

CORRECTIONAL OASIS

**A PUBLICATION OF DESERT WATERS CORRECTIONAL OUTREACH
A NON-PROFIT FOR THE WELL-BEING OF CORRECTIONAL STAFF AND THEIR FAMILIES**

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Reducing Staff's Cumulative Traumatic Impairment

© Caterina Spinaris Tudor

Given the corrections culture of machismo and bravery, what do you think the response of a staff member would be if you asked them how they are doing being exposed to a critical incident at work?

My 10-year experience of working with correctional workers suggests that the vast majority of the time staff would reply, "I'm fine." When they say that, they may indeed be fine, but they may also be numb or withholding truth because they do not want to appear weak. They may believe that they are handling things well because they responded to the incident according to policy, and may have even saved lives. However, performance and well-being are two different things. It is my opinion that no matter how well they say (or even believe) that they are doing, they can probably use some "housecleaning," some de-arousal and reprogramming, after exposure to violence. Incidents that provoke fear, horror or a sense of helplessness affect our brains and our beliefs. They can cause changes and injuries invisible to the naked eye, but very real nonetheless.

If left unprocessed, the impact of such experiences tends to accumulate over the course of a correctional worker's career. As a result, the souls and bodies of correctional workers become increasingly fragile. The last few years I have come across several cases involving veteran staff who had exemplary work records yet they suddenly collapsed psychologically even after routine critical incidents, examples of the last straw that breaks the camel's back. What might be the answer? We are complex creatures and we are not all affected by critical incidents in the same way. Temperament, history and organizational culture shape how correctional workers will be impacted by such

events. However, processing the impact on their bodies, emotions and core beliefs fairly soon after the incident can help a person neutralize the negative, keep the good and even grow positively from the experience. The idea is to intervene while the cement is still wet. Repairs are easier before it hardens. Or to use another analogy, it is easier to pull up a sapling by the roots than to try to uproot a mature tree. Reprogramming our mind days or even weeks after a critical incident happened will be easier to accomplish than doing so months or years later, when secondary fear conditioned responses have had the chance to be established.

One way to do that relatively quickly is through the use of a technique called EMDR. There are other also approaches to deal with the effects of critical events. However, I have found EMDR to be very effective, especially in the case of isolated incidents. Usually two or three 90-minute sessions are sufficient to deal with an event's fallout. For more information about the effectiveness EMDR in treating psychological trauma, go to <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/pages/treatment-ptsd.asp> or <http://www.emdr.com/index.htm>.

My suggestion is that administrators consult with the psychologists on staff and EAP providers about this issue. If they decide that indeed it has merit, I urge them to explore ways to ensure that all staff involved in critical (violent, life-threatening) incidents receive resources about where to find psychotherapists who use EMDR, and reasons why they should pursue the processing of the incident in that manner. EAP and other mental health providers should be selected who are trained in EMDR, prolonged exposure and Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, so that clients can be referred to them for such specialized preventative interventions.

The purpose for this is to help correctional workers prevent toxic traumatic material from accumulating in their souls and bodies, and to even help them grow from their work experiences.

IN MEMORIAM

**CO Tracy Cooper
09/28/2010
Stateville Correctional
Center, IL DOC**

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Reader Feedback, Etc.

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Many thanks for the great piece on PTSD. I find that this has lifelong consequences and often have to treat it as a comorbidity¹ when helping officers with medical or accident-related issues. Often officers take it for granted that it is normal to have flashbacks, isolation, hypervigilance, sleep disturbances and nightmares. Sadly they suffer with the belief that they have no recourse for help and that it is an inevitable sequel of their work that can't be changed. Helping them understand that this not inevitable is a task in itself because the belief system seems to be ingrained as a "badge of courage." Don Steele

¹*Comorbidity means that PTSD co-exists with other illnesses.*

*Dr. Steele, a gifted Psychologist who resides in the state of MA, has been treating corrections staff for years. He, with the assistance of CO Gary Ouillette, has written the 13-page booklet entitled **Stress Management for the Professional Correction Officer**. For more information and to order copies, please email him at steelepub@aol.com. CST*

GOOD EDITION. I would like to express a caution about diagnostic labels such as PTSD. It is now being used by people for almost every negative, adverse or unpleasant experience, including consequences for negative or criminal behavior. Several studies have shown that in the U.S. we tend to be very quick to "medicalize" character traits or circumstances. ... Almost every violent, angry criminal entering jail or prison desires a "Bipolar Disorder" diagnosis with high-powered psychotropics, and subsequent "disabled" status such as SSI, not having to pay certain fines, etc.

