



Uniform Stories
with Uniform Stories Staff

5 stresses cops deal with that non-cops should know about

The incidents LEOs witness will change them on duty and off duty

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By Uniform Stories Staff

Cops are unique. Yes, there are occupations that may face similar stresses (military, firefighting, ems first responders), but the job of a police officer stands unique in its own right.

The best men and women who take on the vocation of being a police officer understand that it truly is a "calling" and not just a job. A good cop must be committed to the profession in a way that transcends the notion of punching a clock and getting a paycheck.

These same men and women will find in a matter of years, however, that the job will change them. It will change their outlook on the world, their interactions with others and in some cases their very ability to deal with others who are not in law enforcement.

They will find that once close relationships with friends and family may fade. Sometimes, that's a natural thing and other times there is simply a lack of understanding of what stresses a cop endures in their day-to-day routines.

Here are 5 stresses that cops deal with that non-cops might not realize:

1. Daily preparation for battle

People die every day. Accidents happen every day. In rare instances, tragedy unexpectedly takes the lives of thousands. However, most occupations generally assume they will go to work and come home at the end of the day.

Being a police officer requires preparation for death, daily. Officers put on bullet proof vests and carry guns for a reason: they are ready for the fight, and unfortunately not every warrior comes home. In the last 5 years, a police officer has been killed, in the line of duty, every 2-3 days. That is 727 lives lost. Cops are at war out there.

2. The cop attitude stays

Many police officers aren't warned about the change that will take place in them from the job. The "cop attitude" cannot be left at the office, either. The incidents cops experience will change them on duty and off duty. They will not sit with their backs to doors or people; they will often not carry on a conversation by looking someone in the eye because they are looking at every person coming and going. They are running a hundred scenarios of what could go potentially wrong wherever they are.

3. Life in a fishbowl

Cops are held to a higher standard. And, the oath taken by officers isn't limited to when they are wearing a uniform. Most departments have a standard of conduct that governs even off duty behavior. Violations of that standard can result in disciplinary action.

There are constant eyes on LEOs and it is often difficult to find ways to de-stress and to blow off steam as a cop. Officers are constantly aware of scrutiny waiting around every corner, yet must boldly continue to go places no one else is willing to go and do things no one else is willing to do.

As the famous quote goes, "People sleep peacefully in their beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf."

4. Front row seat to despair

It is very rare for people to call the police when everything is going well. Instead, the police arrive when dad hits mom, when mom burns her child with a cigarette, when a brother or friend has been found dead with heroin needles in their arms, when a rollover accident has taken the life of a young family, someone's privacy has been violated in a burglary or robbery, or when someone has been the victim of a scam – and the list goes on.

Seeing these things day in and day out will take a toll on any officer. Often people wonder why an officer seemed angry when they saw them, or perhaps didn't smile and wave. Well, perhaps that officer has just returned from doing CPR a newborn and now is taking a report on damage to someone's property.

It's not that the officer is cold or don't care; it's just that people don't often see what that officer sees or do what that officer does.

To be fair, police officers need to consider the same for all those we are dealing with. People call the police when they are in need and under stress. So, not everyone hates the police even though they may just seem that way, we too, haven't been through what they've been through.

5. Riding the incident rollercoaster

At any point in the tour of duty, an officer can move from trying to eat lunch to driving at high speed, running after a suspect, pointing a firearm at someone and finding themselves in a life or death decision. Maybe an officer went from a parking complaint to a child hit by a car back, then back to someone getting a ticket for shoplifting. You get the idea.

These roller coaster scenarios can affect an officer both emotionally and physically. Cops should take note and find healthy ways to keep themselves balanced.

If you see a cop friend, or loved one, behaving a little distant, there is a reason why. If you are a cop struggling with these stresses, remember your friends who are not in this field may not understand.

Communicate openly with those who are trying to help, seek to understand each other. If you are truly struggling and having a hard time overcoming the stresses of the job, please speak up to a trusted brother or sister in blue, or find another qualified resource for help.