

## Wellness

### Day One

#### (A) Course Purpose

1. The purpose of this course is to provide participants (sworn Patrol personnel) with the opportunity to reflect candidly on functioning in various facets of their personal and professional lives. Participants will be provided with education and practical tools that can be self-administered outside of the course to assess functioning on an ongoing basis.
2. Learning Outcomes: Upon completion of this course, students will have operational knowledge of healthy functioning in the areas of intimate-partner, family, and peer relationships. Students will understand factors that affect physical and emotional wellness, and the consequences of not attending to functioning in these areas. Students will understand the motivation and the risk factors associated with excessive substance use. Students will have the necessary skill to assess functioning in the areas of relationships, emotional wellbeing, and substance use in order to maintain or self-correct toward optimal functioning.

#### (B) Course Introduction

##### 1. Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act (2017)

- a. Instructor will provide information on the Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act of 2017. The bill acknowledges the importance and need to safeguard one's emotional health while in the Law Enforcement (LE) profession.

##### 2. Ice Breakers

- a. **SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY:** Each small group will discuss what they would like to get out of the course, including topic areas they would like addressed. Each group will create a list and choose a spokesperson to present back to the larger group. Instructors will review the course syllabus with students.
- b. **SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY:** Classmate Introductions-Instructor will pair off students into groups of two. Students will tell their partner about themselves. Partners will draw a minimum of three pictures illustrating facts about each other. Partners will introduce each other to the class using the drawings.

##### 3. Career Maze/Honesty vs. Denial

- a. Instructor will introduce the maze concept, describing how all LE personnel start their

career at the beginning of a maze. Successful navigation through the maze, and finding the exit to a healthy, fulfilling retirement, involves honestly addressing the topics discussed over the next two days.

b. CLASS ACTIVITY: Denial Discussion-Instructor will write the word “DENIAL” in large letters on white erase board. Instructor will facilitate brief group discussion regarding the areas of life that LEOs (Law Enforcement Officers) are typically in denial about. Instructor will normalize these areas and emphasize the opportunity for students to personally come to terms with what they deny about their own lives.

## (C) Substance Abuse

### 1. Defining/Problematic Use

a. Instructor will explain the differences between misuse, abuse, dependence, and withdrawal, providing information (if applicable) on variation for each substance category of focus (Alcohol, Pain Medication, Performance-Enhancing Drugs [Anabolic Steroids], and Caffeine).

b. Personal use self-assessments will be distributed: Alcohol-The Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT); Pain Medication-Opioid Risk Tool (ORT); Caffeine-Caffeine Consumption Questionnaire (CCQ). Instructor will provide information regarding origin and use of the measures. Instructors will emphasize that measures are to be used to gain personal insight into use, and that measures can be completed on the student’s own time, confidentially, or as applicable substance categories are discussed.

c. “Action/Reaction” concept will be introduced and applied to each substance category of focus (Alcohol, Pain Medication, Performance-Enhancing Drugs [Anabolic Steroids], and Caffeine). Instructor will explain that for each substance category, there is an “Action” mechanism, which provides a rationale for why the substance is being used, and a “Reaction” mechanism that addresses the consequences or repercussions of the use. Instructor will provide information and engage class in a discussion regarding the Action and Reaction dynamics associated with use of each category of focus.

### 2. General Implications of Misuse, Abuse, and Dependence

a. Instructor will provide information and engage students in a discussion regarding the general implications of substance misuse, abuse, and dependence as they pertain to Officer Safety, Home Life, Value System, Work Ethic, and Finances.

### 3. Assisting Peers

a. Instructors will provide conceptualization of the differences in options for providing peer intervention for a LEO when substance use becomes an issue. Examination of preferred first-

half career interventions vs. second-half career interventions.

b. **SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY:** Each small group will choose a specific substance from one of the four categories (Alcohol, Pain Medication, PEDs, Caffeine) and create a hypothetical scenario describing a partner's misuse/abuse of the substance, including what symptoms or behaviors they have noted, and how they would intervene. Each group will pick a spokesperson(s) to present basic scenario back to the larger group for discussion.

## (D) Relationship and Family

### 1. Healthy Relationships

a. **SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY: Discussing/Defining Healthy Relationships-** Each small group will create a list of qualities/characteristics that reflect healthy intimate-partner relationships, chart the stated characteristics, and pick a spokesperson(s) to present findings back to the larger group.

b. **Defining/Operationalizing Healthy Relationships:** Instructor will provide information and engage class in a discussion regarding qualities present in healthy relationships. Instructor will provide self-assessment measure pertaining to general qualities of healthy vs. unhealthy relationships.

c. **Detecting Trouble:** Instructor will provide information on Gottman's "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse": Criticism, Contempt, Defensiveness, and Stonewalling.

