

CONNECTIONS

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FIRST RESPONDER FOCUS

Mindful Policing Research Expands with New Grant from National Institute of Justice

Marianne Spoon, Center for Healthy Minds (Used by permission of the Center)

A new study funded by the U.S. Department of Justice could bring a better scientific understanding of the unique stressors facing police officers.

Expanding on a pilot study from the Center for Healthy Minds at UW–Madison and the Madison Police Department, the new project supported by \$616,000 from the National Institute of Justice delves deeper into the effectiveness of an eight-week mindfulness-based program on police well-being and brings into the fold new collaborators at the UW–Madison Police Department and the Dane County Sheriff’s Office.

As a group, police officers are disproportionately exposed to stressful situations, from high-speed car chases to domestic disputes and daily stressors, like long hours and inconsistent shifts.

“There hasn’t been a lot of work with explicit training to cope with the unique stress officers face, and there are many interesting, unanswered questions about this kind of training to benefit people exposed to extreme levels of stress,” says Dan Grupe, assistant scientist at the Center and scientific lead of the study. “By improving the quality of life and reducing stress for this group of people, we can potentially have a tremendous impact for them, their families and the larger communities they serve.”

The pilot study has not yet undergone peer-review, but thus far, findings suggest a positive relationship between mindfulness training and measures such as sleep quality, officers’ perceived stress and symptoms of burnout. The team will expand on these findings with the new initiative, which will include roughly 120 officers randomly assigned to a training group or a waitlist control group.



Hello City Employees!

Failure is something many people view as a problem, a setback, something to be avoided, and something to be ashamed of. If failure is something you frequently associate with being negative or “bad,” then I encourage you to take a look at this month’s article on *The Secret to Overcoming Any Setback*, because it talks about the impact those negative thoughts can have on future success, and how to overcome setbacks and regain control, thus increasing your resiliency. Who doesn’t want that? On the note of resiliency, the City employs a lot of working parents, myself included. Many tend to separate work and home, but just as there are skills and traits we have at home that can benefit the workplace, some work skills can also be drawn upon to help us in raising our children. Also, many people looking for ways to give back to their community do so by volunteering in the winter months. We have included *Tips for Volunteering Wisely*, as volunteer work is an excellent way to boost mental health, increase feelings of purpose and compassion, and make a positive impact in the community. Lastly, we are excited to have a recurring segment in our newsletter dedicated to first responders, though likely anyone can read and find benefit from the articles. For this month’s **First Responder Focus** article, we have highlighted the Mindful Policing research being conducted at the Center For Healthy Minds on local law enforcement agencies.

As always we wish you well, stay warm, and thank you for your service to Madison and surrounding communities!



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Officers will participate in one guided session per week for two hours, focusing on a variety of practices including meditation, mindful movement (walking, yoga) and group discussions about practices and teachings. They will also be assigned practices to do in their own time outside of the group setting.

Previous studies relied on the ability of officers to recall stressful events some time after they occurred. The new study will capture real-time data from the field that are more closely linked to moment-to-moment stressful events officers experience on duty. Scientists will collect saliva samples to measure cortisol (a hormone linked to stress), sleep quality and heart rate data from fitness trackers, as well as information from daily questionnaires to test outcomes related to the intervention.

The team hopes to specifically learn how well-being practices like mindfulness meditation may affect sleep, cardiovascular outcomes and risk factors, and psychological health outcomes such as burnout, depression and anxiety symptoms.

With the inclusion of both university and county police departments, researchers can also assess similarities and differences among officers from different jurisdictions and populations.

For instance, UW–Madison police work longer patrol shifts than their City and County colleagues, accrue significantly more overtime hours to cover various campus events, and serve a unique higher education population. The Madison Police Department serves a much larger community presenting a greater variety and degree of public safety challenges, while the Sheriff's Office serves a more rural community and those incarcerated in the county jail.

The researchers and law enforcement agencies say they are deeply committed to improving the well-being of police officers and building knowledge that can help people of all ages and backgrounds better cope with stressful situations.

"We are grateful and honored to be able to participate in this program," says Sgt. Tom Sankey from the Dane County Sheriff's Office. "If there's any way to help police officers – especially those new to the profession – to manage stress and well-being, that's highly beneficial."

UW–Madison Police Chief Kristen Roman also views the collaboration as part of a larger commitment to cultivate wellness for officers and for the department.

"I really do believe that as peacemakers and community peacekeepers, we need to first start with ourselves," she says.

This work is supported by the National Institute of Justice Grant 2017-R2-CX-0033. The pilot study conducted in 2016-2017 was made possible by an award from the UW Institute for Clinical and Translational Research.



