrections.

ATTITUDE CONTINUUM



A balanced attitude is crucial in our field. Much has been written about the detriments stemming from a lack of confidence. And, on the other hand, it is easy to recognize that some arrogant staff (as opposed to the assertive, confident sort) inspire revenge, grievances, law suits, and assaults.

Another way to say it is as follows:

Confidence is a firm, friendly hand shake.

Arrogance is a vice-like competition while shaking hands.

Arrogant staff proudly announce their accomplishments and abilities (real or imagined) to all within earshot. Many will exaggerate their worth when they feel threatened by the presence or reputation of others. This is personal pride on a mega-dose of steroids.

This goes beyond a distasteful barrage of braggadocio. There are dangers tied to this. Quite simply, arrogance attracts manipulators. And the long line of possible events in a set-up are put into play. The bottom line is that safety diminishes when unprofessional behavior persists.

The walls have ears. Offenders can easily pick out staff whose identity is tied to an overfed ego. Manipulators with any experience can simply foster the bloated ego of the target and subtly work the con game. One tragedy of this is that it is not easily avoided, as the hyper-arrogant typically do not utilize helpful self-analysis. They often believe that they are too smart to fall into any trap. Arrogant staff may as well paint a large target on their backs.

Staff have ears, as well. As the self-promoters continue to bleat their merits, irritation grows in the staff body. Many will distance themselves from their braggart colleague, intensifying any disenfranchisement. This increases the target potential for would-be handlers.

Another layer of arrogance comes when one attaches their importance to the accomplishments of others and claims them as their own. This is like a parent with excessive pride who boasts incessantly about the academic or athletic accomplishments of their children. In terms of balance, pride is fine in small doses. The problem arises when the balance tilts in the direction of obnoxious, chest thumping declarations of superiority. It is, in other words, a matter of the intensity of the act rather than simple pride in someone else.

This also comes into play when one is enamored with or tied to a mentor. Some staff can be overenthusiastic boosters of mentors. Vocational coaches and positive influences are an important part of the profession. However, their good works are diluted when a parasitical braggart goes beyond learning from the mentor and attaches their wagon to the star. Many

mentors are humble people just doing their job and helping others learn. Arrogant staff with ulterior motives thwart many mentors who do not wish for a wash of attention. This can force a valuable resource to retreat.

As with all things concerned with human nature, mending perceived problems can be complex. And with the arrogant, constructive criticism can be misconstrued as a challenge to one's reputation. Yet, if one treads too lightly, the message is lost. Also, coaching can be interpreted by the "coachee" as harassment.

In the interest of safety for all, we should consider how we can temper the arrogance of colleagues. Perhaps the best fix rests solely on the observer. In other words, one should focus on the lesson learned from others. For example, if you see unbridled arrogance, check yourself to see that you are not conveying the same repugnant message.

Also, one should avoid the preaching mentality. I am aware that this essay may seem preachy. But I am illustrating this in concepts and not attacking particular individuals. Tone and method are important.

Communication training is another part of the solution. However, the intended audience is often oblivious of their sometime uncomfortable impact on others. We can only hope that the lessons trained are eventually assimilated by those who believe that they do not apply to them.

Lastly, no matter the behavior, a colleague is a colleague. Writing them off and leaving them to fall makes one culpable in whatever may happen. Staff disenfranchisement, for whatever reason, is actually a subtle form of arrogance. We need to support our coworkers on the job in order to achieve the goals of safety.

In the end, egos, personalities and animosities should be subordinate to the maintenance of a foundation of safety. Accomplishments mean nothing when we are in the process of answering a call of duress. Issues of safety should put everything else into perspective.

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New Mass Email System

This month we are starting to email the *Correctional Oasis* using [GetResponse](#). We're emailing you a link to the August issue on our site (under [Periodical](#)), and an attachment of the issue TEXT ONLY. If you cannot open links at work, please consider [sending](#) us your personal email address, to send you the link there.

Quote of the Month

"Our lives are unique stones in the mosaic of human existence—priceless and irreplaceable."
~ Henri Nouwen

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