### 2. Side Relations (Infidelity)

a. Instructor will provide information including statistics and engage students in discussion of factors that precipitate emotional and physical infidelity. Instructor will facilitate a discussion regarding cultivating healthy intimate-partner relationships.

### 3. Professional Responsibility vs. Family Commitment

a. Instructor will provide information and engage students in discussion regarding negotiating professional responsibility and family obligations. Instructor will emphasize importance of communicating and educating family about experience and realities of the job, and the importance of nurturing family relationships.

### 4. Drafting/Schedules

a. Instructor will engage students in discussion regarding the impact of drafting (mandated overtime), current demands of Patrol training, and cycle of schedule/logistical changes when a new position, rank, or promotion is attained. Instructor will emphasize importance of accounting for family need at the time of prospective transition.

#### 5. Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

a. Instructor will provide students with information regarding IPV and Walker's 4-Stage Cycle of Abuse: Tension Building, Acute Violence, Reconciliation, Calm. Instructor will engage students in discussion regarding the cycle and relevant information including current statistics, risk factors, and personal and professional implications (applicable law and sections of agency policy) as it pertains to LEO involvement in such occurrences.

b. Instructor will distribute Intimate Partner Violence fact sheet, self-screening tool, and resource page. Instructor will provide information regarding origin and use of the disseminated information. Instructors will emphasize that information is offered to increase personal insight into intimate partner violence and can be used on the student's own time, confidentially, and that assistance is available should it be needed.

#### 6. Divorce

a. Instructor will provide information pertaining to divorce (including statistics regarding identified reasons for divorce, percentages of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> marriages that end in divorce), and co-parenting.

b. Instructor will engage class in discussion, surveying students by asking for a show of hands of how many have been divorced or are currently going through divorce. Instructor will prompt students to share challenges, consequences, and ramifications they have encountered. Instructor will underscore the importance of making an informed (vs. reactive) decision for self and family.

a. Instructor will provide information and engage students in discussion regarding ramifications of divorce in several areas, emphasizing that an informed decision is only the first step in transition. Areas of discussion will include: impact of legal proceedings (mediation vs. private attorney, pension, finances, alimony/child support, child custody, living arrangements), emotional impact (internalizing failure, reduced time with children/psychological impact on children, impact on support system), and co-parenting (potential changes in parental figures, benefits of respect/civility with ex, consistency in discipline, collaborative childcare scheduling).

-

## Day Two

### (E) Day One Review

1. Instructor will review main learning points and subject areas of discussion from previous day. Instructor will answer student questions related to course material.

### (F) Health

#### 1. Physiological and Physical Impact of the Job

a. Instructor will provide information and engage students in discussion regarding hypervigilance (physiological hyperarousal), and the cycle of Autonomic Nervous System symptoms that can impact personal and professional functioning.

b. Instructor will provide information and engage students in discussion regarding the most common types of physical/physiological injuries sustained

by LEOs on the job, including an array of soft tissue injuries and stress-related health problems such as diabetes, heart disease, circulatory and digestive disorders, etc. Instructors will provide data and current literature regarding treatment options for frequently occurring conditions.

#### 2. Mental and Emotional Impact of the Job

a. Instructor will provide information and engage students in discussion regarding critical incident exposure, examining how factors of physical, emotional, and psychological proximity, duration of involvement, and perceived efficacy handling incidents can lead to the development of vicarious trauma (Perlman & Saakvitne).

b. Personal use self-assessments will be distributed: PTSD-Posttraumatic Checklist for DSM-5 (PCL-5); Anxiety-Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7-Item Scale (GAD-7); Depression-Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9). Instructor will provide information regarding origin and use of the measures. Instructor will emphasize that measures are to be used to gain personal insight, and that measures can be completed on the student's own time, confidentially, or as applicable mental health categories are discussed.

c. Instructor will provide information regarding symptoms of PTSD, Anxiety, and Depression, normalizing the inherent potential for development of symptoms due to the nature of the work. Based on current literature, instructor will define/operationalize treatment options for each category, including the benefits, misconceptions and stigma surrounding use of psychotropic medication.