Well Wisconsin Webinar

2018 Program Overview and Portal Demo

February 21, 2018 | 12 – 12:30 p.m.

Make this the year you focus on your health and well-being. Join us to learn all about the 2018 Well Wisconsin Program and resources available to assist you, including how to earn your \$150 incentive.

To register, visit wellwisconsin.staywell.com and go to *Webinars*.



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- ✓ Step one:
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- ✓ Step two:
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Step three:
Well-being activity

All webinars are recorded and available to Well Wisconsin Program participants on the StayWell wellness portal after the event date.

To access the StayWell wellness portal, you must be an employee, retiree, or spouse enrolled in the State of Wisconsin or Wisconsin Public Employers Group Health Insurance Programs.

Ten Tips for Volunteering Wisely

FEI Behavioral Health

1. Research the causes or issues important to you.

Look for a group that works with issues about which you feel strongly. You might already be giving money to one of these organizations, and that might be a good place to begin your volunteer experience. If you can't find such an organization, here's a challenging and intriguing thought: Why not start one yourself? You can rally your neighbors to clean up that vacant lot on the corner, patrol the neighborhood, paint an elderly neighbor's house, take turns keeping an eye on the ailing person down the street, or form a group to advocate for a remedy to that dangerous intersection in your neighborhood. There is no end to the creative avenues for volunteering, just as there is no end to the need for volunteers.

2. Consider the skills you have to offer.

If you enjoy outdoor work, have a knack for teaching, or just enjoy interacting with people, you may want to look for volunteer work that would incorporate these aspects of your personality. Many positions require a volunteer who has previous familiarity with certain equipment (such as computers), or who possesses certain skills (such as ability in athletics or communications). For one of these positions, you might decide to do something comparable to what you do on the job during your workday or something that you already enjoy as a hobby. This sort of position allows you to jump right into the work without having to take training to prepare for the assignment.

3. Would you like to learn something new?

Perhaps you would like to learn a new skill or gain exposure to a new situation. Consider seeking a volunteer opportunity where you'll learn something new. For example, volunteering to work on the newsletter for the local animal shelter will improve your writing and editing abilities—skills that may help you in your career. Or, volunteering can simply offer a change from your daily routine. For example, if your full-time job is in an office, you may decide to take on a more active volunteer assignment, such as leading tours at an art museum or building a playground. Many nonprofits seek out people who are willing to learn. Realize beforehand, however, that such work might require a time commitment for training before the actual volunteer assignment begins.

4. Combine your goals.

Look for volunteer opportunities that will also help you achieve your other goals in life. For example, if you want to lose a few extra pounds, pick an active volunteer opportunity, such as cleaning a park or working with kids. If you've been meaning to take a cooking class, try volunteering at a food bank that teaches cooking skills.

5. Don't overcommit your schedule.

Make sure the volunteer hours you want to give fit into your hectic life, so that you don't frustrate your family, exhaust yourself, shortchange the organization you're trying to help, or neglect your job. Do you want a long-term assignment or something temporary? If you are unsure about your availability or want to see how the work suits you before making an extensive commitment, see if the organization will start you out on a limited number of hours until you get the feel of things. It's better to start out slowly than to commit yourself to a schedule you can't or don't want to fulfill.



6. Nonprofits may have questions, too.

While most nonprofits are eager to find volunteer help, they have to be careful when accepting the services you offer. If you contact an organization with an offer to volunteer your time, you may be asked to come in for an interview, fill out a volunteer application, or describe your qualifications and your background just as you would at an interview for a paying job. It is in the organization's interest and more beneficial to the people it serves to make certain you have the skills needed, that you are truly committed to doing the work, and that your interests match those of the nonprofit. Furthermore, in volunteer work involving children or other at-risk populations, there are legal ramifications for the organization to consider.

7. Consider volunteering as a family.

Think about looking for a volunteer opportunity suitable for parents and children to do together, or for a husband and wife to take on as a team. When a family volunteers to work together at a nonprofit organization, the experience can bring them closer together, teach young children the value of giving their time and effort, introduce everyone in the family to skills and experiences never before encountered, and give the entire family a shared experience as a wonderful family memory.

8. What About Virtual Volunteering?

Yes, there is such a thing! If you have computer access and the necessary skills, some organizations now offer the opportunity to do volunteer work over the computer. This might take the form of giving free legal advice, typing a college term paper for a person with a disability, or simply keeping in contact with a homebound individual who has e-mail. This sort

of volunteering might be well suited to you if you have limited time, no transportation, or a physical disability that precludes you getting about freely. Virtual volunteering can also be a way for you to give time if you simply enjoy computers and want to employ your computer skills in your volunteer work.

