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... Meet the New FBI ...

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Director William S. Sessions meets Julien C. Gallet, the new President of the FBI National Academy Associates.

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The Boss as Victim Stress and the Police Manager

"Stress that an agency administrator faces is no less a problem that must be effectively handled than any other organizational situation which he or she confronts."

By
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Within the last few years, the phenomenon of "police stress" has captured the interest of the law enforcement community, and to some degree, the imagination of the public. In the media, television shows like "Hill Street Blues" reflect the pressures and tensions in the daily life of a law enforcement officer; movies, with stars like Clint Eastwood and Paul Newman, glorify "the job" while depicting to a small degree the stress and strains experienced by the street officer or the hero detective.

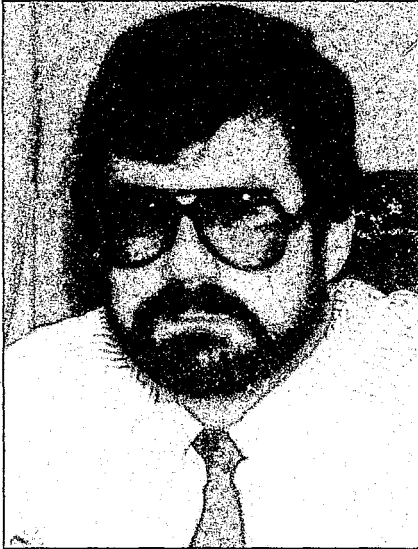
With the contemporary emphasis on stress in the work place, many departments have turned their attention to the physiological and emotional hazards of police work¹ and have begun developing stress management programs to combat the problem.² For the most part, however, the primary focus of such programs has been the street officer.

A number of reasons have brought about this direction. The line law enforcement officer is, of course, the most visible representative and comprises the largest segment of the law enforcement community. Police associations and unions, normally representing entry-level positions, have raised the level of concern for the officers whom they represent. Supervisors and managers have recognized that continuing stress on the officer charged with carrying out the day-to-day operations of the department can, without resolution, decrease efficiency and effectiveness of the department and increase both community complaints and internal dissatisfaction.

Sadly, however, such programs have not been as effectively expanded to others within the law enforcement family. Civilian workers, particularly dispatchers, have long been ignored in the development of stress management

programs; yet, at the same time, they experience stress which is just as traumatic, although perhaps not directly as life-threatening, as that of sworn officers. Specialty units, including homicide and SWAT, have likewise been overlooked in the development of programs which adequately and directly meet their unique needs.

There is another group within the law enforcement organization which has been traditionally ignored in dealing with the issue of police stress — the police manager. For too long, the "bosses" have taken a "back seat" in identifying their sources of stress, isolating practices by which they may cause or experience stress, recognizing warning signs within themselves and in their employees, and developing techniques to better handle stress. Although other researchers have focused on management stress in other areas,³ this article attempts to recognize



Chief Sewell

sources and signs of stress and offer a plan of action for the police manager.

Defining Stress

Since "stress" is a buzzword of the 1980's and has been used in a number of ways, it may be best to first define the term as it is applied in this article. Some experts in psychology have broadly applied the term to "anything which places an extra demand on you,"⁴ while others have limited it to "environmental situations which, to the extent they are perceived or experienced, require behavioral adjustment."⁵ Everyday working terms may offer the most concise and commonly understood definitions — pressure, tension, fear, frustration, worry, conflict, change. Each of these create a mental picture of the emotional and physiological state "stress" brings about in people.

Stress can, of course, be good. Some degree of physical and emotional response, such as that experienced by athletes, is necessary to "psych up" someone to do a job well. The attention of this article, however, will focus on the negative aspects of stress, negative effects which occur where demands of the working environment exceed existing abilities, where clear obstacles exist in fulfilling strong needs or values, and where fear and frustration affect an individual. The focus will be on maladaptive effects of stress — those occurring when an individual's stress response is elicited too frequently or sustained for too long and where recovery to a relaxed state is a slow process.

It is generally accepted that a person's perception of any situation is based upon experience and background. Consequently, what is stress to one person may not be to another. The real impact on the individual depends on the duration, intensity, and fre-

quency of the stress-causing event or situation, as he or she perceives it, as well as pre-stress preparation of the individual. Thus, for managers to effectively handle job stress, they must first understand and then mentally prepare to deal with the problem.

