

# OFFICER DOWN:

## Portrait of a Police Suicide

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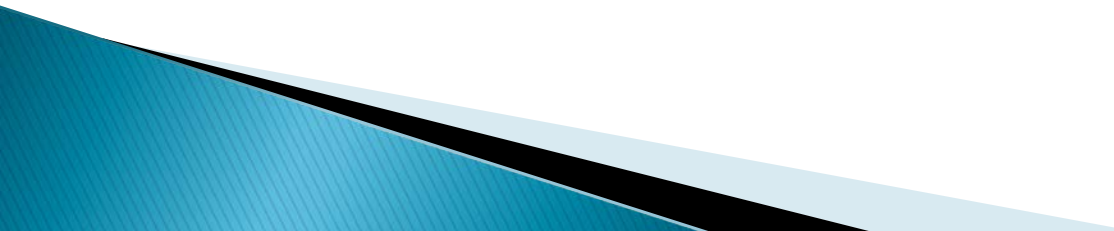
# What are the numbers???

- ▶ National POLICE Suicide Foundation previously reported an average of ~~450~~ Police Suicides every year



<http://www.psf.org>

# Police Suicide Rates

- ▶ **22.99 per 100,000** Loo (2003)  
meta-analysis
  - ▶ **14.9 per 100,000** Marzuk et al (2002)  
New York City Police Officers
  - ▶ **18.1 per 100,000** Aamodt & Stalnaker (2001)  
National study
  - ▶ **25 per 100,000** Lindsay & Lester (2001)  
Northeastern Police Department
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# What are the numbers???

National Surveillance of  
Police Suicide Study (NSOPS)  
reports established that  
141 police suicides  
occurred during 2008 and  
143 occurred in 2009

O'Hara, Violanti  
Based on Web Surveillance of National Data



**2012**  
Line of Duty Deaths

As of March 8, 2012

22

Law Enforcement Officers have lost their  
lives in the line of duty this year

**2011**  
Line of Duty Deaths

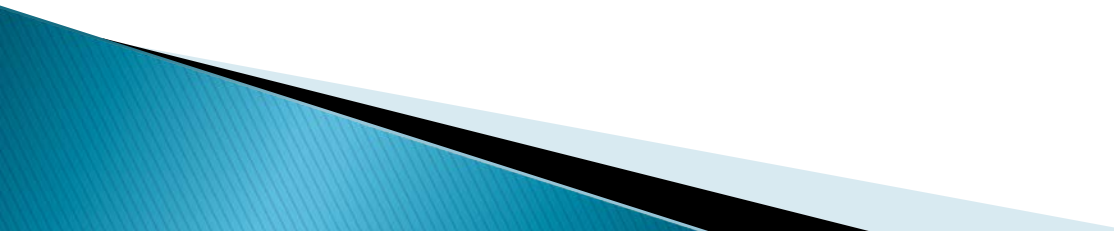
As of December 31, 2011

164

Law Enforcement Officers have lost their  
lives in the line of duty this year



▶ **EVERY YEAR MORE  
POLICE OFFICERS DIE  
BY THEIR OWN HAND  
THAN BY FELONIOUS  
ASSAULT**

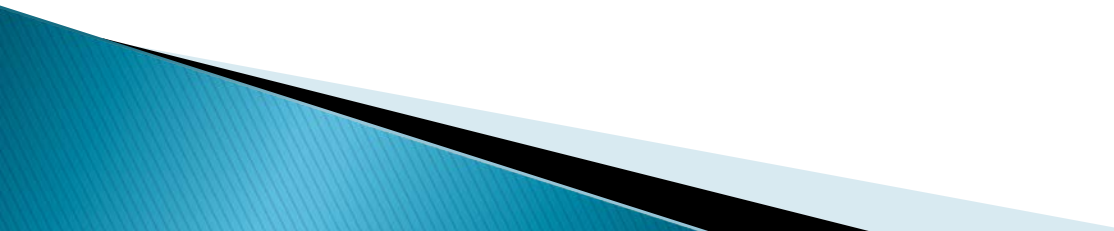


# Warning Signs

- ▶ Preoccupation with death
- ▶ Emotional distance
- ▶ Risk taking
- ▶ Increased alcohol use
- ▶ Unexpectedly contacting people that they have been estranged from
- ▶ Giving away treasured possessions
- ▶ Recent devastating loss
- ▶ Noticeable change in personality/mood
- ▶ Change in personal appearance

