

CORRECTIONAL OASIS

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A NON-PROFIT FOR THE WELL-BEING OF CORRECTIONAL STAFF

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From The Old Screw

No More Family Violence—Please!

To Officers of all law enforcement, male and female:

You are Officers and I would be proud to know all of you.

We have a serious problem going around and it is called *Domestic Violence* or *Family Violence*.

I lost count of how many families I've seen broken up because of the frustration and anger we sometimes go home with.

I have written about down time (time to unwind from work), but writing about it does little to explain it to those that don't know our jobs. There are things that just can't be explained to outsiders very well.



You have to live them first hand to truly understand them.

Think what it's like when your spouse has no idea and cannot picture what it's like where you

work. Children think it's fun to slip up and scare daddy or mommy, not knowing how dangerous that can be when they startle one of us. (I've known people who in a split second had someone down, by the throat, only to realize it was their spouse or child who had come up behind them and tapped them on the shoulder.)

It is so important that we find something to ease the stress when we get home. Take up a hobby other than alcohol or drugs. One place where I worked had "choir practice" every night after work. Finally my wife said, "It's the bar or me." I'm thankful that I

realized she was more important than the booze.

Sad to say, some Officers think drinking after work is their right, and that they deserve it. When the violence starts and they suddenly have no family, they wonder what happened. And by the way, that's when they are in serious danger of becoming suicidal.

Step back and look at what you and your family are doing. If you can see signs of trouble, talk to someone you trust. GET HELP.

Remember this: If you have the nerve to walk into work each day, then talking to a professional or a peer won't be any harder.

You, your spouse and your children deserve all the good help you can get.

Take care,

The Old Screw

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GOOD PRESS

Thanks to Scott Rappold of the Gazette Telegraph in Colorado Springs, an article was printed on 09/05/06 on the Ventline. Corrections staff got positive press! Thanks also go to our volunteers, Wes Connert and Anne Gard, who agreed to be interviewed. Through Associated Press, the article was reprinted in the Pueblo Chieftain and in the Sterling Journal Advocate.

<http://gazette.com/display.php?id=1321208&secid=2>

THE STATE OF CORRECTIONS

We are pleased to report that an article entitled *Increasing Correctional Employee Retention* contributed by Caterina Spinaris Tudor has been included in ACA's *The State of Corrections Proceedings ACA Annual Conferences 2005*. Thank you, Alice Heiserman and Michael Kelly.

From Caterina's Desk**WOW!**

Dear Caterina:

Wow! Not really sure how else to describe your website. Wandered across it by accident and I am impressed. I have been a Corrections Officer for 25 years in a maximum facility. I enjoy my job and still have an active role inside.

The part of your website that hit me the most was the changes you go through when you really get into corrections. I have been telling this to new jacks (*new staff*) for years, and I advise them to listen to their families and friends when they tell them about their attitude changes. Most just blow it off. In time I saddle up with another officer and when we see that the time is right, we approach them and tell them straight to their coconut how much they've changed since the beginning. We point out to each and every one what and who they have become, where their trusts lie, and just their life in general. I get involved with a lot of these guys and gals on break, wandering through the facility and at gatherings after work.

My ideal has always been, *We all come to work in one piece and we all go home in one piece.* Your family does not follow inmate rules. Don't treat them like they are inmates. They were and always will be your local support group no matter what. They have placed their trust in you to do your job and come home and be mom or dad or sis or brother, not a C.O.

They won't understand the consequences of observ-

ing the human race under a microscope, and at its worst. You can tell them, but they won't know unless they see it first hand, so don't treat them like inmates.

Over the years I've seen too many of my friends and co-workers lose to alcohol and drugs, and a few suck on a 9mm straw . Heartbreaking? Yes. Could I have done more? Who knows, but try to help the rest. That's why I am so glad I came across your website. Someone can see the Ventline and blow off to you, and know these problems are universal in this line of work. It's not just them.

To get help, people first need to see they have a problem. To do that, they must know what their problem looks like. (Most staff don't identify their behavior as a problem.) And after that, they must tell someone.

