

# June Newsletter

## POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS AWARENESS MONTH

Posttraumatic Stress is a mental health condition that can develop after witnessing or experiencing a traumatic event. Symptoms of posttraumatic stress include intrusive thoughts, avoidance, negative changes in thinking/mood, and a heightened arousal response. It is not uncommon for individuals to experience these symptoms after a traumatic event; we call this posttraumatic stress. However, once the symptoms last longer than one month and begin causing distress or functional impairment in one's social or occupational life, it may become a diagnosable injury.

### What are the signs of Posttraumatic Stress?

- Nightmares, and recurring thoughts Emotional numbness
- Extreme worry, guilt, anger, or hopelessness
- Avoidance of people, places, or things that are reminders of the trauma
- A loss of interest in things that once gave pleasure
- Easily startled or jumpy Sleep issues
- Increased use in alcohol or other substances

### Does being diagnosed with Posttraumatic Stress make me weak?

- No! Everyone responds to traumatic events differently. Some people might experience a traumatic event and only experience symptoms for a short time period. Some individuals even experience posttraumatic growth which allows the individual to grow from his/her experience and find new meaning in life. Posttraumatic stress nothing to do with mental toughness. However, you can always increase protective factors to manage or reduce symptoms. Protective factors include, increasing your social support system, seeking out therapy, utilizing healthy coping strategies and having a sense of purpose and/or faith place.

### What should I do if I think I have Posttraumatic Stress or symptoms of it?

- A great place to start is by taking an assessment. You can take a PTSD self-assessment by clicking here: <https://screening.nhanational.org/scme-nmg-tools/psd/2ref>
- After getting your results, you can call the Fire Capt. Ryan J Mitchell's First Responders Program at 1-833-983- 4778 and we can help you with next steps. Whether it just be talking to someone about the results, or helping you get connected to a behavioral health expert. We are here for you!

## 10 Anxiety Trauma Responses



People all over the world have different behaviors that some may find odd and some not odd at all. Some of these behaviors can be due to anxiety. This may be caused by nervousness, fear of speaking in public, or fear of being in crowds. Many forms of anxiety are not as obvious and no matter their level of recognition, many anxious behaviors may be linked to some experiences of childhood trauma. Research has demonstrated a link between trauma and many symptoms of anxiety, finding that our experiences in childhood and beyond often lead to behavior manifestations present well

into adulthood. A fear of being negatively viewed or evaluated manifests in many different areas of a person's life. While many of these are experienced by people who have not had trauma, and can be explained by other means, here are 10 of the most common anxious responses.

1. Not answering the phone, or avoiding making calls.
2. Shutting down or being silent during group events or in social settings.
3. Being nervous or uncomfortable when someone sits too close to you.
4. Needing to sit in certain places or areas during restaurant visits or social events.
5. Overeating or overdrinking.
6. Someone knocking on your door who is unexpected/uninvited.
7. Constantly apologizing, even for things that aren't your (or anyone's) fault.
8. Having a heightened startle reflex.
9. Not wanting people over to your house because you cannot control when they leave.
10. Being more comfortable around certain people than others.

[Click here to read more](#)

## Running Has Encouraging Benefits for Those Suffering from Posttraumatic Stress



PTSD was formally added to the list of neurological and mental conditions by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980, after many veterans from Vietnam were treated for it. Today, the diagnosis is broadly accepted and understood to be a result of experiencing any type of traumatic event outside of the body and mind's ability to process or control it.

Clinical neuroscientist Scott Hayes, Ph.D. associate professor in the department of psychology at Ohio State University says that, "PTSD is associated with symptoms such as involuntary and intrusive memories of the event, decreased attention and concentration, and avoidance of things that could trigger the unwanted memory, and further negatively impact mood and brain function." Hayes' team noted in their review that those who did engage in vigorous-intensity exercise had fewer hyperarousal symptoms of PTSD. "Both observational and intervention studies provide support for the notion that anaerobic exercise, either alone or in combination with standard treatments, exerts positive mental health benefits among individuals with PTSD."