Sources of Stress for Managers

Preliminary research has already begun to identify sources of stress on the police manager. Kroes, Hurrell, and Margolis, for instance, found that "many police administrators and supervisors were experiencing stress problems that were different from those experienced by patrolmen, yet equally menacing."⁶ Conducting interviews of 12 captains and 13 lieutenants on the Cincinnati Police Department, they found that these administrators sensed their major stress as coming from administration (e.g., higher echelon support), equipment/manpower (e.g., adequacy of equipment of manpower), community relations (e.g., public apathy/ignorance and citizen complaints/demands), and courts (e.g., court scheduling problems and judicial leniency). Work ambiguity and work overload were their major concerns, with community relations, relations with superiors and subordinates, and work conflict also classified as "bothersome." Additionally, several of these administrators identified "taking disciplinary actions against subordinates" and "new administrative assignments" as specific stressors which concerned them. Finally, the researchers concluded:

"The most significant stressors seemed to be a result of the administrator being in the position of the 'man in the middle' while complex demands were being made upon him from the community, his superiors, and subordinates."⁷

"...for managers to effectively handle job stress, they must first understand and then mentally prepare to deal with the problem."

In their study of 20 police chiefs and sheriffs at a National Executive Development Institute, Hillgren, Bond, and Jones separated sources of stress into inherent line (events encountered as part of the routine job function) and administrative organization (problems resulting from the police agency or the criminal justice system) stressors. In this study, police executives were randomly divided into three groups and instructed "to consensually identify stressors believed to be affecting their line personnel and which they perceived to weigh heavily on them as chief administrators."⁸

Two of the findings in this study were particularly important. First, as other researchers have indicated, the source of much police officer stress, even for the "bosses," begins within the police agency and its policies and procedures. Second, there is a "marked similarity between the sources of stress identified by police officers for themselves, and those identified by chief administrators for themselves,"⁹ a finding similar to that in the research of Kroes, Margolis, and Hurrell. With these studies as a starting point, a number of specific sources of stress for police administrators can be identified.

Dependence on Others

The position of the law enforcement officer often requires extreme independence and the ability to rely on oneself; at the most common level, one depends on only one's partner for backup and support. In the position of administrator, however, one must learn to depend on subordinates and support staff to accomplish the defined mission. Especially in large departments, it is mentally and physically impossible for senior administrators to know and do

all; they must instead develop a dependence on others which runs contrary to their basic training as a police officer. Perhaps Harry Truman's commentary on the Presidency best captures the essence of being a police chief: "I sit here all day trying to persuade people to do the things they ought to have sense enough to do without my persuading them . . . That's all the powers of the President amounts to!"

Concerns for Personnel and Their Needs

In performing his/her daily activities, the street officer and the detective are each concerned about equipment, supplies, and support which directly and individually pertain to them. While they may feel some ties with other officers, the concern over the needs of others is not a major priority. For the administrator, the focus changes. Instead of being concerned over one shotgun, one case, one patrol vehicle, and one partner, the administrator finds himself concerned for the wellbeing and resource needs of the multiple officers under his command.

Lack of Resources

In many governmental agencies, recent years have seen the era of "cut-back management." For many of us, departments are now operated with increased demands, increasing street crime, increasing citizen concerns, and fewer personnel and fiscal resources. The lack of available resources, including salary and benefits, and competition with other governmental agencies over limited revenue obviously hamper the ability of the administrator to do the job and can cause a significant degree of stress.

Increased Community Demands and Pressures

Again, the last several years have seen an increase in demands for police activities, particularly as concern about real or perceived crime in the streets increases. Especially in our larger cities, community pressure to assure professionalization of police, prevent discriminatory and abusive practices, and provide a prompt and complete response to citizens have increased pressures on and expectations directed toward administrators.

Impact of the External Bureaucracy

The police manager, especially the agency's chief administrator, must also react to controls, regulations, demands, and even paperwork imposed by outside sources, such as courts, prosecutors, or State or Federal government, which are difficult to influence and often impossible to predict. The many mandates from outside the department often place the police manager in a position which allows little flexibility of response and discourages managerial creativity and productivity.