Much of what correctional staff endure could probably be under the general umbrella of "occupational stress" which of course would require systemic changes, such as making inmates more responsible instead of micromanaging and disciplining staff. I have researched some of these areas for years but no one with the power to make the needed changes will do so. The ALLURE model is fairly good and I have said that inservices and seminars could be held across the country. So far, in Ohio the politicians and bureaucrats ignore the huge problem of deception and make the common mistake of saying in essence that if society just gives offenders a lot of social services etc., they will no longer be criminals. Garbage! A couple of experts that might be sought by those wanting to understand deception and criminal behavior might be Park Dietz (famous forensic psychiatrist), Martin Samenow (psychologist and researcher), and John Douglas (former FBI profiler who has written books and who has cautioned against relying on self-report from offenders). Research has shown that, oddly enough, typical mental health people are lousy at detecting deception.

Anonymous

When I use the term PTSD I mean cases when the condition has been diagnosed by a clinician following a potentially traumatic incident. Specific criteria must be met for an event to be considered potentially traumatic. I agree with you that people can use medical terms very loosely and erroneously, and that there may be popular trends and fads about certain diagnoses.

I want to add that I have encountered corrections officers who, after witnessing horrific violence at work, sometimes for years, have symptoms like veterans coming back from the war. CST

CONGRATULATIONS on your first "extended" edition of Correctional Oasis. A really splendid issue and a great credit to your personal input and overall direction.

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Feedback

I particularly liked the Leadership article. I wish it had been available, with its wisdom, in my earlier days of management. At least I was always very diligent in making notes in a book I invariably carried with me, but the subject of the notes was to improve the operations of the company and seldom for the domestic enhancement of the employees.

In some strange fashion they were real people only when on Company premises and “ceased to exist” when work ended for the day.

Of course it was not a perfect analogy with members of Correctional establishments where the nature of the work is unique and the mental aspects are searing on the individual. When the employees I knew left the premises they “could pull down the blind” on the work of the day, whilst those in the Correctional services, as I know from your articles, still throbbed with the personal encounters of the day.

Keep up your good work which is so patently tailored to their special needs.

Raymond Sinclair, UK

ALLURE—Verbal Cues: Part 3

Detecting Deception & Truth

By Rick Nielsen

Rick Nielsen is a Community Corrections Officer (i.e., Probation and Parole Officer) in the Washington State Department of Corrections. For comments or questions, email him at richard.nielsen@doc.wa.gov. This is the third in a series of five articles on this subject. This article builds on the previous articles in this series. Parts 1 & 2 will be found in prior issues of the Correctional Oasis which will be posted on the Desert Waters website www.desertwaters.com in the near future.

Remember your ALLURE, (ALLURE is copyright ©2009-2010 Richard A. Nielsen):

1. ASK unexpected questions that bring out behavioral responses. (Vrij et al 2009)
2. LOOK for stress & controlling behaviors. Don't just focus on deception cues. (DePaulo et al 2003)
3. LISTEN to the voice & the words. (DePaulo et al 2003)
4. UNDERSTAND everything in context. (Porter 2009, Vrij et al 2001)
5. REPEAT the process often; keep scanning. (Porter 2009, Vrij et al 2001)
6. ERRORS: Beware of errors. There really is no Pinocchio's nose. (Herbert 2007)

If you look for it, you'll find ALLURE in the article below.

Verbal Cues come from:

- Live dialogue
- Non-word speech sounds, including paralinguistics, like voice pitch, “um's”, “ah's”, etc.
- Transcripts of dialogue
- Audio recordings of dialogue

With experience, you'll see some overlap between Verbal Cues and Text Cues of deception.

Class 1 Verbal Cues can be divided into signs of Withholding and Masking.

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Allure

Withholding cues:

- Liars are less forthcoming in their presentations.
- Liars' talking time is less.
- Liars give fewer details.
- Liars tell less compelling tales.
- Liars' stories are less plausible.
- Liars' stories have less logical structure.
- Liars' stories have more discrepancies and ambivalence.
- Liars' stories are less verbally and vocally engaging.
- Liars' stories have less verbal and vocal immediacy. Liars' stories have more verbal and vocal uncertainty.
- Liars are less cooperative overall.
- Liars' stories include fewer ordinary imperfections or unusual contents.
- Liars' stories include fewer spontaneous corrections.
- Liars less often admit lack of memory.
- Liars show more vocal tension.
- Liars' voice pitch is higher. (DePaulo et al 2003)

While we're on the subject, voice stress analysis machines detect stress only, not lying. (Damphousse et al 2007, Haddad et al 2002, Hopkins et al 2005)

Masking cues:

- Liars make a more negative impression.
- Liars make more negative statements.
- Liars make more complaints.
- Liars' stories have more word and phrase repetitions.
- Liars' stories include more related external associations (alibi building). (DePaulo et al 2003)

Class 2 Verbal Cues

None found. Since Class 2 Cues signify true feelings which are contrary to the Verbal statements, this is to be expected. There are no body cues, or head cues in speech with which to compare the Verbal Cues.

