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Toward an Understanding of Stress

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INTRODUCTION

While this paper is concerned with the stress experienced by those in policing, I view many elements of police stress as basically the same as stress of people in general. Everything said here about police stress (with the exception of certain specific job related statements) could as correctly be said about all people. In fact, to reduce the tendency to look at police as being different from others, it would be appropriate to translate "human being" for "policeman" whenever it occurs. It is hoped that this approach adds a dimension not covered by other papers.

TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF STRESS

The most parsimonious thing that can be said about stress is that it is different things to different people. This is true both from theoretical points of view as well as from the personal experience of stress. Stress has been studied from many theoretical bases, all of which rest on the idiosyncracies of the researcher. From my point of view, based on my experiences, I am not prepared to reject any of the proposed notions. I believe that "all of the above are true." But I also believe that stress is more than these parts.

My Experience of Stress

As I have participated in some stress research, experienced some stress myself, been the stimulus for others to experience stress, and have helped others work on their stress in therapy. I have been increasingly aware that I was not "understanding" stress and what it means to the individual person. This became more apparent as I have been formulating this paper, and as I began to realize that the outcome was going to be far different than I originally had expected. Finally, I became aware of the source of my discomfort... my stress, if you will...in understanding stress. Suddenly I had the feeling that so much of what I was reading was dealing with symptoms, with outward expression of the internal experience of stress. An that somehow these dealing with the "symptom" left something out for me. I became more and more dissatisfied with my work. I thought and read some more. Sure enough, time after time, concern was expressed for the effect that the "personality" of the individual had in the experience of stress.

I asked, what in the personality determines, or affects, the experience of stress? Why do some experience stress and others not? Even more important, why do many of us who "know" about stress still experience stress? Why do those of us who are Type A and who know about Type A and stress and medical complications still insist in behaving in Type A ways? Why is it more

important to kill ourselves than to really "understand"? Why don't we, or can't we, change our behaviors? Why don't we eliminate stress for ourselves and for others? The answer seems to have something to do with one's personality.

What is there about the personality that causes (pre-determines, predisposes) some people to experience stress more than others? Experiences last year with some of my clients raised some issues related to these. Frequently, I use behavior modification procedures, such as Wolpe's progressive relaxation, with clients seeking help in anxiety reduction. However, several of my clients became more tense during the relaxation. Further talk with them revealed that there were some "personality" factors that were interfering with the relaxation procedure, some internal experiences that short-circuited the relaxation and increased the amount of stress felt.

In some cases we were able to identify these factors, which until that time had been largely unconscious to the individual, and then to proceed with the relaxation. This "uncovering and understanding" was typically a stressful experience in and of itself. One factor which repeatedly arose was the fact that the uncovering and experiencing of the dreaded thoughts and fearful feelings which the individual had tried to keep hidden was not nearly so painful (stressful) as had been anticipated, and that the "understanding" of these had reduced the original anxiety that they had experienced and for which they had sought help, or made it possible for them to then engage in relaxation training. Other clients were not able (did not want to, did not hurt enough, were too afraid of the buried material) to "understand" their block, and decided that they would rather leave therapy and just live with the discomfort.

My explanation for this second type of person is that they glimpsed the feared personal conflict and the imagined, anticipated consequences of uncovering it and felt that changing their behavior was far more anxiety producing than just living with "it", pretending "it" didn't exist, trying to ignore "it", working on the symptoms, or taking medication. So they "stiffened their upper lip", kept busy, worked harder, drank more, etc., etc. Or sometimes they continued in therapy working on other problems: career decisions, school achievement, work, insomnia, problems with the children...on and on. And they wondered why they didn't feel any better after therapy was over. It is like going to the doctor for treatment of a toothache when you really have a broken leg.

The stressful environments noted by many writers are typically those which might be experienced as stressful by almost everyone. What is the difference between a person who gets himself out of a stressful environment and one who does not? What is the difference between a person who continually seeks out stressful environments and one who does not? Do some people carry stress around with them, always looking for some hook to hang it on?

At what point does eustress (good stress according to Selye (26)) end and stress (distress) begin? If stress is an inescapable and necessary part of life, and if one must experience some stress if he is to push for and achieve certain goals, at what point does stress become debilitating and produce problems?

