

FRIDAY, JANUARY 6, 2023

PUBLIC SAFETY WELLNESS UNIT NEWSLETTER

2023 Events

Month of February - Introduction to Trauma Informed Care for First Responders Campaign

Peer Support Quarterly Trainings for 2023

- March 15 & 16
- June 14 & 15
- September 13 & 14
- December 6 & 7

Other Events 2023:

- **April 29**- Peer Support Family Day with Heroes on the Water



Wishing All First Responders a Safe and Happy New Year

The Power of Hope

In this first edition of our monthly newsletter for 2023, I want to take a moment and reflect on "the power of hope." So much of our lives is spent looking outwards, helping others, moving forward or from one project to the next, that we seldom stop, just stop, to sit with the present. We have one life to live, we do not get a do over. Our lives, much like our natural resources, is scarce when we consider it from the vastness of time. Which begs the question; how am I living my life?

For some individuals, the idea of just stopping to consider the present moment may be daunting. So much of their time is spent on trying to survive by avoiding the memories or numbing the feelings, that the thought of sitting with the pain or the "ugly" stirs up intense emotional distress. However, living in a state of constant survival is like flying an airplane with a leaking fuel tank. At some point the airplane will run out of fuel and crash. Living in a constant state of escape requires an insurmountable amount of negative emotion, mainly fear. In time, the individual begins to experience the depletion in their physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual health. At this point, the realization that the fuel that once kept them going is empty. In other words, the individual realizes they have lost all sense of hope.

It is in this stage that individuals find themselves immerse in hopelessness. Hopelessness feels different for everyone, but Sciolli and Biller (2009) suggest there are nine pure forms of the emotion. These nine types of hopelessness can be grouped into three categories:

- alienation, forsakenness, and lack of inspiration
- doom, helplessness, and captivity
- powerlessness, oppression, and limitedness

These categories are based on the types of cognitive distortions that typically drive each form of hopelessness.

A counselor can help to identify and process these negative cognitions. In other words, to regain hope we must try to think about our thoughts and how we can change them to see things differently. This brings me back to the importance of "stopping."

An article in Psychology Today titled "The Power of Hope" (2013), Dr. Archer states that, "hope defines the psychological victim and psychological survivor." He continues to state: "If I could find a way to package and dispense hope, I would have a pill more powerful than any antidepressant on the market. Hope, is often the only thing between man and the abyss. As long as a patient, individual or victim has hope, they can recover from anything and everything."

Dr. Archer's defines a psychological victim and a psychological survivor as follows:

- **Psychological victims:** these individuals are passive, pessimistic, and look to the past. They ask, "Who will help me?" They despair and are all consumed by their loss, refusing to help themselves.
- **Psychological survivors:** these folks are active, optimistic, and look to the future. They ask, "How can I help myself?" They grieve, which is healthy, but they continue to persevere and fight.

The American Psychological Association (APA) defines hope as: the expectation that one will have positive experiences or that a potentially threatening or negative situation will not materialize or will ultimately result in a favorable state of affairs.

The question now is; how do I foster hope in my life? I recommend we start by "stopping." I can't emphasize this enough. This new year provides us with tangible end and starting point to make significant changes, and I am not referring to new year's resolutions. I am referring to something more meaningful, i.e., life style changes, or maybe even life saving changes.

To have hope, here are the things that are most important (Archer, 2013):

- **Faith:** The belief that there is something bigger and more important than you. It is a reason to go on, and it has nothing to do with just you.
- **Gratitude:** Focus on what you have to be thankful for, not on what you don't have or what you have lost or what you want.
- **Love:** Think about the people in your life that you love and those that love you—family and friends.

For first responders fostering hope is vital. In a career that by definition positions them as the first to respond to crisis, it is easy to become depleted of hope very early in their career. In the words of Haruki Murakami, "Pain is inevitable. Suffering is optional."

It is my hope for you all this coming year become a decisive point in your life to stop, face the present moment, and decide to foster hope. Happy New Year!

Resources & Lifelines

Public Safety Wellness Unit:
Available 24/7 for Crisis Calls

Dr. Mildred Betancourt- 469-559-7688

Barbara Banda- 469-261-9766

Felicia Nevarez- 682-681-4242

Heroes Helpline: 833-367-4689

First Responder Helpline: 833-367-4689

**National Volunteer Fire Council's
Fire/EMS Helpline:** 1-888-731-FIRE (3473)

Safe Call Now: 1-206-459-3020

National Suicide Hotline: 988

Suicide.org Bluehelp.org Redhelp.org

Copline: 1-800-COPLINE (2675463)

Peer Support Program:
wellness@cityofirving.org