Then there's that "Blue never rats on Blue" thing that stalls helping someone even when you see them struggling. I guess it's the nature of the beast that makes you "John Wayne and a bucket of hand grenades and nothing can bother you". But it does bother you, and we C.O.s are apprehensive about looking at someone in the face and admitting it. With your Ventline there's anonymity and hopefully guidance that will show them they are not alone and maybe they'll take that extra step and get themselves more help.

Anonymous

SERVICES OFFERED THROUGH DWCO

- ◆ **The Corrections Ventline**, a 24/7 phone and email crisis intervention, support and referral access to trained volunteer Responders at no charge. Through the Ventline you can also contact a peer supporter or have one phone consultation at no charge with a mental health provider.
- ◆ Low-cost, cash-based **counseling** for corrections staff and their family members. This allows you to get help without going through your insurance.
- ◆ **Trainings and consultations** for entire facilities or teams, and individual **coaching**.

If you have benefited from our services or from this newsletter, or if you know others who have, please consider making a monthly or a one-time tax-deductible contribution to DWCO.

As the demand for our services grows, so do our expenses.

Women Succeeding In Corrections

By an anonymous contributor

Foundational

1. Correctional professionals (who happen to be female) are a valuable organizational asset for male offender management.
2. Offender manipulation is a risk for both male and female staff. However, female staff may be at greater risk and should have a "tool box" ready, full of strategies to defend against manipulation.
3. Correctional Administrators should establish a professional culture where all staff and offenders are treated with dignity and respect.

How?

1. This begins with a well-designed and frequently reviewed/revised policy.
2. Procedures within the policy should be easy to understand.
3. Relationship with the agency's investigative arm should be sound and practical.
4. Training should be available, required and frequently offered. (High ranking administrators should be a part of training delivery.)
5. Workplace culture should provide a system whereby all workers feel they can seek help and assistance.
6. Female workers should early on establish a reputation for "bright line," well-defined and solid professional boundaries.

Career Development for Female Correctional Workers

1. Experience in a male facility should be considered vital for diversity of experience.
2. Female correctional workers should demonstrate they are highly-skilled. (Know the rules and follow them.)
3. Know when/how to use appropriate discretionary decision-making.
4. Have ideas and ability to follow through.
5. Attain credentials.
6. Establish standards of behavior both on and off the job.
7. Expect to be tested.

When You Are Tested, Will You Be Able To:

1. Defend your actions?
2. Place the agency in a position to defend your actions?
3. Withstand the Denver Post test? (Media scrutiny)

When in Doubt

1. Work through the chain of command.
2. Take the high road and do the right thing.
3. Do not be pressured by peers or supervisors to disregard policies or reportable incidents.

From Desert Waters' Blog

If you could change THREE things to improve your corrections workplace, what would these be?

Charlie Stoy wrote:

1. Focus more on my co-workers: we **are** a team whether we realize it or not.
2. Focus on the basics of my job: firm, fair, consistent.
3. Be a leader. I do not have to have some fancy title to lead. All I need is to do the right thing.

Charlie also added: We're only as good as our weakest link. When we see someone needing help, we should build them up. And remember: Maybe some day we'll be the ones who are the weak link. We hope that our co-workers will build us up in our time of need.

Reprinted with the author's permission.

Desert Waters

Correctional Outreach



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

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BLOGS
<http://desertwaters.blogspot.com>
<http://womenincorrections.blogspot.com>

**We Thank You For
Your Support!**

The Corrections Ventline™
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Perfect For Roll Call

Our good friend, Dr. Don Steele, who has over 20 years of experience treating correctional staff, has authored the booklet, **Stress Management for the Professional Correction Officer**. Administrators, EAP officials, union officials and others can order it in bulk and provide copies to correctional staff. Or a section can be read daily at roll call. For more information or to order, please go to www.steelepublishing.com, email SteelePub@aol.com, or call 508-339-6760.

- Triggers for stress in the prison environment*
- Stress-related behavior*
- Job consequences for corrections officers*
- Get physical*
- Managing your thoughts*
- Live in the present*

- Focus on specific issues or people*
- Differentiate between possible and probable*
- Differentiate between catastrophe and difficulty*
- Realize you aren't the only one*
- Anger*
- Basic anger management techniques*
- Change your focus when you leave work*
- Communication is an important process*
- Female officers*
- Institutional changes can help—but they take a long time*
- Obtaining help*
- Think and act productively*
- When and how to get help*