Political Nature of the Job

The very nature of law enforcement is, of course, political. Police officers at all levels always have been placed in positions where they must deal with competing demands within a complex political environment. For the administrator, the political nature of the job is magnified by the number of high profile cases, number and power of special interest groups, and number of members of the appropriate governing body. Especially where administrators are not protected by civil service status, the political nature of the job can, of course, result in termination.

"The important first step in successfully dealing with managerial stress is recognizing of the problem."

Sedentary Nature of the Job

Law enforcement is, through our perception, an action-oriented profession. Street officers particularly perceive themselves to be the "glory guys," able to take quick and effective action against the criminal hordes. For the administrator promoted through the ranks, the sedentary nature of the job takes its toll. Instead of being a radio car operator, one becomes a "desk jockey," increasingly handling papers and less able to respond in the physical manner expected of the professional and which discharges the adrenalin inherent to stressful situations. The result is heart attack, ulcers, and other diseases associated with a lack of cardiovascular exercise and a stressful vocation.

Lack of Preparation for the Job

Traditionally, in law enforcement, the greatest degree of professional development has been devoted to street officers and investigators, preparing them to deal with the day-to-day operational tasks which they must confront. Especially in small departments, little effort has been given to prepare administrators and supervisors for the demands of their positions, and too many administrators still perceive themselves as "top cops" instead of modern managers. The position of police administrator requires a significant degree of training and flexibility to meet changing job requirements. Without effective preparation and development, administrators, like their operational counterparts, are ineffective and incapable of meeting the demands placed upon them.

Conflict with Employee Organizations

Over the last 25 years, there has been a significant increase in the num-

ber of employee organizations representing law enforcement officers as their collective bargaining units. Because of unfair management activities in the past and the lack of career protection for law officers, these organizations have grown in strength and power as they have proved their effectiveness in an agency. Especially for new administrators, there is often a conflict between the executive acting as an agent of change and the organization which tries to protect the status quo, too often in the mistaken belief that the chief will again become too powerful. The conflict within and between ranks can become a major source of stress.

Difficulty of Effecting Lasting Change

A major frustration for administrators is their perception of their inability to effect lasting change in an organization. With the limited tenure of police administrators and with the demands of the political environment, change is slow to occur and the actual effect may not be known for years. By then, the administrator's frustrations have built, and too often, he has left for other horizons. Although a problem within many professions, the long lead time necessary to put changes into effect is especially disappointing for law enforcement administrators whose prior training and experience has developed in them a mindset on the need to be decisive and to act quickly.

Separation from the Subculture

For most officers, the involvement with and camaraderie of one's peers are critical parts of the law enforcement experience. The ability to associate off duty with one who has shared similar

life experiences and who generally views the profession in a similar manner contributes to the maintenance of the police subculture. As one progresses upward in the administrative hierarchy, however, the number of one's direct peers is reduced. Because of the responsibilities associated with their rank and assignment, many managers find fewer officers with whom they can comfortably and in confidence share their experiences, concerns, emotions, and problems. Likewise, comrades from a manager's days in patrol or investigations may be reticent to discuss fully their opinions of administrative actions or to include managers in their social or even professional activities. The lack of someone to whom you can talk — a sudden limitation on the "brotherhood of the badge" — can be one of the greatest shocks of promotion.

Dealing with the Manager's Stress

The important first step in successfully dealing with managerial stress is recognizing of the problem. Many managers fail to notice tension, pressure, and anxiety; others accept that it is part of the way of life for a police manager. In either case, stress can psychologically, and more likely, physiologically take its toll. To begin to confront stress effectively, one must, as in dealing with any administrative problem, acknowledge its existence and effect and then begin to develop a program of stress management.

Second, the development of a unique problem of stress resolution and management for administrators is critical. While many administrators have hurried to improve the capability of their officers to deal with the stress of law enforcement, only a few have recognized the need for their own stress

management programs. Such programs should include components which emphasize the importance of proper diet and nutrition, physical fitness and exercise, and psychological fitness in handling the stress of police management.¹⁰

As part of the program of stress management, it is important that an administrator learn to use leisure activities to relieve stress. Recreational outlets, including sports, hobbies, and social functions, are alternatives to the stressful life of a manager. Periods of rest and relaxation, including regular vacations, are imperative to allow the body an opportunity to recharge, preparing itself for stress in the days to come.

