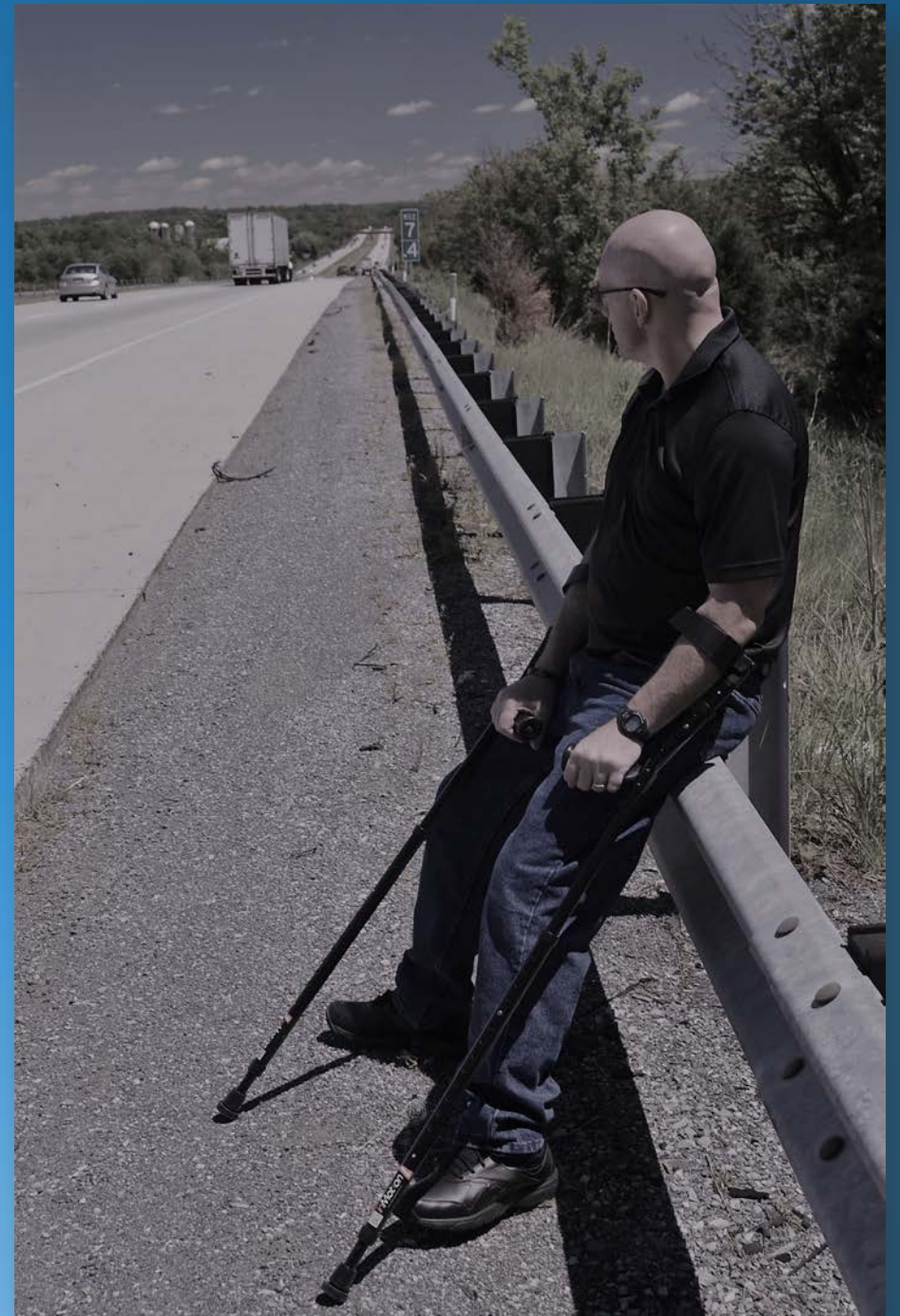


The Benefits of Peer Support

SERGEANT (Ret.) ROBERT E. BEMIS

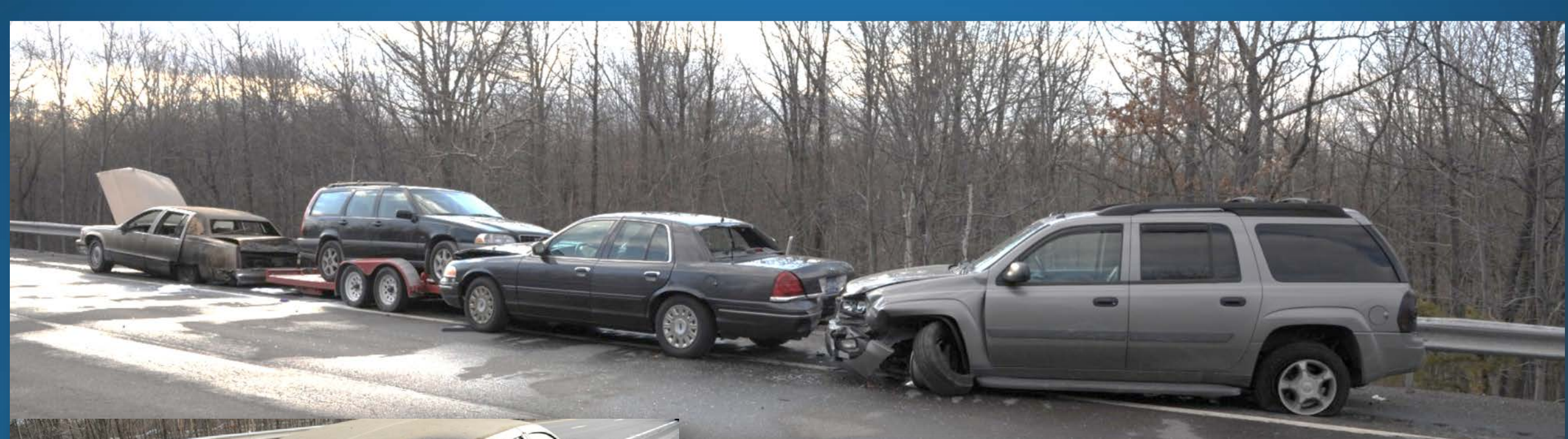
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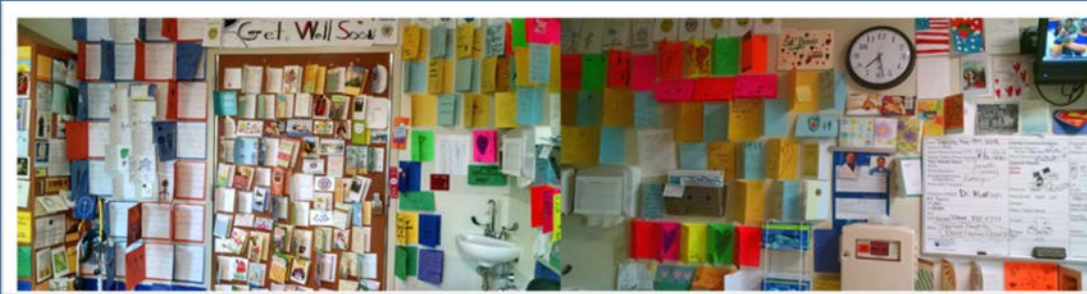


