

The Dynamics of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

With Emphasis on Police Officers Involved in a Shooting

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Introduction

Over the past several years almost all of us have heard or read about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). For many people, when they first hear the words “post traumatic stress disorder” they relate it to the American veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. This is a very true and accurate connection because our media outlets today, and for the past eight years, have been reporting on the tumultuous issues surrounding those two countries and the path the United States of America has taken to help them. The American soldier has a duty to protect our way of life in this country and to maintain the level of freedom in which we live. What about the soldier who protects the streets and communities within the borders of the United States of America?

This soldier is better known as a peace officer, police officer, state trooper, or county deputy. I am a police officer and have been for eleven years. I also served in the US military in the United States Marine Corps. Although I was never deployed to the Middle East, I have seen the effects of PTSD on police officers and I have spoken firsthand with those officers and listened with open ears and an open mind. With the permission of these officers, I have been given a chance to sit and listen to the dramatic and raw details as they shared their stories with me. It is my hope and desire by conducting this research that you and I can better understand what PTSD is and how it affects police officers after being involved in an on duty shooting. Furthermore, what we as police officers and police administrators can do to combat PTSD within our fellow officers and provide them the avenues they need to get help, but for which they seldom ask.

What is PTSD and what are some of the causes?

According to the National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, via the US Department of Veterans Affairs, PTSD is defined as an anxiety disorder that can develop after exposure to a terrifying event or ordeal in which grave physical harm occurred or was threatened. (Psychology Staff VA, 2010) The exposure to a terrifying event can be something that happened to you directly or to someone you know. The event does not have to impact you directly, but merely being in the same area and witnessing the event can have serious effects in the form of PTSD. Traumatic events that can trigger PTSD include but are not limited to:

- Violent personal assaults
 - Rape
 - Physical assaults by another person that may or may not involve a weapon
- Natural disasters
- Human-caused disasters
- Serious accidents
- Shootings
- Military combat

(Unknown, Recognizing EMT's, Firefighters or Police Officers with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, 2009)

All of the above examples can and have taken the lives of human beings. As humans, we react to these types of incidents in different ways. Because we react differently, not everyone exposed to one of these dramatic events will suffer from PTSD, nor will they react the same way. With that being said, it is extremely important to know what to look for within yourself or someone you know that may be showing symptoms of dealing with PTSD.

The job responsibilities of police officers are unique. For example, if you come home and realize that someone has broken into your home, who do you call? You call the police. If a bank is being robbed, you call the police. If you have been involved in a serious automobile accident, someone is going to dial 911 and the police along with the fire department and ambulatory service are going to respond. If your house catches on fire, you or someone else is going to dial 911 and the police and fire department are going to respond. There is a pattern here. To better understand how PTSD affects police officers, it is necessary to understand the demands placed on police officers.

For just about any kind of emergency service, the police are going to be called and are going to respond. This is one of the distinguishing characteristics between being a police officer and either a firefighter or paramedic. In no way is that statement meant to diminish the importance nor the necessity of firefighters and paramedics. They simply have unique responsibilities that police officers do not. For example, the stress of running into a burning building to save a human life, or conducting chest compressions for thirty minutes until the paramedics arrive at the emergency room. The one important responsibility we have as police officers that our fellow emergency personnel do not is the life altering, split second decision to use deadly force on another human being. To know that every day we put our uniform on may be the day I will have

to make the decision to kill someone to save a life or to even save my own life. Firefighters and paramedics do not carry that weighty responsibility.

Police officers should be well trained to deal with dangerous situations when they may have to use deadly force. As police officers, we train with our department issued weapons several times a year (depending on the department for whom you work). But no matter how much you train with your weapon at the firing range, you will never be able to duplicate the stress involved in a real life scenario where you must decide within the blink of an eye whether to shoot or not to shoot. This is not a lesson that can be taught in the classroom. The most helpful thing we can do to prepare ourselves is to learn from the officers who have been in these situations and are still alive to teach us. The mere fact they are alive to share their experiences is a blessing and something to which those of us who have never been in those situations should pay close attention.

