

Though it has been nearly 25 years since this book has been written, many of the issues remain the same...

*John M. Madonna*

# TREATING POLICE STRESS


The Work and the Words of Peer Counselors

*By*

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*and*

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guidance  
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suicides  
surveys  
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## FOREWORD

Police service is among the most paradoxical of professions. At one moment an officer is part of a thin line of defense against the evil of the world. He or she must vigorously suppress the "softer" emotions and present oneself as controlled, hard, and an impregnable fortress for those who depend upon the shield. In the next moment, the very same officer tenderly holds a distressed child or shows great reverence to a weak old man who fought an enemy army across the sea so many years ago. Law enforcement is often hours of boredom interrupted periodically by moments of sheer terror. It is the painfully slow work of meticulous puzzle-building. It is also the supercharged pace of an urban battlefield or a high-speed chase.

Each human contact leaves an indelible mark on an officer's psyche. Some contacts leave only the slightest scratch, barely perceptible. Other contacts uplift and inspire and are memorable; they help to fill in the dents and dings of work behind the badge. They polish the character of the officer. They can strengthen the law enforcement officer's spirit. There are also the contacts that wound and mangle and scar the soul. After the deepest scars, personalities can change, relationships are altered, control is lost, sleep is disturbed, performance is diminished, and health is threatened. Law enforcement officers can teeter on the brink of professional and personal destruction. Some are lost to the profession, to their families, and to themselves.

Stepping back from the edge of ruin is not a simple task. It is difficult to let out the emotions that one has worked so hard to keep in check. It is difficult to admit that one's fortress has been penetrated. A guide is often necessary to ensure that an officer on the edge of doom takes the right steps toward recovery and adaptive functioning.

Not every guide is trusted. Credibility is absolutely essential. Education alone will not be sufficient. No one really cares what degrees a person has or where they obtained those degrees. The real-world experience of having "been there" in the streets is honored and expected. Law enforcement personnel will not talk to just anybody about their inner pain. Trust is given only to credible resources that have proven their value to the officer.



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