That's it. Not very much to remember with Verbal Cues.

So here's your "homework." Listen to a news interview—the more unrehearsed the better—and see if you find signs of verbal deception. Also, for extra credit, listen to yourself speak when responding in a stressful situation.

It's important to realize that we all use deception: to be polite, protect personal privacy, maintain personal space, and to give ourselves enough time to understand the questions accurately and as quickly as possible.

So, when looking for signs of deception in yourself or others, remember that there really is no one sign of deception—there is no Pinocchio's nose. And the best deception detectors use ALL the data they have access to.

Good luck and stay safe! And join me next time for Body deception cues.

(Continued from page 4)

Allure

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Why Some Training Fails

By Jim Gregory

Most of the training in law enforcement is done as a reaction to some event that indicates officers and staff need to know more about a subject. This happens, for example, when something like “use of force” is used and it is determined mistakes were made because of staffs' lack of knowledge or understanding. This is when resources are suddenly diverted to address the issue to prevent it from happening in the future. Frequently, information is assembled and disseminated to all levels within the unit to make sure that if the situation ever happens in the future, everyone will have been given the information as to an acceptable response. That’s where it usually ends.

Unfortunately, this approach is often used as a basis for punitive action in the future on whoever makes a mistake by not following written procedures as disseminated or taught in some class. So why does this approach fail to accomplish what was intended? Sir Ken Robinson identified this same issue in public education. His approach in education should be our model in law enforcement. Briefly, we tend to approach training in law enforcement in a mechanical way. By that I mean we look at issues as a problem that needs assembly line application, much like building a car. We start at one end with parts, put them together, and expect to see a finished product. Generally, we research by getting experts together to develop a lesson plan filled with all the relevant information to be taught in the learning environment. We then deliver this knowledge with multi-media presentations or any other attention-getting devices we can muster. We then ask for the usual “smile sheets” to evaluate how people felt about the training and information, and we distribute certificates of completion to prove that staff did in fact attend and obtained the information.

This approach does have some application (merit?), but it doesn't work for everything. We expect it to work for everything, though, and often don't understand why it doesn't. For example: everybody in law enforcement has had classes on sexual harassment. So why is sexual harassment still such a costly issue? It just might be that

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Why

some training is not suited to the assembly line approach. So what is a possible alternative?

What about changing our approach to training to that of the “farmer?” The farmer cultivates the ground and plants the seed but doesn’t stop there. After cultivating and planting, the process of keeping an eye on the crop for an extended period of time begins. The farmer makes adjustments as needed to ensure the success of the crop. This still may not be enough. The farmer knows that just planting the seed is not enough to ensure success, just as every trainer knows that presenting a class on any given subject does not ensure that the information will be used as intended, or if it will be used at all. The learning environment goes beyond the classroom. Having knowledge is a good starting point, but this must be coupled with job experience. With knowledge and experience in hand, the work environment must then be supportive of these elements. It does no good when staff in the field has the attitude that “what happens in training, stays in training.” If what goes on in the classroom is not reflecting properly what takes place in the field, then that classroom material needs to be adjusted. But sometimes, what goes on in the field needs to be adjusted to the classroom materials.

The steady reinforcement of knowledge and experience in the field is what makes successful departments. Without daily cultivation, the desired changes get lost and failure becomes the result.

Jim Gregory is a staff development supervisor for the Kansas Department of Corrections at the El Dorado Correctional Facility, in El Dorado, Kansas. He holds a BBA and MS, and has worked in corrections for 19 years. He also has taught in the Criminal Justice programs at several universities and has held certifications in fire-arms instructor, self-defense instructor, chemical agents instructor, PREA instructor, sexual harassment instructor, to name just a few. He is currently an adjunct instructor at Friends University where he teaches Ethics.

Good Knight

By Sonny Rider

Shutter Creek Correctional Institution, OR

The day awakens and the clock reminds me of the
duty to come
Putting my best foot forward each day.
Not knowing what I may see or feel today, or
where from
Hoping for the best, I kneel and pray.