Testimonial by Fayetteville Police Officers Ken Willyard and Chris Scherrey

On the night of June 26, 2009, at approximately 10:32 PM, Fayetteville dispatchers received a 911 call from a female named Jill Ulmer. According to Jill, her ex-boyfriend Ricky Anderson was in the parking lot of her apartment complex and was walking toward the stairs that led up to her apartment. Ricky had previously been served a protection order and was ordered by a Washington county judge not to have any contact with Jill.

As Jill began to give dispatchers additional info, two officers were being dispatched to Jill's apartment. Officers Willyard and Scherrey were the two officers assigned the call. Officer Scherrey arrived first and parked his patrol car on the east side of the apartment complex. Within a minute or two, Officer Willyard arrived and parked his patrol car further to the north of

Jill's apartment building. As Officer Willyard arrived, he said he noticed a vehicle matching the description of the car that Jill gave the dispatchers. According to Willyard, he realized the suspect was most likely still in the area and had not fled before they arrived.

As Willyard began to approach the apartment building, he heard a woman scream. He looked up to where the scream was coming and saw a door slam shut. He immediately ran to the building and ran up the stairs where he saw Scherrey trying to kick the door open. According to Scherrey, the door was very solid and was not moving at all as he kicked it over and over again. All the while they both heard a woman screaming for help. Willyard said he has heard screams before in his career as a police officer, but he had never heard a woman scream for help like he heard this woman scream. "It was a life and death scream". (Willyard, 2010) Both officers knew immediately they had to get in that apartment as soon as possible.

Willyard tried to kick the door as well and realized after just one attempt they were not going to be able to break the door in. He immediately ran over to the window and kicked it breaking the window in several pieces. After kicking the window, both officers said the screams were ear piercing. They could see a black male attacking Jill, but had a hard time actually seeing them because the apartment was fairly dark inside and as Ricky and Jill were behind a couch. Scherrey immediately drew his taser and fired it hoping to hit Ricky. Scherrey realized he missed him with the taser and heard Willyard yell, "Knife"! Willyard drew his Glock .40 caliber pistol and began firing in the direction of Ricky Anderson.

Willyard said he could see Ricky with a large knife in his hand making a stabbing motion toward the floor behind the couch where Jill was located. According to Willyard, it was extremely hard to get Ricky in his sights because he was moving so fast and only a portion of his

head was visible above the couch. Scherrey had already pulled his Glock .40 caliber pistol and was also firing in the direction of Ricky trying to shoot him so he would stop stabbing the woman. All they could hear was this woman screaming and begging for her life.

Willyard realized rather quickly his rounds were not impacting Ricky and so he aimed at the couch where he thought Ricky was and fired. Within a second or two, he did not see any more stabbing motions from Ricky nor was there any more screaming from the victim, Jill. Because Scherrey is taller than Willyard, he could see Ricky move away from Jill's body and sit on the floor. He could see Jill as she lay on the floor not moving.

Scherrey climbed through the window and was pointing his gun right at Ricky yelling at him not to move or he would shoot him. Scherrey made his way to the door and unlocked it so Willyard could come inside. Once inside they approached Ricky and realized pretty soon that it did not appear that they had shot him. Willyard said he looked over at Jill and saw that she was lying in a pool of blood. They handcuffed Ricky and he was immediately escorted out the door. As they walked out the door, other officers had just arrived and took Ricky to a patrol car in the parking lot where he was secured. Sgt. Carey Hartsfield and Willyard went back into the apartment and checked on Jill, but it was too late. She died from her wounds.

After approximately fifteen minutes had passed, both Willyard and Scherrey were in the parking lot of the apartment complex and were approached by Sgt. Hartsfield and K9 Officer Jason McDaniel. Both of these officers have been involved in previous incidents where they had to use their service weapons and ultimately shot and killed someone who was threatening their lives with a firearm. Because of their experiences having already traveled down this path, it was extremely reassuring to both Willyard and Scherrey to have them present. Hartsfield and

McDaniel were able to inform both Willyard and Scherrey what to expect over the next several hours and days regarding the departmental investigation: (1) on whether or not any policies were violated: (2) the Washington County Sheriff's Office investigation on whether or not any criminal charges would need to be filed by the county prosecutor's office.