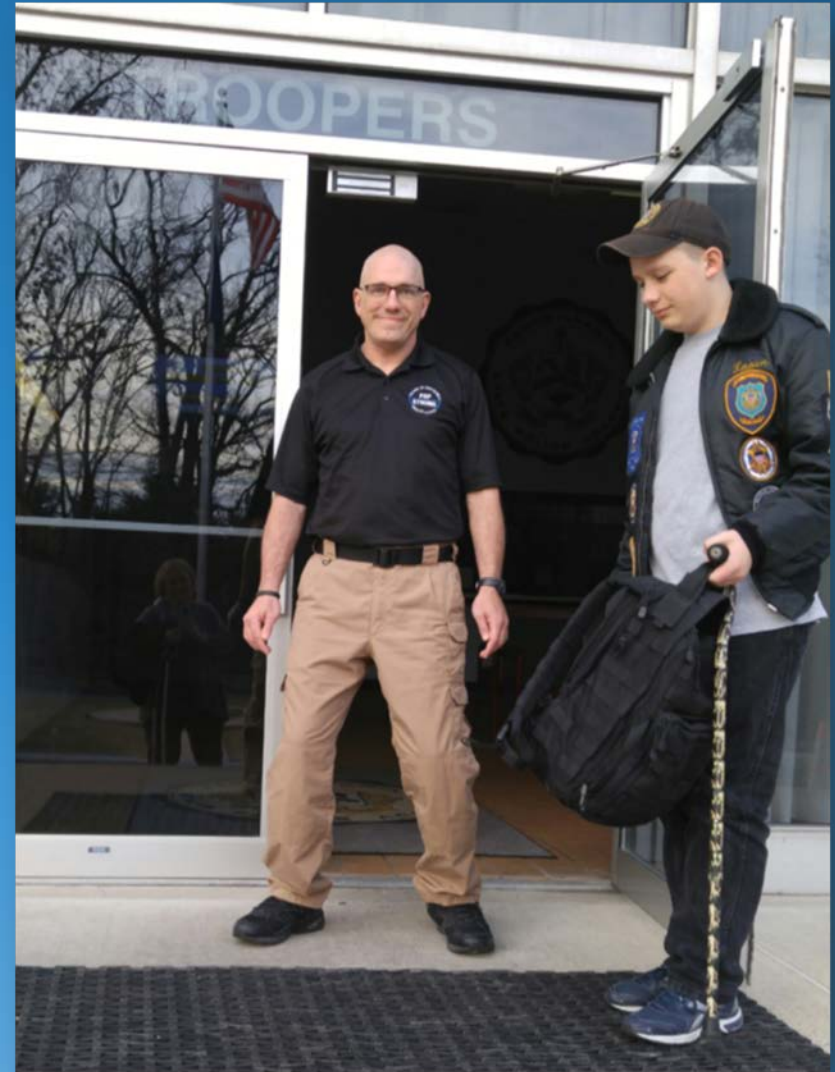
Public safety personnel may experience between 400 and 600 traumatic events in their career, while the average person experiences three to four in their lifetime.