If sources of stress are failures, losses, status comparisons, personal limitations, guilt, lack of meaning in life, avoidance of facing reality, pressures, competition, marriage, social change, lack of communication, lack of participation, decisions about one's life, irratic changes, bureaucratic structures, overload, ambiguity, lack of social support, lack of skill, why are we all not crushed with stress reactions (strain according to French & Caplan, 1972).

If the increase in stress related medical and psychological disorders is to be taken as evidence, then the majority of us are experiencing too much stress. And the effects may hit us all at some future point in our most vulnerable-psychic-system.

It occurs to me that stress might be of four types: intra-individual stress, that is experiences in the innerself, stemming from thoughts, feelings, fears of the individual; inter-individual stress, stress occurring when there is tension between individuals; stress between the organization and the individual; and, stress that is a relationship between the individual and the environment.

This paper is concerned with stress of the first type because it is this stress which, I believe, is frequently at the root of the other types. If an individual has not come to grips with his internal stresses then the stresses caused by these other sources tends to be compounded. The degree to which the individual handles these basic fears will affect the degree of stress he feels in other stress situations. The ways he has coped with these inner stresses will affect the ways he reacts to the other sources of stress and the degree of reaction he experiences.

Theoretical Background

Theories of stress have varied greatly in their basic approaches as well as in their definitions of stress. In general, stress is said to occur when a person perceives that he is unable to cope with the demands made upon him and when the consequences of this inability to cope are threatening. Persumably the individual can alter the state of stress by avoiding the consequences, fulfulling the demands, or altering the perception of demands, of his capabilities, and/or of the consequences.

Theoretical approaches to understanding stress include those primarily concerned with the antecedent conditions (stimuli) or environmental conditions; those concerned with the state of the organism produced by the stressing condition; those concerned with the mediating events between the stimulus and the condition; and those which propose more of a transactional concept referring to the stimulus as the stress and to the resultant condition as the strain. This definition also specifies that the stress may be continual and cumulative, and that strain may occur at some point when the build-up is too great and exceeds the organism's tolerance level, or that the strain may result from a more discrete event.

Some conceptualizations of stress have focused on the physiological reactions to stress: changes in the GSR, heart rate, respiration, blood pressure, muscle tension. Selye has proposed a biochemical model based on the definition of stress as a "state manifested by a specific syndrome which consists of all the nonspecifically induced changes within a biological

system." The syndrome is described as the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS), a three state process: the alarm state during which a general mobilization occurs; the resistance stage which is characterized by a set of internal responses that stimulate tissue defense; and exhaustion, which occurs if the stress continues to bombard the organism despite these responses. The organism may collapse or die trying to defend itself. This general response occurs regardless of the stressor. Selye has identified organ changes resulting from prolonged stress (25).

Physiological changes thought to be the result of reactions to stress include cardiovascular disorders, ulcerative colitis, and dermatitis. This psychosomatic theory of stress is based on the premise that tensions and strains occurring in one system of the body (psychological) often have pathological consequences for other (physiological) bodily systems. These physiological consequences are thought to occur when responses to provoking circumstances are inappropriate or when the tensions or conflicts are handled in an indirect way without confronting the source.

Lazarus has noted that there are several concerns in the field of psychological stress needing resolution. They pertain to the identification of conditions producing stress and individual differences in the stress reaction and in coping behavior (14).

Problems with these definitions occur primarily because of the problems of measuring stress and of predicting what types of stress reactions will occur in what situations for which people.

In general, these theories of stress typically include some references to the personality characteristics or thought processes which influence the experience of stress, however these characteristics are not specified. Lazarus and others (14) have identified differences in cognitive styles between those who are copers and avoiders. Engle offers a definition of psychological stress which implies these processes or characteristics: "Psychological stress refers to all processes, whether orginating in the external environment or within the person, which impose a demand or requirement upon the organism the resolution or handling of which requires....activity of the mental apparatus before any other system is involved or activated." The result of these processes has been called tension...or anxiety (19).

This tension is brought about by conflicts and stimulates certain emergency rememdies on the part of the ego to relieve the tension. The ego may stimulate action to alter the situation, to remove the threat, to fill painful need, to arrange a compromise, or to otherwise deal with the situation in a way to reduce external and internal tension. These actions such as the mastering of problems, achieving a goal, or averting threats, all require energy. Always there is a price for reducing tension and maintaining the equilibirium, and it is expedient to pay the lowest price possible to keep the cost of living as low as possible. This price we call stress. The effect is a stress reaction or strain.