Two days after the incident occurred, both Scherrey and Willyard were contacted by Chief of Police Greg Tabor and asked to come to the police department to meet with him. It was during that meeting Willyard and Scherrey were informed of the injuries Jill sustained during the attack by her ex-boyfriend Ricky Anderson. They were told she had suffered approximately twenty-five stab wounds and that she had a gunshot wound to her head. The chief told them the medical examiner reported the celiac artery that ran through her lower abdomen had been severed during the attack by Ricky. The severed artery was a direct cause of her death along with the gunshot wound. They were also told that if she had not suffered the gunshot wound, she would have died in the apartment due to the artery being cut. (Scherrey, 2010) (Willyard, 2010)

It should be known that no departmental policies were violated nor were any criminal charges brought against Officers Willyard and Scherrey.

As I sat and listened to these two officers share this experience with me, it was obvious they both still deal with the outcome of that night. Both officers expressed a deep sense of failure because no matter what they did, Jill was still dead and they couldn't save her. She was crying out for help and begging for her life and these two men, these two police officers, will always remember her screams.

So where do these two officers and other officers in America's police departments go from here? How do they cope with these types of situations? Are they suffering now? More

importantly, would we as fellow officers and family members pick up on the many symptoms and clues of someone struggling with post traumatic stress disorder?

What are the symptoms of PTSD?

It isn't uncommon in the law enforcement community for us to keep our feelings to ourselves. Many cops do not want to burden others with their problems. By nature, we are "fixers" and need to find solutions to not only our problems, but other people's problems as well. It's part of our job and it's one we take seriously. Police work as a whole is very stressful as significant research has proven. As numerous psychologists and researchers have documented, police work is one of the most stressful occupations in the world. (Anderson, Litzenberger, & Plecas, 2002)

When you compound the stresses of accompanying basic police officer responsibilities such as, active patrol, foot patrol, completing paperwork at the end of a twelve hour shift, investigating child abuse, fatality traffic accidents etc. then add on any stresses you may be dealing with at home and in your personal life, it is very easy to see a police officer's life inherently includes levels of stress unknown to the average person. (Karlsson & Christianson, 2003) Now granted, no one made us go down to our local city hall and fill out the police application. For some it truly is a calling; for others a sense of duty and a desire to help others draws them. We want to improve the community in which we live. But we are human and because we are human there are physical and emotional consequences for the stresses we endure and carry every day.

We already know what some of the causes are of PTSD and when you add the everyday stresses of just doing the job, an officer who has suffered through a tragic or life threatening

event can be a ticking time bomb mentally and emotionally. According to the Mayo Clinic, symptoms of PTSD fall under three categories: Intrusive memories, avoidance and numbing, and increased anxiety or emotional arousal (hyperarousal). (Mayo, 2009)

Symptoms of Intrusive Memories may include:

- Flashbacks, or reliving the traumatic event for minutes or even days at a time
- Upsetting dreams about the traumatic event

Symptoms of avoidance and emotional numbing may include:

- Trying to avoid thinking or talking about the traumatic event
- Feeling emotionally numb
- Avoiding activities you once enjoyed
- Hopelessness about the future
- Memory problems
- Trouble concentrating
- Difficulty maintaining close relationships

Symptoms of anxiety and increased emotional arousal may include:

- Irritability or anger
- Overwhelming guilt or shame
- Self-destructive behavior, such as drinking too much

- Trouble sleeping
- Being easily startled or frightened
- Hearing or seeing things that aren't there

(Mayo, 2009)

Testimonial by Fayetteville Police Officers Scott Carlton and Jason McDaniel

In February 2005, Officer Carlton was on night shift patrol working the east side of Fayetteville. At approximately 10:30 PM, Fayetteville dispatchers received a call from an alarm monitoring company advising them of an active alarm at a residence in Fayetteville. The call was dispatched to Carlton and K9 Officer Preston Oswald. At the time, Oswald was on the far west side of town finishing up another call and therefore it was going to take him some time to get to the residence. Carlton advised him he would take the call on his own and if he felt another officer was needed he would let him know.

As Carlton pulled onto the street and parked his patrol car to the north of the residence, he noticed a front porch light was on. He slowly walked towards the house and as he got closer he heard a muffled scream or yell. After hearing this, he stopped and looked toward the house and listened for anything else. After several minutes passed, he did not hear anything else so he continued to approach the house, but as he did so, he said he just felt something wasn't right. Just as he approached the front porch area, and checked the storm door to the residence he heard from inside of the house a man's voice say, "I'll kill you, you fucking bitch! I'll kill you"! Carlton said, "After hearing that, I immediately ran towards a car parked in the driveway, took

cover and asked dispatch to send more officers to my location”. As soon as he requested more officers, several advised over the radio they were on their way to Carlton’s location.