Let me be alert and observant, always at the ready
Grant me wisdom, strength, and courage under
fire
Help me to be consistent and steady
Guide me to be fair and firm, let my response
never tire.

Adjusting the uniform in the mirror I see
A little bit older, sharper, but wiser I guess
Experienced, and what I wanted to be
When I started trying to be my best.

Sheathing a pen for a sword
And a badge for a shield
Preparing for battle toward
The Correctional field.

Hoping I don’t see anything today that could make
me cry
Some inhumanity that can occur within the wall
Entering I pick up my keys and then I try
To keep my fellow staff safe and on the ball.

Trying to defend a less than thankful public is my
goal
But watching to keep the peace is what I need.
A small eight-hour loss of my personal freedom is
stole
As I await the end of shift when I may be freed.

Keeping some sorrow, anguish, and lessons learned
From the ones I love at home
I let old memories and bridges burned
Hidden inside, these I bear alone.

As I get home and get into bed
I turn out the light.
My spouse turns and says,
Good night Good Knight.

The First Line Supervisor: Where the Rubber Meets the Road

By William Sturgeon

In the field of criminal justice, there is a group of dedicated men and women who receive very little recognition for their hard work. They are The First Line Supervisors. The first line supervisor is the first rung on the supervisory ladder and most often leads to management positions in the future. It is the first line supervisors who ensure that the agency's policies are followed by their subordinates and that the agency's procedures for conducting business are adhered to by everyone working in the field.

The first line supervisor is the bridge between the line staff and management. The first line supervisor is the person who communicates with both of these groups on a continuous basis. It is the first line supervisor who is first to be able to sense the morale of the line staff, find a policy or procedure that is not working as written, improve incorrect staffing patterns, or to observe changes in the make-up of the offenders, etc.

In the majority of emergency situations, it is the first line supervisor who is first on the scene and the one who has to take immediate action. While these incidents are taking place, the first line supervisors will need to depend on their training, education, and experience. Whether it is a law enforcement or correctional situation, it is the first line supervisor who must direct his/her subordinates as to what actions they should take. For a period of time, the weight and future implications of the incidents fall upon the shoulders of the first line supervisors.

In the military, the importance of maintaining a strong, well trained and educated Non-Commissioned Officer Corps is extremely important. Most agencies, in my opinion, do not fully appreciate the importance of its first line supervisors as much as the military does. It has been my experience that agencies that have experienced and well trained first line supervisors have few internal and external problems, and the morale is higher.

How Are Great Supervisors Developed

I believe that developing first line supervisors is a process through which a person must progress. There are several crucial steps that, I believe, compose a detailed first line supervisor training program:

- Communication skills: *Communication skills for first line supervisors cannot be stressed enough.*
 - Report writing skills: *First line supervisors have to not only write reports; they must approve reports from their subordinates as they move up the chain-of-command.*
 - How to administer discipline: *Disciplining staff with whom they work so closely can be a difficult process for first line supervisors, but one that they must do.*
 - Well versed in policies and procedures: *It is the first line supervisor who has to see to it that the agency's policies and procedures are followed by their subordinates in the performance of their duties.*
 - A comprehensive understanding of the agency's Mission and Goals: *It is the duty of the first line supervisor to constantly reinforce the Mission and Goals of the agency.*
-
- How to manage an emergency situation: When emergencies take place, it is customary for the first line supervisor to be the first representative of the agency on the scene. Therefore, the first line supervisor must be well trained in all aspects of the agency's emergency /contingency plans.
 - Conflict Resolution skills: Personally, I believe that conflict resolution skills are essential for all supervisors and managers.

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First Line (Continued from page 7)

- On-the-job training of subordinates: Every first line supervisor must be accountable for training their subordinates to perform their duties and to ensure that they follow the policies and procedures of the agency.
- Delegation Skills: Eventually, every first line supervisor will come to the realization that they will have to delegate some of their duties to their subordinates.
- Planning skills: The first line supervisor has to plan how he/she will consistently operate their area. Consistency is the key in developing a supervisory style.

The Spark in the Engine Is the First Line Supervisor

It is important for management to understand that its first line supervisors are “The Spark in the Engine” that keeps an agency performing at its highest level. Management should do everything possible:

- To keep the first line supervisors up-to-date with changes in the agency
- To keep their training current
- To ask for feedback on new or amended policies, procedures and/or other major changes
- To listen to their concerns and respond to them
- To meet with them quarterly

Unpleasant But Absolutely Necessary

While it is unpleasant, it is absolutely necessary to deal with ineffective, burned-out, or disruptive first line supervisors. A first line supervisor who is out of touch with the agency’s Mission and Goals and who breeds discontent is like a cancer within the agency.