Menninger (19) discusses several normal regulatory devices for coping with the emergencies of everyday life: reassurances of touch, rhythm, sound, speech, food and food substitutes (smoking and chewing gum), alcoholic beverages and other self-medications, self-dicipline, laughing, crying, and cursing,

boasting, sleeping, talking out, thinking through, working off, acting to change, pointless overactivity, daydreaming, dreaming, minor accidents or mismanagements, reaction formation, counterphobic reactions, and physiological activities (yawning, frequent imitations, itching, etc.). He stresses that these are normal and useful and can reduce tension and enable the life style to continue virtually uninterrupted.

Tensions which are reduced by one of these regulatory devices result in a minimal degree of disorganization or disequilibrium. More severe or long-lasting tensions which are not reducible in these ways may result if the source of the tension is not eliminated/reduced. Menninger suggests that tension build up follows a 5-step process. In the first step the individual is diorganized; nervous; tensions have increased; and the ego recognized a greater than average upsurge of anger, fear, and other emotions betraying the arousal of aggressive impulses. This state may result in greater than average amounts of repression, suppression, emotionalism, overactivity, worrying (obsessive thinking), compensation, denial, and somatic discomforts and minor dysfuncitons, including sexual dysfunctions. These defensive reappraisals enable a person to psychologically redefine a threatening situation as nonthreatening and thus reduce or eleminate the stress.

These are symptoms indicating that problems exist and that help is needed. There are conflicts and problems buried deep within the individual which could be resolved if brought to the surface; but until this occurs they seek expression in some substitute way, either psychologically and/or physically. This state can be transitional and quickly reversible, if the original problem is solved. The state may worsen if ignored, or the physiological symptoms can further exhaust the individual.

At the second level there is a slight but definite detachment of the person from his environment and he looses some of his reality-testing ability. Work, play, productivity, and social intercourse are typically impaired to some extent, but this may be covered by a facade and no one knows the difference. A work level may be maintained which impresses the world as adequate or even superior, but this is achieved at great inner cost. As the person withdraws, his normal sources of energy, stimulation, nourishment, new information and correct bearing are diminished with resultant difficulties in coping with life. The real source of conflict, as well as the meaning of his coping devices, remains unconscious.

During this time, the individual experiences discomfort: anxiety, mild depression, a sense that things are not right, comfortable or pleasant. Often there is a gnawing sense of failure, or uselessness, of incompetence, of being a great disappointment to oneself and others. Joy in working diminishes. Guilt, fears, ridiculous notions increase. In general, the person become more neurotic. The individual may cope in a variety of ways. He may block the aggressive and other dangerous impulses of the unconscious by extreme repression and dissociation, which might be noted by fainting, phobias, counterphobias, and fantasies. Counterphobic reactions (against fear, failure, impotence) might be identifiable by fool-hardiness, bravado, recklessness, a pathological boldness. At this level, the individual is experiencing an increase in tension and aggressive impulses. An attack on the source of stress is too dangerous, or forbidden by the superego, and no substitute object is available for a simple

external displacement. The individual seems to have no alternative but to take out his aggression and guilt upon himself. This displacement to bodily pro-cesses seems to be the most "economical" because it sacrifices only a part of the body for the whole. These reactions are externally and internally directed aggressive acts and have connections with long forgotten experiences of child-hood.

In addition, at this level, the conflicts are frequently transformed from aggressive ones to socially and personally acceptable ones. The aggres-sion is disguised, but it is not dissipated. Rituals, compulsions, obessional thinking occur. Sexual impulses may appear in the form of fire-setting, klep-tomania, addictive gambling, reckless car driving, and physical violence, as well as aggressive sexual acts which harm the partner. Socially accepted labels for these types of maladjustments are "sissy, miser, braggart, bully, worrier, fussbudget, liar." Other maladjusted persons may possess inadequate, infantile, negativistic, withdrawn, or narcissistic personalities, or are overly generous, friendly, enthusiastic persons whose moods shift easily.