Within a few minutes, officers started arriving at the scene to assist Carlton. Officer Bryan Lindabury arrived first to assist and then K9 Officer Oswald. K9 Officer McDaniel arrived along with Sgt. John Warren and Sgt. Mike Key. Right after they arrived, Carlton informed them of what he heard as he approached the storm door. It was at this time they devised a plan on how they were going to approach the house; which officer was going to approach the house and where the remaining officers were going to be to provide cover. Within a matter of a minute or two, McDaniel stated he would go to the door along with Carlton. As they approached the front door, McDaniel shouted out, “Fayetteville Police Department”! As soon as he finished yelling, they heard a man inside the house shout, “I’ll kill everyone of you motherfuckers”! Carlton said, McDaniel immediately yelled he was getting behind the engine block while Carlton followed him.

By this time there were several officers who were maintaining positions covering the front door, including McDaniel, Carlton, and Lindabury. Just as they took their positions, they noticed a white male open the door and walk outside with a pistol grip shotgun. Everyone began shouting, “Police! Drop the gun! Police! Drop the gun now”! And as they are yelling these commands, the suspect raises the shotgun in the direction of Carlton and McDaniel. Just as he did this, shots were fired by three officers, Carlton, McDaniel, and Lindabury who fired a 12 gauge shotgun slug at the suspect. The suspect flew backwards into the storm door and slumped to the ground. He was shot several times by .40 caliber rounds and one shotgun slug. He died on the front porch of his home. (Carlton, 2010) (McDaniel, 2010)

It should be known that no departmental policies were violated nor were any criminal charges brought against Officers Carlton, McDaniel, and Lindabury.

As I continued to talk with Carlton, it was apparent that the memories of that night were very clear to him. As he continued to describe to me the details of how this shooting affected him, it was obvious he was feeling somewhat apprehensive. I noticed he took deep breaths and struggled to talk about certain things regarding the emotional toll it had on him. The hesitation in his voice was very noticeable as it was when I spoke with Officers Willyard and Scherrey.

Officer Carlton was very upfront and detailed when it came to the symptoms he suffered after the shooting. He suffered from nightmares and feelings of hopelessness about the future of his career as a police officer. Carlton had trouble sleeping and became easily startled or frightened when he would finally fall asleep. These are all symptoms of a person fighting with PTSD. These emotions and feelings went on for a year and progressively got worse. Finally, he had to go to his supervisor and broke down in tears requesting a change and help. Carlton's case is a perfect example of an officer who was suffering from PTSD.

Testimonial by Fayetteville Police Detective Dave Williams and Sgt. Shannon Gabbard

On December 2, 2009, at approximately 3:30 PM, a robbery call went out over the radio from the Fayetteville Police Department's communication center. The Arvest Bank on Garland Avenue was being robbed by a white male in a passenger car at the drive through window. Detective Dave Williams had just left from a doctor's appointment and was close by and told dispatch he would be responding. Also responding was Sgt. Shannon Gabbard and Sgt. Chris Moad. They would be the second police car to arrive at the bank.

Williams was the first on the scene and as he approached the bank it hit him that school was letting out. He knew there was an elementary school just a quarter mile down the road from the bank and the surrounding streets would be full of kids walking home and crossing streets. He saw the suspect's vehicle in the drive through and he pulled up blocking him from exiting. He got out of his unmarked Ford Crown Victoria and shouted, "Police! Police, let me see your hands"! As he yelled at the suspect, he noticed the car began to go backwards in reverse and slammed into another vehicle being driven by a woman. Just as this happened, Sgt. Gabbard and Moad arrived and pulled in the parking lot on the back side of the bank. They got out of their marked police car and ran in the direction of the suspect vehicle. As they got closer, they too had to jump out of the way as the suspect continued ramming his vehicle into the woman's vehicle behind him. Sgt. Gabbard said to me that he knew right away this was not going to be a good situation and it most likely wasn't going to end peacefully.