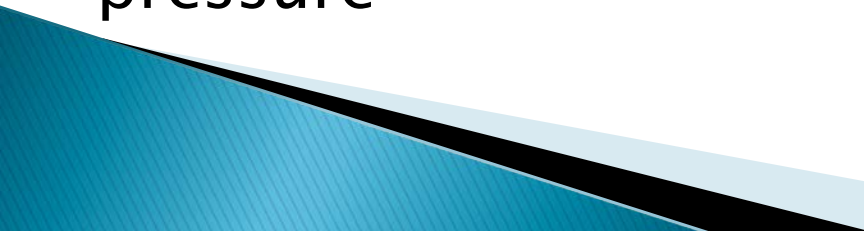


# Risk Factors for Police Suicide

- ▶ PTSD
  - ▶ Depression
  - ▶ Alcohol Abuse
  - ▶ Job Stress/Burnout
  - ▶ Relationship Problems
  - ▶ Availability of Firearms
  - ▶ Mistrust of Mental Health System
  - ▶ Inability to separate from the “COP” identity
  - ▶ Perception that needing and/or asking for help implies weakness
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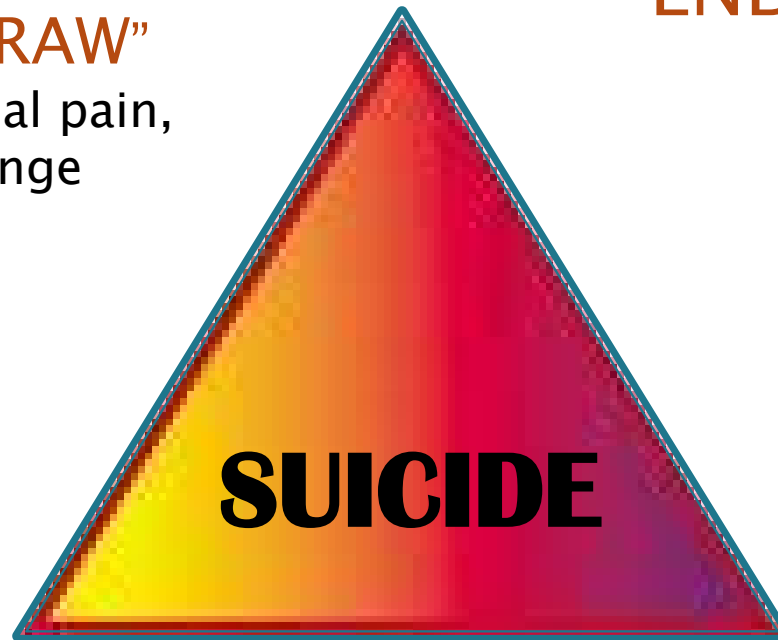


# Police Stress is Multidimensional

- ▶ Constant exposure to death/ violence/ aggression/ tragedy
  - ▶ Hypervigilance
  - ▶ **Shift work/overtime/ weekends/ holidays**
  - ▶ Pressure from spouse/ significant other/ kids
  - ▶ Public scrutiny
  - ▶ Departmental pressure
  - ▶ Self-imposed criticism
  - ▶ Frustration with Judicial system
  - ▶ Same crime, same people,
  - ▶ Pendulum swing from boredom to adrenaline dump and back again
  - ▶ Lack of proper equipment/ resources
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DESIRE/motivating  
factor  
**“FINAL STRAW”**  
mental/physical pain,  
loss, revenge

TARGET/object of desire  
**END TO PAIN,  
DEATH**



OPPORTUNITY/favorable forming of circumstances  
**LOSS OF AMBIVALENCE**  
Plan, lethality, access to means


# Barriers to Seeking Help

- ▶ Confidentiality concerns
- ▶ Stigma associated with mental illness and seeking professional help
- ▶ Possibility of job reassignment and/or loss of firearm privileges
- ▶ Some departments require reporting of all prescription medications (i.e. Antidepressants) thereby “letting the cat out of the bag”
- ▶ “Officers help people, they don’t need help themselves”



# CONSEQUENCES

for the ones left behind

- Ripple effect
  - Funeral
  - Estrangement from family/friends/coworkers
  - Financial difficulties
  - PTSD (witnesses, children)
  - Complicated grief
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# Peer supporters