9. These are things you probably never thought about!

Many community groups are looking for volunteers, and some may not have occurred to you. Most people know that hospitals, libraries, and religious organizations use volunteers for a great deal of their work, but here are some volunteer opportunities that may not have crossed your mind:

- Day care centers, public schools, and colleges
- Halfway houses, drug rehabilitation centers, prisons, and shelters for battered women and children
- Retirement centers and homes for the elderly, meals-on-wheels, and religious- or community-sponsored soup kitchens or food pantries
- Museums, art galleries, community theaters, and monuments
- Community choirs, bands, and orchestras
- **The Neighborhood Watch Institute**, neighborhood parks, youth organizations, sports teams, and after-school programs
- Historical restorations, battlefields, national parks, fraternal organizations, and civic clubs

10. Give a voice to your heart through giving and volunteering!

Bring your heart and your sense of humor to your volunteer service, along with your enthusiastic spirit, which in itself is a priceless gift. What you'll get back will be immeasurable!

Source: Lifelines/2017



The Secret to Overcoming Any Setback

Guy Winch (Used by permission of the author)

Think back to a time you failed at something meaningful or important to you. Did you feel demoralized, blocked, hopeless, or helpless? Did you feel stuck because you had done what you could, yet were unable to succeed? If so, you are not alone.

Small Psychological Injuries Can Have Big Impacts

We all know failures are demoralizing, but what we don't realize is they constitute a form of psychological injury in that they literally distort our perceptions—and thus set us up to fail again. There are three primary ways in which this happens:

1. Failure distorts our perceptions of our abilities such that we feel less up to the task or less capable of reaching a goal than we actually are.
2. Failure distorts our perception of the goal itself such that it seems further out of reach.
3. Failure makes us believe that whether we succeed or not is out of our control.

Taken together, we are likely to feel hopeless and stuck, which is why so many of us give up after a failure, or perform poorly if we do or must persist.

As an illustration of how powerfully our distorted perceptions affect our behavior, in a recent study, scientists examined the self-care practices of patients with heart failure—developing healthy habits is vital for people with cardiovascular disease. Patients who perceived themselves as having little control over their disease were much worse at self-care than patients who perceived themselves as having *more* control, even though all were well aware that self-care was vital for their health and longevity. In other words, incorrectly perceiving a lack of control prevented the patients from taking action and applying vital self-care strategies, despite knowing that such strategies were incredibly important to their health and longevity.

The Importance of Regaining Control

To avoid feeling helpless and hopeless, and to address the psychological injuries that failures and setbacks can inflict, you must find ways to regain control of as many aspects of the task or goal as possible.

Let's look at some examples of how to regain control:

1. **You failed to get a promotion at work.** Now you feel like the situation is hopeless because you've done a good job, and if your boss refuses to recognize your contributions, there's nothing more you can do. To regain control, realize there is more that you can do. For example, ask yourself what your boss considers important and what they "see" of your work. You and your boss may have different priorities—you may prioritize your actual work and your boss may prioritize what makes their life easier, what makes them look good to their boss, or whether you make

them feel like a good manager. Further, bosses don't see everything we do. Figuring out what your boss values, and being strategic about how you can demonstrate those specific things so they "see" them, is a great way to take action and regain control.

2. **You failed yet another diet.** And now you believe you simply lack the willpower to succeed. To regain control, you have to recognize that most repeat dieters tend to fail at similar points each time, like two weeks after starting, or when work gets busy—and they tend to get tripped up by the same situations and temptations. To regain control you have to realize that your success does not depend on willpower alone. Figuring out your traditional failure points, and building in incentives and plans to manage them—planning ahead and making healthy meals so you don't have to rely on fast food or vending machines, or bringing a thermos of coffee to work so you don't have to go into the break room at work and have pastries wink at you—is a great way to regain control and feel more hopeful about trying again.
3. **You aren't getting any dates on dating websites.** You've written to a number of people but they haven't responded or followed through and few people have written to you. You believe you're just not attractive, smart, successful, or interesting enough to attract a partner. To regain control, you have to realize that you can work on your profile or pursue other venues. For example, ask a friend to look at your profile and give you feedback. Remember, online profiles are marketing tools, and as such, might need several rounds of tweaking both of content and pictures, until you get results. Second, look at sites like meetup.com for people interested in activities that reflect your areas of interest and passion. Such groups are a much better platform for meeting people with common interests, as it already gives you something to discuss and share with the other person.

The bottom line is there are always ways we can take control of a situation even when we initially believe we cannot. This is an area in which our mind's way of responding to failure and setbacks is misleading and potentially damaging. We have to override the defeatism we feel and find ways to assert control. That alone will help us move forward.