Running and other forms of somatic movement (like yoga, dance, or Tai Chi) help us reconnect with our bodies, to acknowledge all that our bodies had to do to ensure our survival, and importantly, to remind our bodies that we have survived. "There is no longer a survival need to hold ourselves in fight, flight, freeze, or fawn mode. Running and other forms of somatic movement allow us to tap into the inner wisdom of our bodies and provide a method of grounding us in the here and now, rather than being stuck in our minds." [To read more about this article, click here.](#)

## International Yoga Day

June 21 is International Yoga Day, a day set by the United Nations celebrating the spiritual and physical benefits of the practice of yoga. Yoga is an ancient practice that has been used by people for centuries as a way to connect the mind, body, and soul, and also as a way of exercising. "Inhale the future, exhale the past." Breathing practices and meditation both help calm and center the mind so it's hardly surprising that yoga brings these mental benefits and more like reducing anxiety, depression, PTSD, heart attacks, suicide and other stress related issues. Step in Yogashield® Yoga for First Responders.



Their mission is to provide First Responders with traditional yoga training that is culturally informed and job specific for the purposes of effectively processing stress, building resilience, and enhancing performance. If you'd like more information about how yoga can help you and your crew, please visit their website at [yogaforfirstresponders.org](http://yogaforfirstresponders.org)

## Police & Fire Championships June 11th-19th



The 2022 U.S. Police & Fire Championships are on! The Olympic-style competition brings together public safety personnel for a week of fitness and sport. This year's competition is scheduled to take place on June 11 - 19 in San Diego. Registration opens Feb. 15. "We are thrilled to be returning to San Diego for our 55th season of the games," said Larry Collins, president of the California Police Athletic Federation. "The mission of the California Police Athletic Federation is to unite public safety athletes and provide them with the ultimate Olympic-style athletic experience. The focus is to encourage health and wellness among all public safety personnel and create lifelong memories for the athletes, their families and the communities they serve." According to organizers, the event is expected to draw thousands of athletes representing law enforcement, firefighters, EMS providers, corrections officers and other first responders. For more information about the competition, including events and eligibility, [click here.](#)

## Focus on the Positive



Positive thinking, or an optimistic attitude, is the practice of focusing on the good in any given situation. It can have a big impact on your physical and mental health. That doesn't mean you ignore reality or make light of problems. It simply means you approach the good and the bad in life with the expectation that things will go well.

**The Benefits of Positive Thinking:** Many studies have looked at the role of optimism and positive thinking in mental and physical health. It's not always clear which comes first: the mindset or these benefits. But there is no downside to staying upbeat.

Some physical benefits may include:

- Longer life span
- Lower chance of having a heart attack
- Better physical health
- Greater resistance to illness
- Lower blood pressure
- Better stress management
- Better pain tolerance

Some mental benefits may include:

- More creativity
- Greater problem-solving skill
- Clearer thinking
- Better mood
- Better coping skills
- Less depression

To learn more about how to achieve these physical and mental benefits, see WebMD's article on [Positive Thinking.](#)

## CLINICAL COUCH

With Taylor & Kim

### Stress Management



As part of our ongoing wellness in 2022, our Peer Navigator Kim Gonzales and Program Manager, Taylor Valdivia, present to you a talk about *Stress Management*. In this video we discuss and explore what stress is, signs of it and different tools and tips to manage it.



## First Responder Community Training

Resiliency is a top priority in the First Responder community. First Responders are at a greater risk for experiencing symptoms of depression and anxiety due to repeated exposure to trauma. Many First Responders are hesitant to seek help because of the stigma surrounding mental health. Our staff provides county funded in-person & Zoom presentations to educate First Responders about stigma, resiliency & wellness; recognizing its impact, and providing tools to reduce stigma and promote wellness within the First Responder community.

Our team is working to promote prevention and support First Responders – creating custom presentations to meet department needs. Contact us today to request an in-person or Zoom presentation.

[Request More Information](#)