Williams continued to shout and yell at the suspect along with Gabbard and Moad. All three of them yelling at the top of their lungs for him to stop, but he didn't. He pulled forward and Williams took cover behind a large pillar on the front side of the drive through. By now, Sgt. Moad was on the driver side and Sgt. Gabbard was on the passenger side. Williams moved forward toward the car realizing every time the suspect rammed the car behind him, he was gradually creating more room for an escape. Williams told me as he was seeing this happen, he knew they had to stop him or someone was going to get hurt; maybe one of the kids who just got out of school up the road. They all three continued to yell at the suspect to stop. Sgt. Moad tried to reach in and grab the keys out of the ignition but to no avail. The suspect rammed his vehicle in reverse striking the woman's car for a third time. Gabbard said he could hear her screaming hysterically. Williams realized he was getting more room to escape. The suspect turned the

wheels in his direction and drove forward. Williams fired his pistol once striking the suspect in the arm. He fired three more times, striking the suspect in the chest. The driver slumped over and the car finally stopped.

Sgt. Gabbard and Sgt. Moad took the suspect out of the car and handcuffed him. They immediately began CPR. Gabbard said he was in bad shape and was choking on blood in his airway. Fayetteville firefighters and paramedics arrived within seconds and took over administering CPR. (Williams, 2010) (Gabbard, 2010)

It should be known that no departmental policies were violated nor were any criminal charges brought against Detective Williams.

Detective Williams stated that he never really lost any sleep except during the first few days. He spoke about his relationship with his girlfriend and how she was very supportive and understanding through the days and months following the shooting. His relationship with his sons is very important to him and he felt he needed to explain to them what happened and how he was doing.

This was not his first encounter with using deadly force. In March of 1999, while in the field training program, he and his field training officer were dispatched to a wooded area behind the local Salvation Army where a homeless man was armed with a pistol. As they and several other officers arrived, the suspect ran from officers deeper into the woods. Within a matter of a few minutes, the suspect stopped running and turned around to face the officers. He raised his gun to fire when Williams' field training officer fired first with a 12 gauge shotgun using 00 buck shot. Williams along with several other officers fired their .40 caliber pistols but were unsure if he actually shot the suspect.

According to Williams, one of the biggest differences between the two shootings was the amount of time spent as an officer. When the first shooting took place, he had only been working the streets for two months. When the second and most recent shooting took place, he had been a police officer for eleven years. Williams said he struggled a lot more on the first one with nervousness, loss of appetite and sleep.

The most noticeable symptom Williams realized he was dealing with after the shooting at the bank, surfaced almost six months later. During the month of July 2010, while he was on call, he responded to the hospital to investigate the death of a two year old boy. It appeared that foul play may be involved by either the father or step-mother of the little boy. As he was investigating this incident, he was also investigating the rapes and sexual assaults of several women by a man who lived in Fayetteville. The suspect allegedly drugged these women and then committed heinous sexual acts on them.

It was obvious that Williams was beginning to deal with intense stress, which was related to the types of cases he was actively investigating. Fortunately, he had supervisors, and another detective, he could rely on, talk to and confide in. His level of stress and the emotions with which he was dealing were from time to time misconstrued as a bad attitude by others within the department. This was far from the truth. (Williams, 2010)

Officers Willyard and Scherrey were dealing with different emotional stressors even though they responded to the same call. The two symptoms they feel and deal with to this day, are a sense of guilt and failure. Although they did everything right based on what they knew at the time, it still did not change the fact that a woman was dead and neither one of them was able to

save her. Neither Willyard nor Scherrey shot the suspect, even though they were completely justified in using deadly force.

My interviews with Willyard and Scherrey were conducted on different days and as individuals, not together. Both officers struggled with the fact that justice needed to be served on the suspect, Ricky Anderson. As he sat there looking up at them denying he was the suspect and that the real suspect ran out the back of the apartment. While Jill lay dead on the floor because of the actions of Anderson, they both stated they wanted to walk up to him and shoot him in the head. (Willyard, 2010) (Scherrey, 2010) Neither one of them said it while in the apartment, but both of them were thinking the exact same thing and they both expressed that feeling to me during the interview. Both officers expressed the raw emotion of failure and guilt they were feeling at that moment in time. As I sat there and listened to them, I could see pain and frustration through their facial expressions. They needed justice for Jill and for themselves. I asked each of them what they think may have happened if they were in that situation alone. Both thought it was a real possibility that they may have pulled the trigger. But there was something deep inside of them saying, “Don’t do it. It’s not worth it”.