For many other tips on how to overcome failure check out, [Emotional First Aid: Healing Rejection, Guilt, Failure and Other Everyday Hurts](#) (Plume, 2014).

Tips for Working Parents

How To Put Your Career Skills To Work At Home

Sara Villanueva, Ph.D., *Psychology Today* (Used by permission of the author)

As a working parent, knowing how to manage your time and being an expert juggler of multiple tasks is not only helpful for your professional success, but also critical to your survival at home. The general rule of thumb I would suggest for parents is to use tools that work for you, both at work and at home. Whether you use an online calendar with your smart phone dutifully beeping with reminders for yet another meeting, or a good old-fashioned paper calendar with sticky note reminders galore, we all have our own way of responsibly meeting deadlines and managing tasks. By putting those same organizational skills to work at home, working parents can meet the constant demands that come in the form of science projects, PTA meetings, baseball practice, dance recitals, and doctor's appointments, all while enjoying the chaotic bliss that we call parenthood. Here are a few tips on how to use the skills that you utilize at work to make you a better parent at home.

Communication, Negotiation

Good communication in the workplace is vital to meeting goals and objectives. Whether making contributions (i.e., offering thoughts, ideas, or opinions), requests, or demands, being able to clearly state your message to others not only benefits the entire organization, but also helps to build rapport, collegiality, and trust with individuals. The same is true at home. As parents, it is especially important to clearly communicate our thoughts, opinions, feelings, and expectations to our children, particularly as they get older. Clear, consistent, and age-appropriate communication with our children encourages similar behaviors from them and benefits the individual, the parent-child relationship, and the family as a whole. What's more, teaching your children how to communicate early and often sets the stage for healthy future relationships, and who wouldn't want that?

When colleagues cannot find common ground, negotiation and compromise are also imperative for reaching goals and objectives. Similarly, parents and children can reach a middle ground by both engaging in some give-and-take. Given the fast-paced, technology-driven, idealistic and immediately gratifying society in which our children are growing up, learning how to negotiate is a valuable lesson for our kids today. It is our job, as parents, to teach them the truth, and the truth is this: In the real world (as opposed to, oh...I don't know... online social networking sites, perhaps) you may not always get exactly what you want; and you may not get it exactly when you want it. Along with communication skills, teaching our children the art of negotiation can not only help the family, but the person that we are creating in the future.

Collaboration

Working together as a TEAM; sharing common goals and helping one another to reach them; building an environment of support and encouragement – these are all behaviors that are continually reinforced in the workplace. As working parents, sharing these same concepts at home with our children can be of great benefit. When we approach our children with a “we are all in this together” kind of attitude, whether the objective is spring-cleaning or learning to ski, it empowers them to know that they are not alone. Rather, it signifies that, IF we all work together, and pull our own weight for the sake of the greater good, we will ALL reach the common goals in a much more reasonable and efficient way. This also teaches them about responsibility and consideration. There is something, after all, to the old saying “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.”



Leadership & Management Skills

Building excellent leadership skills and providing quality mentorship at your workplace not only sets future careers on a trajectory for success, it sets a positive tone, and models good, professional behaviors for others to follow. Being a good role model for your children at home has essentially the same effect. Whether we are aware or not, from the time they are infants, our children look to us for guidance – guidance on how to react emotionally to certain occurrences, how to behave in specific circumstances, etc. We are their first reference point... the person who models the behaviors that they will utilize with others in the future. Knowing this, it behooves both the family unit, and the individuals within the family for us to put the skills that we've learned at work to good use at home.

Work-Life Balance

Regardless of whether we are at work or at home, working parents are stressed. It's ok, you can admit it...we're all in the same cortisol filled boat. Working parents have TWO full-time jobs, after all: managing their career and managing their families/children. So, it befits us all to find a nice balance between work responsibilities and home demands. Some would argue that there is no such thing as balance, but I would say that, by necessity, all working parents (successfully or not) find ways to manage the seemingly overwhelming responsibility of living this dual life. The specific methods vary (massages, down time, time with friends) but parents who can find ways to make work and home demands manageable, are less stressed than those who can't. And less stress means better parenting behaviors and interactions with children. And better family interactions...well, you get the picture!

Sara Villanueva, Ph.D., an associate professor of psychology at St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas, is the author of *The Angst of Adolescence: How to Parent Your Teen and Live to Laugh About It*.

Three things in human life are important. The first is to be *kind*. The second is to be *kind*. And the third is to be *kind*.

- HENRY JAMES

Pass it on...

FEBRUARY 11-17, 2018

random acts 
of kindness week

Thanks for reading,

we hope you found the information useful!

**You can reach any of us by calling the
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