Over time, exposure to high-stress scenarios and/or threat of personal injury can begin take a toll.



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Stress and posttraumatic stress and substance use disorders may affect first responders at higher rates, and studies suggest that first responders may be more likely to think about or die by suicide than the general public.

Responder culture can play a role in whether those in need reach out for help or even recognize that the symptoms they are dealing with may be something requiring care and treatment. Responders also deal with the same stigma that makes it hard for people in many communities to seek help. They may think asking for help will make them seem not able to do their job, when asking for help is actually a sign of resilience.

Resilience Strategies

Practice Self-Care

Peer Support

Professional Help

Self Care Tips

- Get Regular Exercise.
- Eat healthy - Stay Hydrated. Watch caffeine and alcohol intake.
- Make sleep a priority.
- Relaxing Activities - Music, Reading, Nature Walks – Low-Stress Stuff
- Set Goals and Priorities – Reflect on and Appreciate Accomplishments. Practice Gratitude.
Focus on Positivity.
- Stay Connected with Friends or Family Members.

What is Peer Support?

Peer support is a type of support that involves people sharing their experiences and providing each other with support and guidance. A peer support advocate can be someone with the lived experience of recovery from a mental health condition, substance use disorder, or both.

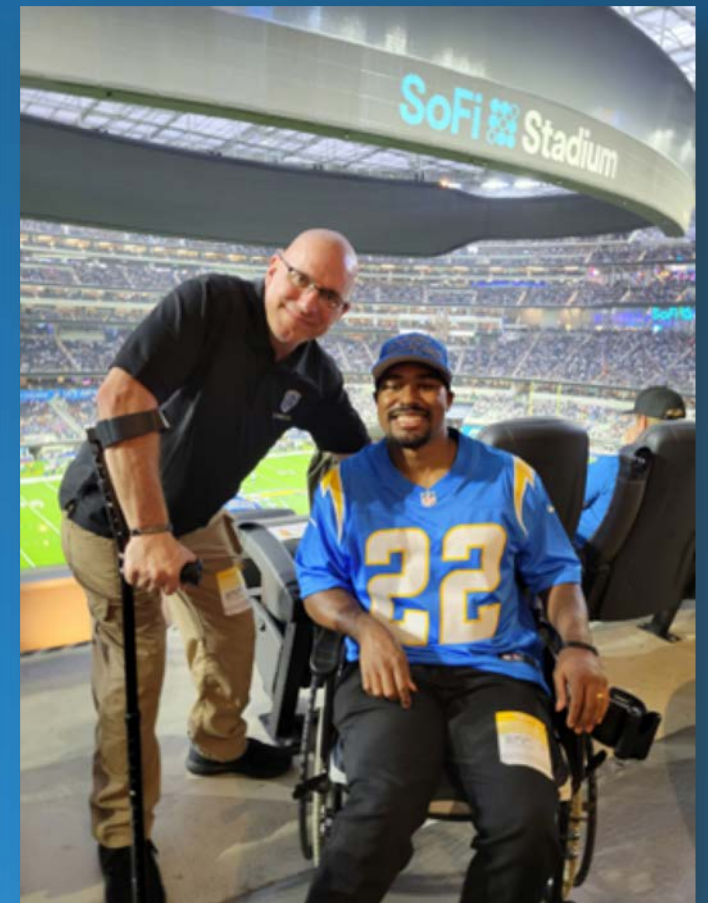
Peer Advocates provide support to others experiencing similar challenges. They provide non-clinical, strengths-based support and are “experientially credentialed” by their own recovery journey. This common experience creates a strong basis for trust and hope.

Benefits of a Peer Team Approach

- Feeling Less Isolated and More Understood
- Sharing Information
- Emotional Support in a “Safe Environment”
- Reducing Anxiety, Depression and Negativity
- Learning from Other’s Experiences and Perspectives
- Empowerment to Solve Own Problems
- Inexpensive Alternative

Necessities and Obstacles for a Peer Team

- Assess Workplace Culture and attitudes regarding mental health and Peer Support. Assistance available from agency Employee Assistance Program (EAP)?
- Agency Support? “Buy-in” is crucial. Working Group to establish guidelines, policy and procedures
- Peer Team Selection – Application process? Belief in team objectives
- Peer Support Training – Necessary and Critical to Success
- Understanding of local resources and services and build relationships with culturally competent clinicians who understand first responder culture



THE
WOUNDED BLUE

Never Forgotten. Never Alone.

You don't need Peer Training to be a friend...

WAYS TO ASSIST AN INJURED RESPONDER OR THEIR FAMILY

- Help with housework (mow, rake, shovel, plow) *Don't offer...just do!*
- Offer to run to the store (Rx, groceries)
- Organize meal drops
- Take children to school or other activities
- Help with pets
- Caregiver breaks
- Observe anniversaries – Birthdays – “Alive Day”
- Spend time (movies, dinner, etc.)
- Holidays especially tough

“How we walk with the wounded speaks louder than how we sit with the great.”

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