As Willyard and Scherrey look back on the events of that night, compared to where they are today, they both realize the decision they made to restrain themselves from being consumed and persuaded by anger and rage was one of the best decisions they will most likely ever make for themselves. Jill’s family stood up for their actions within days of the incident.

The Physiology of Combat and How It Affects the Human Body

One of the more prominent authors on how the human body responds to combat is Lt. Col. Dave Grossman. In his book “On Combat”, he discusses in great detail what the body is doing

and the effects on different bodily functions as stress and adrenaline increase during deadly encounters. Furthermore, Grossman writes about “Perceptual Distortions” in combat and violent encounters.

During my interview with Officer Willyard, he described to me what he heard as he fired his weapon at Ricky Anderson. He vividly remembers Officer Scherrey firing his weapon within a foot of him and all he heard were muffled bangs. According to Grossman, this is known as auditory exclusion. (Grossman, 2008) Because of the heightened sense of urgency and the rush of adrenaline, Willyard’s hearing was affected and therefore, the shots fired were drastically diminished.

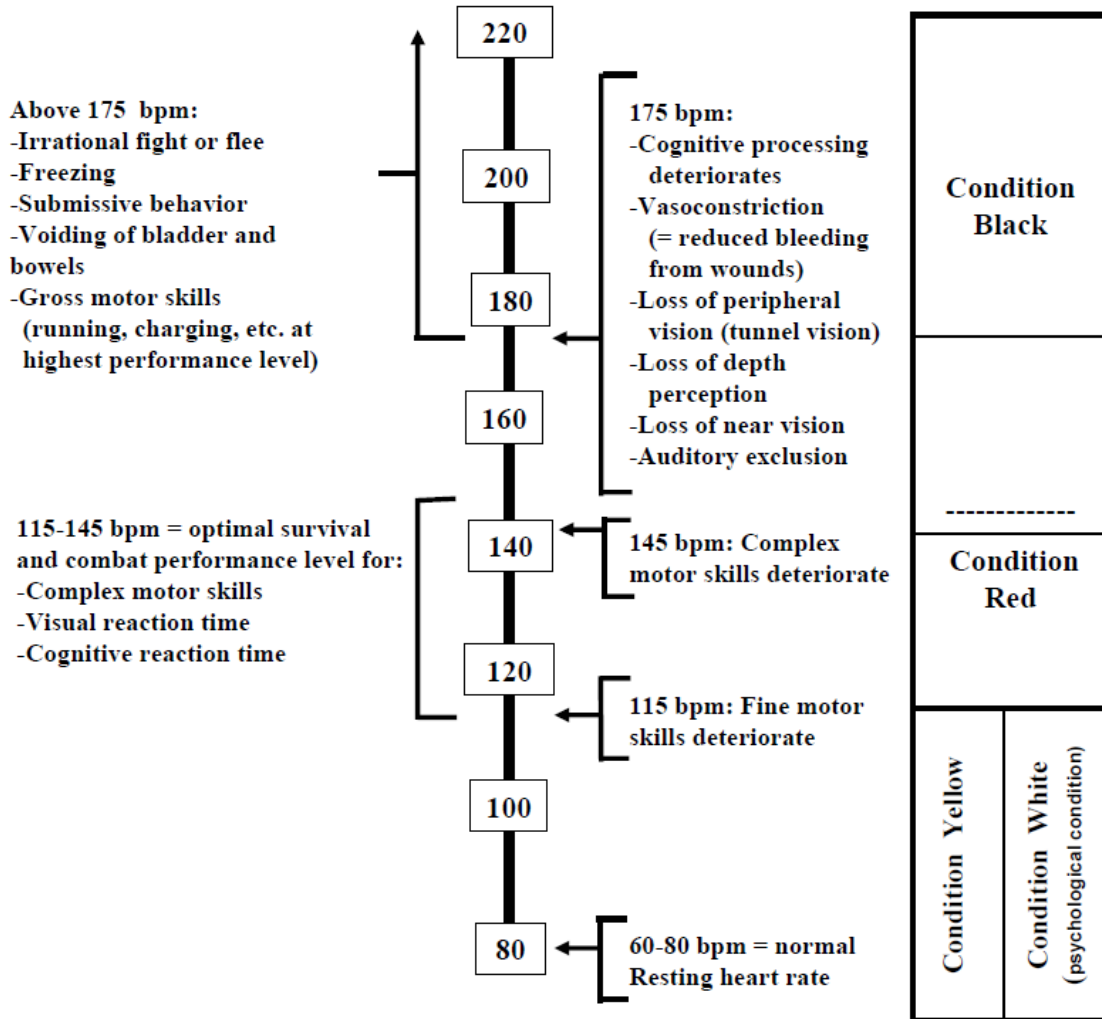
Officer Willyard and Officer Carlton both described seeing things occur in slow motion. Both of these officers were involved in two different shootings, but both of them specifically remembered seeing things move slower than normal. Willyard described seeing what he thought was a ricocheted bullet flying back in his direction at a slower rate than he knows is normally acceptable within his own mind. (Willyard, 2010) Carlton remembered seeing the blast from Officer Lindabury’s shotgun move through the air in front of the porch light at a very slow speed. (Carlton, 2010) This also is a perceptual distortion that is common among police officers who have been involved in shootings.