It is also important for management to replace first line supervisors who are not:

- Following the agency’s policies and procedures
- Disciplining subordinates when necessary
- Adhering to the agency’s policies and procedures
- Performing their duties at an above average level
- Acting as leaders
- Training their subordinates
- Supervising in a consistent manner

Possible Symptoms of a Breakdown in First Line Supervision

If management is having issues with a certain unit or division, it might be a symptom of a breakdown in

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Please remember that you need to make your end-of-year giving decisions by December 31 (postmarked or online, www.desertwaters.com) to qualify for a tax deduction in this calendar year.

First Line *(Continued from page 8)*

First Line Supervision. It is not unusual for a unit whose first line supervisor is not doing his or her job to start having operational problems such as these:

- Poor morale
- Excessive sick time usage
- Increase in offender complaints
- Increases in Use of Force situations
- Officers requesting transfers

Some of these symptoms can also be attributed to:

- Understaffing
- Poorly trained staff
- Excessive number of new “Green” staff
- Change in offender make-up

Summary

As budgets tighten and the public demands more “measurable productivity” from criminal justice agencies, the importance of first line supervisors will become more evident and these positions more demanding. I believe that management has a special duty to its first line supervisors to understand the many difficulties associated with their positions. Additionally, many of these first line supervisors will become the managers in the future. The better these first line supervisors are prepared, the better managers they will become.

A personal note to all first line supervisors—Thank you!

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Why I Serve

From Peumansend Creek Jail—Reprinted with Permission

Angie Perry, LPN, Staff Nurse

For as long as I can remember, I always wanted to be a nurse. While in school, it never crossed my mind to be a “jail nurse.” I remember my clinicals at Coffeewood Correctional Center. I was terrified. Mind you, I was 18 years old.

One day, on my way home from the nursing home (where I worked), I stopped here at Peumansend Creek to fill out my application, and I never left.

It is in my heart to help people, to make them better, to make a difference in their lives. Here I have a fairly captive audience. Watching inmates progress from a not so healthy lifestyle to being proud of themselves for the changes they have made gives me great satisfaction. Feeling the pride in their progress and the appreciation they express for what I do is why I come back day after day.

Sergeant Lucy Battle

Never in a million years could anyone have told me, that this would be the course my life would take . . . Corrections.

Corrections is a double-edged sword for me. It is the gratification in helping someone, be it translating a phone call to home. And it is the ill feeling of hearing those dreaded words, “Officer Needs Assistance.” The adrenaline that flows through your body in anticipation of helping a fellow officer in need outweighs millions.

Call it what you like, helping someone comes in so many forms and dimensions . . . Be it an inmate needing your help or a fellow officer. It doesn't matter what side of the fence you're on. . . It all boils down to being human.

Desert Waters

Correctional Outreach



*a non-profit organization
for the well-being of correctional
staff and their families*

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The Man Next Door by The Old Screw

The man next door was a strange one. He was quiet and on the outside appeared to be the same as you and me. Yet there were signs that he was different. When I talked to him he never looked me in the eye. Instead, he kept looking all around him, checking out everything that was going on. I wondered about this man with the guarded look and some sadness in his eyes. We went out to eat one time. He was almost rude in making sure he sat with his back to a wall where he could see all entryways.

As I grew to know and understand this man I couldn't help but think, "He sure acts strange, yet he seems to be so nice!" He was gentle with children and animals. With grown-ups he was sometimes short, gruff. Then one day I found out why this man was the way he was.

He told me some things about his work and I thought, "How can he go into that place every day and do his job? How can anyone do that job?" He was the first Prison Officer I had ever met. He told me that even women worked in there around killers and rapists. I asked myself, "How can they do that and remain human?"

That day I knew then that I had met a unique person. Not some fake who brags about having a dangerous job, but one who did his job with no fanfare or glory. *And it made me proud to call that Corrections Officer my friend.*

New Organization Member

We welcome the Association of Oregon Corrections Employees (AOCE, <http://www.association-of-oregon-corrections-employees.org/>) as a DWCO organizational member. Thank you, AOCE, for valuing what we do and for getting on board with Desert Waters! Your support is very much needed and greatly appreciated!

Quote of the Month

Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice.
Justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love.

Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* 1967