d. Instructor will provide information and engage students in discussion regarding LE Suicide, including current statistics and risk factors: Relationship/Child Custody Issues, Substance Abuse Issues, Financial Issues, being Relieved of Duty/Under Investigation, Serious Illness/Chronic Pain, Retirement.

e. Instructor will engage students in a discussion regarding common misconceptions about getting assistance when a mental health need exists. Instructor will address stigma of getting support in LE culture (exhibiting weakness/compromising image), voluntary vs. involuntary hospitalization, personal beliefs around mental health, conflict LEOs can face when uncertainty exists about how to address concerns with peers.

f. **SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY: Difficult Conversations with Partners (Lessons Learned)-** Instructor will pair off students into groups of two and prompt them to share an instance(s) with each other where they encountered a partner struggling with a personal issue involving the mental health or substance-related symptoms discussed in the previous section. Students will be asked to discuss how they handled the concern with the peer (including the verbiage they used to address the issue), what worked well/did not, what they would do differently in retrospect, and how the situation was resolved. Students will discuss findings with the larger group.

## (G) Identity

### 1. Peer Influence

a. Instructor will provide information on “Peer Influence” (encouragement to follow peers by changing attitudes, values and/or behaviors to conform to the influencing group/individual) and discuss how concept relates to Social Psychology principles of Conformity, Obedience, Bystander Affect, and Ethical Drift.

b. Instructors will split students into four groups. Students will be asked to discuss and chart the role Peer Influence plays in each of four areas: formation of Professional Identity, formation of Personal Identity, On-duty Conduct, Off-duty Conduct. Students will be asked to chart both the positive and negative impact in each area and share findings with the larger group. Instructor will lead students in discussion, highlighting relevant examples such as peer accountability, reputation management, social drinking behavior, aggression, use of force, professionalism, and clique membership.

### 2. Self-Identity

a. **CLASS ACTIVITY: Self-Identity-**Instructor will divide white erase board into two categories “Then” and “Now.” Instructor will facilitate a group discussion regarding reconciling who students were as individuals (attributes of personality, belief system, self-image) pre-academy with who they are currently. Instructor will highlight significant changes (i.e., less empathy, cynical, emotionally numb, disconnected, irritable, angry, etc.) and ask students what barriers exist to self-correction.

b. Personal use self-assessment will be distributed: “Who Am I?” exercise (Gottman). Instructor will provide information regarding origin and use of the

exercise. Instructor will emphasize that exercise is to be used to gain personal insight into self, and that it can be completed on the student’s own time, confidentially.

## (H) Balance

### 1. Stress Management

a. Instructor will engage students in discussion regarding importance of comprehensive stress management including scheduling of hobbies/activities, proper nutrition, and cardiovascular exercise. Instructor will provide information and resources relevant to stress management.

b. Instructor will discuss the many ways the job exposes students to trauma (threats to physical safety, abuse of children, death, work with suspects/offenders). Instructor will discuss limiting exposure, emotional care, and the importance of annual psychological check-ups to address cumulative trauma exposure.

### 2. Management of Finances

a. Instructor will engage students in discussion regarding financial management. Areas of discussion will include creating a budget (debt-reduction, pitfalls of including overtime funds in regular budget, importance of allocating resources for emergency medical and living expenses, travel, hobbies/interests, date nights, etc.), retirement planning.

## (I) Planning

### 1. Developing a Personalized Health Plan

a. CLASS ACTIVITY: Instructor will write main subject areas of discussion over last two days on white erase board (Substance Abuse, Relationship and Family, Health, Identity, Balance). Instructor will prompt students to demonstrate their knowledge of the subject areas discussed over previous two days by sharing points of learning or interest from each area.

b. EXERCISE: Students will demonstrate their knowledge of the course content by completing a personalized health plan. Instructor will provide students with copies of the Action Plan for Health template and direct them to pick at least two of the subject areas in which they want to improve their functioning.

c. Students will create a SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-

Bound) goal for each identified area, and complete one copy of the Action Plan for Health template for each goal.

(J) Wrap-Up

1. Course Conclusion

- a. Instructor will provide closing remarks, answer final questions related to course material, and pass out course evaluations.
  
- b. Information on available resources will be disseminated including the LASD Psychological Services Bureau (PSB), LASD Peer Support Program, Peace Officer Fellowship (POF), and First Responder-appropriate Counseling, Alcohol, and Substance-Abuse Treatment facilities.

**Author: Stephen Seetal, Ph. D., POST ID # C40-B15**

---