Please review the two charts on the following pages regarding heart rate and perceptual distortions. The information listed in the charts should be read with the understanding these are documented effects of hormonal or fear induced heart rate increases during a possible deadly altercation.

Heart Rate

Beats Per Minute

(Copyright 1997 Siddle & Grossman)



EFFECTS OF HORMONAL OR FEAR INDUCED HEART RATE INCREASE

Notes:

1- These data are for hormonal or fear induced heart rate increases resulting from sympathetic nervous system arousal. Exercise induced increases will not have the same effect.

2- Hormonal induced performance and strength increases can achieve 100% of potential max within 10 seconds, but drop 55% after 30 seconds, 35% after 60 seconds, and 31% after 90 seconds. It takes a minimum of 3 minutes of rest to "recharge" the system.

3- Any extended period of relaxation after intense sympathetic nervous system arousal can result in a parasympathetic backlash, with significant drops in energy level, heart rate and blood pressure. This can manifest itself as normal shock symptoms (dizziness, nausea and/or vomiting, paleness, clammy skin) and/or profound exhaustion.

(Grossman, 2008)

Perceptual Distortions in Combat

From *Deadly Force Encounters* by Dr. Alexis Artwohl & Loren Christensen

Based on Survey of 141 Officers

- ❖ **85% Diminished Sound (auditory exclusion)**
- ❖ **16% Intensified Sounds**

- ❖ **80% Tunnel Vision**

- ❖ **74% Automatic Pilot**
 (“Scared Speechless?”)

- ❖ **72% Heightened Visual Clarity**

- ❖ **65% Slow Motion Time**
- ❖ **07% Temporary Paralysis**

- ❖ **51% Memory Loss for Parts of the Event**
- ❖ **47% Memory Loss for Some of Your Actions**
 (“Perseveration?”)

- ❖ **40% Dissociation (detachment)**
- ❖ **26% Intrusive Distracting Thoughts**
- ❖ **22% Memory Distortions (“Perceptual Set?”)**
 (Role of fear and past associations)
 (Role of videotaping)
- ❖ **16% Fast Motion Time**

For additional info on perceptual distortions in combat, *Into The Kill Zone* by
Dr. David A. Klinger is highly recommended.

www.killology.com

(Grossman, 2008)

The Healing Process

Jill's father and mother requested that both Willyard and Scherrey come to the funeral if they were up to it. The Ulmer family requested that they sit with them at the grave side ceremony. After the trial, they invited Willyard and his family and Scherrey and his family to an Ulmer family bbq. Over and over they wanted to be sure that these two officers and the rest of the Fayetteville Police Department and community knew they supported them. They appreciated everything these two men did that night on June 26, 2009. This was a profound step in the healing process for both officers. (Willyard, 2010) (Scherrey, 2010)