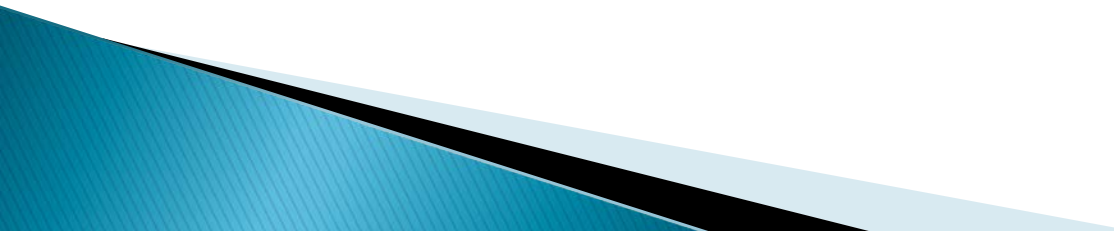
Comfort factor

Trust

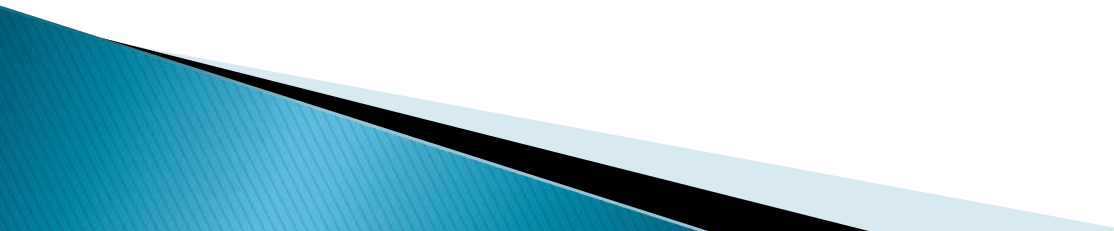
Proximity

Share same experiences, know what it is like to work there.

Understand that sometimes all a person needs to do is vent in a **safe environment** and have their feelings **normalized** before the problem gets too large for them to handle.



# Critical Incident Stress Management

- ▶ Early intervention – get to officers when the incident is fresh in their mind.
  - ▶ Allows participants to talk about thoughts, emotions and physical symptoms that they have been experiencing since the critical incident in a safe and confidential environment.
  - ▶ Allows groups to “fill in the blanks” and have a more comprehensive view of the incident.
  - ▶ Provides reassurance that what they are experiencing are “normal reactions to an abnormal event”
  - ▶ Team members assess the need for follow up and provide participants with information about typical stress reactions.
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# SUICIDE AWARENESS TRAINING

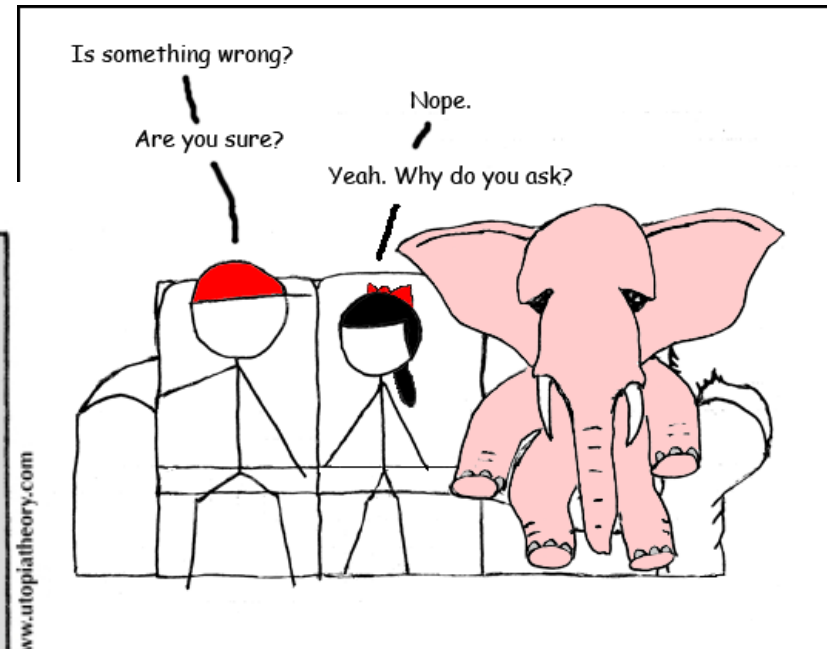
## ► Address the “elephant in the room”

- Roll play talking to people about suicide
- Reduce stigma

~ UTOPIA THEORY ~

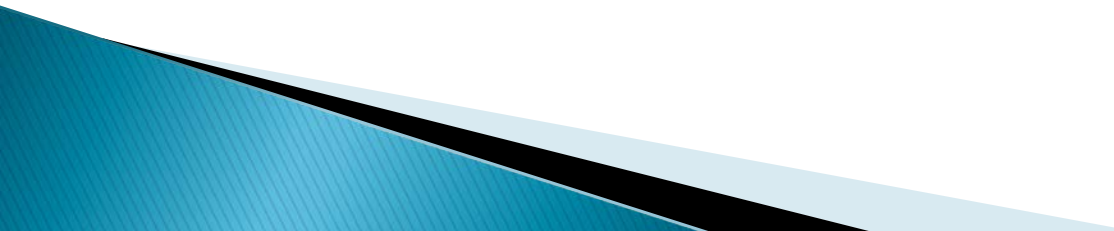


"Yeah, I see him too...But nobody wants to talk about it!"



Know the local resources available, take the time to familiarize yourself with them

# Take care of YOU!

- ▶ Be available for others, but always remember to take care of yourself!
  - ▶ Know your limits
  - ▶ Cultivate your support system
    - Family, friends, spiritual
  - ▶ Engage in healthy activities that allow you to separate from the stress
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**LYONS INVESTIGATIONS & CONSULTING**

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**FIRE ORIGIN & CAUSE / FIRE LOSS ANALYSIS**

**WORK PLACE STRESS MANAGEMENT**

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