Third, preparation for management positions is as critical a step in professional development as is the preparation of investigators and technicians. The training of supervisors and managers, whether in a classroom or through on-the-job experience, should begin prior to an officer's promotion. Creativity in training, including the use of temporary administrative duty assignments, intradepartmental management internships, and interdepartmental exchange programs, can offer new, and perhaps, more effective methods of career development and preparation for future managers.

Fourth, perhaps one of the greatest frustrations experienced by any manager is the feeling that he or she has no control over time. Time management is, in effect, no more than successful management of the manager by himself. While many of the demands upon a manager's time may be imposed by others, the majority of time constraints and demands come from within ourselves. Successful time management simply requires a manager to organize, prioritize, and structure his

time in order to more effectively and efficiently get things done.¹¹

Finally, as one progresses up through the ranks, it becomes critical to develop new peer groups with whom one can discuss problems and share confidences. The problems one manager must confront have often been experienced by others, and it is helpful to be able to draw from that experience and to learn from their successes and failures. While not a complete substitute for the camaraderie of "working cops," professional associations at the local, State, and national levels offer police administrators an opportunity for communication, discussion, and fellowship which they may otherwise lack.

Summary

In summary, then, a police manager, especially the chief administrator of an agency, is as much victim of stress as the officers under his or her command. While many of the stressors of line personnel may be physical in nature, the manager's stress translates into organizational pressures, administrative frustrations, psychological tension and fear, and nonviolent interpersonal conflict. Yet, the results of either can be deadly, and diseases of the body and mind strike boss and street cop equally and as quick.

Much administrative attention in recent years has been devoted to enabling the line officer to better handle the pressure of the street. With this training, with physical activity on the street which allows for the discharge of emotions, and with improved selection procedures, personnel in the lower ranks seem increasingly able to handle line-of-duty stress.

It is time to devote the same time, efforts, and energies to the resolution of stress experienced by police administrators. Effective management re-

quires the ability to anticipate, understand, and control organizational and community problems. Stress that an agency administrator faces is no less a problem that must be effectively handled than any other organizational situation which he or she confronts.

Footnotes

¹See, for example, A. Lad Burgin, "The Management of Stress in Policing," *Police Chief*, vol. 45, No. 4, 1978, pp. 53-54; James D. Sewell, "Police Stress," *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, vol. 50, No. 4, April 1981, pp. 7-11; Katherine W. Ellison and John L. Genz, *Stress and the Police Officer* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1983).

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⁴Robert Veninga and James P. Spradley, *The Work Stress Connection: How to Cope with Job Burnout* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1982), p. 16.

⁵Herbert Benson and Robert L. Allen, "How Much Stress Is to Much," *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 58, No. 5, 1980, p. 87.

⁶William H. Kroes, Joseph J. Hurrell, and Bruce Margolis, "Job Stress in Police Administrators," *Journal of Police Science and Administration*, vol. 2, No. 4, 1974, p. 381.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 287.

⁸James S. Hillgren, Rebekah Bond, and Sue Jones, "Primary Stressors in Police Administration and Law Enforcement," *Journal of Police Science and Administration*, vol. 4, No. 4, 1976, p. 447.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰For suggestions on effective programs, see, for example, Harry Levinson, *Executive Stress* (New York: Mentor Executive Library, 1975); Alfred Goodloe, Jane Bensahel, and John Kelly, *Managing Yourself: How to Control Emotion, Stress, and Time* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1984); Executive Health Examiners, *Stress Management for the Executive* (New York: Berkley Books, 1985); James D. Sewell, "Stress Management for the Police Manager," *The Florida Police Chief*, vol. 12, No. 3, 1986, pp. 56-65; James T. Chandler, "The Demoted Police Executive," *Law and Order*, vol. 33, No. 8, 1985, pp. 29-31.

¹¹R. Alec MacKenzie, *The Time Trap* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975) is one of the classic works on successful time management.