Carlton's road to healing began with the support from fellow officers. Especially those officers who have been in his shoes and could relate to what he was going through. The chief of police showed up on the scene of the shooting to make sure they were ok. He said that was something that meant a lot to him. The change from night shift to morning shift was when the real positive changes began to take place. It was a completely different atmosphere. For those officers who have worked both shifts, it will be easier to understand. Carlton never lost his sense of remaining vigilant while on day shift. (Carlton, 2010)

Fayetteville Police Officer Gary Crews is the most senior officer within the police department who is currently working a patrol shift. He has been a member of the department's Emergency Response Team (ERT) and is currently the lead sniper. Several years ago, he was forced to shoot and kill a man who was armed with a deer rifle during a standoff in Elkins, Arkansas. Gary's interview about that day was an eye opener. Gary shot the suspect with a Remington 308 outfitted with a sniper scope. This was a whole new experience for anyone in our department because it was an up close and personal image of a man being killed. It truly

affected Gary. He, like several of the other officers mentioned in this report, found that relying on their fellow officers who have been down this road was a tremendous support. (Crews, 2010)

The Fayetteville Police Department has mandatory Critical Incident Stress Debriefings after any time an officer has been involved in a shooting. Typically these debriefings take place within 24 to 72 hours of the incident. Whether the suspect was killed or not, it is a mandatory process that they must attend. But after that, it is up to the officer to seek out additional help through counseling if they need it. As mentioned before, police work is predominantly a masculine and machismo environment. Very rarely will an officer go to his supervisor and ask for help. Very rarely will you hear an officer say, “I need to speak to someone about verbally abusing my family members, drinking too much alcohol, not sleeping, not eating, waking up with constant nightmares about the shooting I was in seven months ago”. Officers typically don’t ask for help because they are afraid of how it will look. They are afraid it might negatively affect them come time for promotion. Some are afraid that they will be reassigned and will no longer work with the men and women they have trusted with their lives. But that is the point. You have trusted them with your life, but can they trust you with theirs.

Officer Gary Crews suggested that any time a Fayetteville Police Officer is involved in a shooting; he or she should be given a mandatory one week off and mandated to get counseling through the Employee Assistance Program for at least five to ten sessions. (Crews, 2010) This is a brilliant idea. Not only do the officers need this path of healing, but so do the families. It is easy for us to forget about them. They have been there from the beginning and are there when we come home each day. How are the wives, sons, daughters, mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters being treated by their loved one when they come home? They are usually the ones we dump our emotions and anger on. They are even more confused than the officer on how to deal

with PTSD. They don't fully understand the stresses that come with being a police officer. The family support network is something we need to rely on and to make it work, the police department administrators and city hall administrators need to be sure they have a game plan in place to assist not only the officer, but their families as well.

Conclusion

I have given examples of three different incidents where police officers were forced to use their duty weapons to save another person's life or to save their own. All of them are vastly different in their own right, but the outcome was the same. They drew their weapons and were forced to shoot. All of the officers I spoke with have suffered at least one symptom or more detailed in this research. Many of them were able to heal on their own because of a strong family unit, their level of cop maturity was greater than others, or because their personality was one that they were able to just cope better. Either way, they all suffered from at least one symptom. All of the officers felt the Fayetteville Police Department is on the right track when it comes to assisting them with dealing with PTSD. Subsequently, they all felt the Fayetteville Police Department can do a better job too. Like Officer Crews mentioned, making officers take a mandatory week off plus attend required counseling sessions. Such action would take the stigma and apprehension away of asking for help.

Every single officer I spoke with said they would go to counseling.

After meeting with these officers, it is apparent to me that policies and procedures must be developed to protect our police officers, and their families. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in law enforcement should be a very important concern for police department administrators. We need to start doing a better job of taking care of our own.



*I have been where you fear to go...
I have seen what you fear to see...
I have done what you fear to do...
All these things I've done for you.*

*I am the one you lean upon...
The one you cast your scorn upon...
The one you bring your troubles to...
All these people I've been for you.*

*The one you ask to stand apart...
The one you feel should have no heart...
The one you call the man in blue...
But I am human just like you.*

*And through the years I've come to see...
That I'm not what you ask of me...
So take this badge and take this gun...
Will you take it? Will anyone?*

*And when you watch a person die...
And hear a battered baby cry...
Then so you think that you can be
All those things you ask of me...?*

"Tears Of A Cop" - author unknown

(Unknown Author.)

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