



# Size up: what EA professionals should know before working with first responders

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Reason for  
Presentation

**AWARENESS OF RACIAL JUSTICE  
ISSUES IN THIS COUNTRY**

**EFFECT ON POLICE & FIRST  
RESPONDERS**

**NEED FOR MENTAL HEALTH  
WORKERS TO INCREASE THEIR  
CULTURAL COMPETENCE**

# WHO IS OUR AUDIENCE

- Have participants put their home state in the chat....

# ALBUQUERQUE FIRE RESCUE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES

Behavioral Health Director

Peer Support Team

Chaplains Program

Drug and Alcohol Peer Support Program

Casualty Assistance Plan

Individual Consultations

On-Going Counseling – EAP, MAP

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I WISH MY HEAD COULD FORGET WHAT MY EYES HAVE SEEN.” – RETIRED DETROIT COP



# WORKING WITH PUBLIC SAFETY EMPLOYEES

- Any clinician working with Fire Fighters, Paramedics, Law Enforcement Officers, Sheriff's Deputies or Dispatchers is like a sociologist or an ethnologist.
- You are entering a closed culture with high levels of distrust for outsiders.
- First responders see more misery and despair in their first years of their jobs than most of us do in a lifetime.



# INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

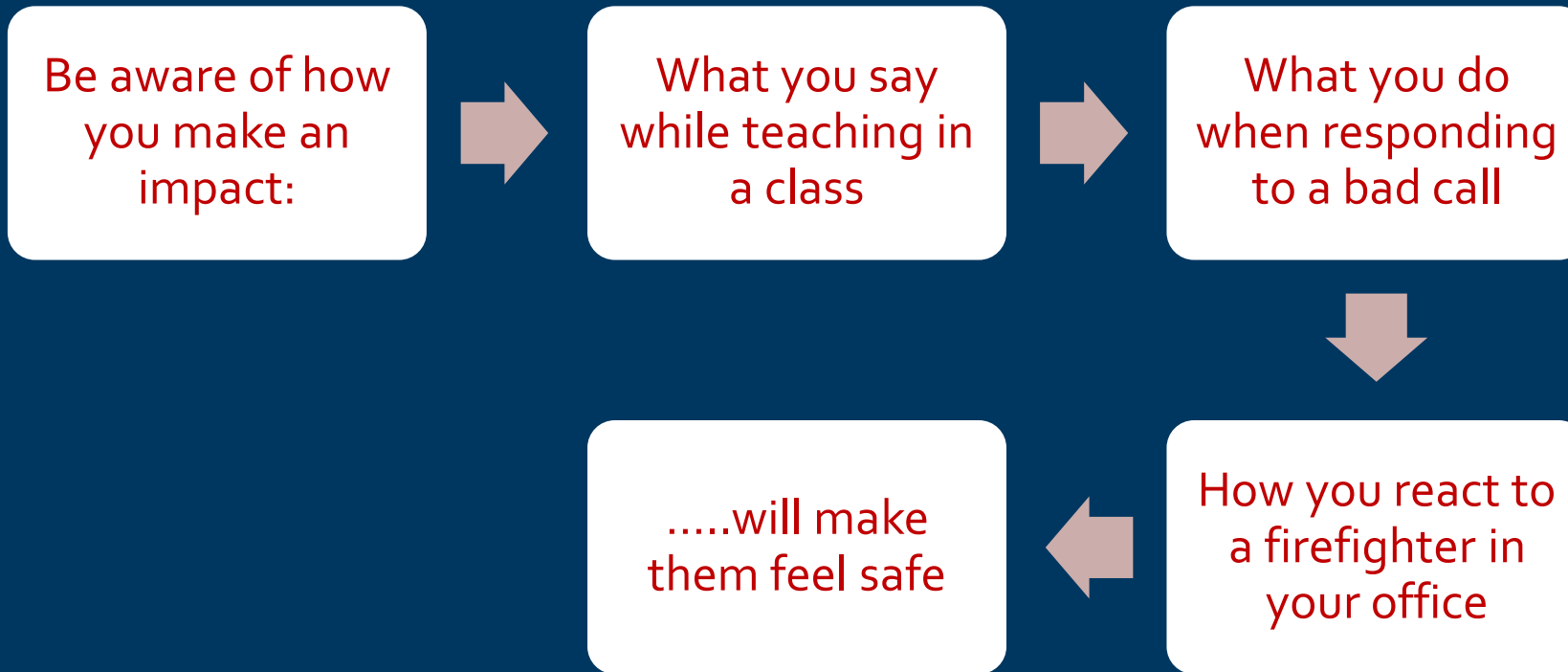
- By the time a First Responder seeks counseling, he is likely to have been exposed to significant stress, both on and off the job and have been suffering a long time; he and his family may feel that they are near the breaking point.
- Not the “worried well”.
- Trauma is a whole person injury that may require a collaborative and interdisciplinary team - a 360° view.





## HOW A FIREFIGHTER SEES A BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL





# 3 POINTS OF CONTACT A FIRE DEPARTMENT STORY

# SIMILARITIES BETWEEN CLINICIANS AND FIRST RESPONDERS

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Make a positive difference in peoples lives

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Problem solvers

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Relieve suffering

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Ethical principles

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Hold a public trust

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Work in managed bureaucratic structure

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Subject to organizational stress

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Exposed to people in pain

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Risk for burnout and compassion fatigue

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Objects of stereotypes and derisive humor

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History of conflict or mistreatment in our families

# DIFFERENCES

## Public Safety



Action oriented people, value excitement



Give and take orders



Decisive, work in front of others



Value conformity, tradition, team work, structure



Emotional self control



Use humor to manage stress

## Clinicians

- Non directive and contemplative
- Don't impose values on clients
- Work behind closed doors
- Value individuality, spontaneity, emotional expression
- Self actualization and client's feelings



Non directive and contemplative



Don't impose values on clients



Work behind closed doors



Value individuality, spontaneity, emotional expression



Self actualization and client's feelings

# DIFFERENCES CLINICIANS

# SIMILARITIES BETWEEN FIRE FIGHTERS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS (LEO)

- Under public scrutiny as they perform often dangerous jobs
- Active risk seekers – Alternate between excitement and boredom
- Experience significant levels of organizational stress
- Families all contend with spill over from job to home



# DIFFERENCES

Fire Fighters are mostly physical

LEO's are mostly cognitive and interpersonal

Fire Fighters work 10 days a month, LEO's 26 days/month

Fire Fighters may have second jobs or side businesses

Social mandate for police is to control people and situations, restore peace

Social mandate for Fire Fighters is to save lives and property

LEO's work in profession based on mistrust

Fire Fighters work in a trust based profession

# HOW DO YOU DO IT?

## *“Personality”*

It takes a special personality,...with unique characteristics – these traits have been scientifically studied (Mitchell, 1987,89/Carter and Scott, 2001) – referred to as the **“Emergency Services Personality” (ESP)**



# WHAT DOES A FIRE FIGHTER LOOK LIKE?



## Psychological Profile

- Obsessive/Compulsive Traits
- Family Orientation
- Rescue Personality
- High need for Stimulation
- Easily Bored
- Cultural Expectation for Attention to Detail



# NEW BREED OF FIRE FIGHTER



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- More technologically advanced
- Less likely to have firefighting as a family tradition
- Able to speak about their feelings
- Limited interpersonal communication skills