At the third stage of dysfunction, the survival measures taken by the ego begin to fail and the aggression is no longer directed inward, but is directed toward the environment. Justifications for this violence come in the form of "destruction of evil," self-defense, "clean up the world." Aggression against animals, either by children or adults, may emerge. Projections and displace-ment, suspiciousness, hypersensitiveness and over-reaction to minor incidents are indications that such devices are being used. Such devices used minimally may offer temporary benefit, but by definition, they are a departure from reality and their overabuse may result in a more fixed, chronic paranoid life view in which one is sour, skeptical, suspicious, cnynical, bitter, grouchy or hostile with self justifying fantasies.

Other individuals may become overly active, over-alert. They talk too much, go too fast, sleep too little, and seem to overly react to everything to the point of being highly annoying or amusingly troublesome. Their impaired judgement is apparent to everyone, including themselves.

At the fourth level, the attempts to control the energy utilized at the other levels no longer works. There are more severe blow-ups, temper tantrums; life become more difficult. Menninger notes that people who develop these more severe symptoms of disintegration, have made other attempts, perhaps in child-hood, to hold the line with the normal emergency devices. But at this time, these unresolved feelings appear to "suddenly" erupt; but in reality, the early life ego vulnerabilities are now no longer controllable and burst into full view.

At this level, the loss of control which is so feared by the ego becomes more apparent. The facade of trying to live up to everyone's expectations is no longer possible. This facade may conceal suffering, feelings of in-competence, aggression, shame, joy, hate. It is no longer possible to be all things to all people at the expense of being nothing to one's self. In spite of the fears of being made known to others and seen as unlovable and unaccept-able one cannot continue not doing so. The facade is crumbling. The individual may become manic, depressed, schizophrenic, or paranoid. Attempts to maintain equilibrium and organization fail. At this level the unconscious determination to die may occur.

The Experience of Stress

How do we escape? Or escape with as low a cost as possible? It seems that we all are a potential stress reaction waiting to happen. We don't happen as long as life continues at a level that is copable and does not present too many demands too quickly for behavior that we feel we cannot provide. We are extremely resistant creatures and can suffer great damage before we reach exhaustion. In fact, many of our behaviors to stave off fear (stress) are the ones which society values in a productive, caring, working, contributing person. But these behaviors only mask the real panic we feel and may actually hasten the onset of exhaustion.

The trigger of a stress reaction (the straw that breaks the camel's back) may be the overload or underload condition, or perhaps it is the experience which is most representative (symbolic) of the unresolved, hidden, fearful situations of our past.

An intriguing hypothesis has to do with the notion that we may be able to cope with difficult situation after difficult situation with little apparent effect, but "break" at that one which appears to be of lesser magnitude, but which in reality represents to us the fears and inadequacies that we can least admit to ourselves. It is this symbolic representativeness which unconsciously motivates our behavior and results in stress reactions.

Otherwise, why is it that some people work well in a situation objectively identified as "role ambiguity" and others flounder helplessly? Why do some seek a "boss" to tell them what to do, while others rebel at the slightest hint of boss, and others have to be boss? Why do some insist on having open communication with superiors and others tremble at the mention that such face-to-face interaction may be required?

Indeed, why do some people always directly define and attack a stressor directly? Why are some unable to face it directly, but must instead defensively reappraise it and utilize a defense mechanism to cope with it. And why do some experience an emotional reaction and/or a physiological stress response?

Why indeed? It appears that such reactions are the result of past learning, past experiences, unresolved past conflicts, that continue to motivate our behavior unbeknowst to us. And we label it as "the way we are," that is my personality."

Those unresolved conflicts that keep us from knowing what motivates us and what controls our behavior, also may partially determine our stress points. Behavior learned in childhood to escape or avoid unpleasant situations may continue, producing more stress because of the internal discomfort resulting from anxiety created by the avoidance. For example, stomach disorders may have been an acceptable way of escaping the undesirable conflicts of taking responsibility, giving a speech at school, or going somewhere new, so we learn this behavior as a way to cope with the stress situations and continue to use it to avoid coming into contact and "understanding" what it really was that we were trying to escape in the first place. Or we work hard, we make all A's, advance rapidly in our job, keep a clean house, a clean desk, or beautiful yard as a way to prove something to ourselves, to escape from the fear that we really aren't very good, very acceptable, very desirable.

169

So conflicts and fears and unknowns and symptoms and methods of coping and escape get wound up together, and we try to escape, but we can't. Because we are really afraid to escape.

The medicine seems worse than the illness. So flight and avoidance continue. But the inner pain grows. And somehow we suffer the consequences.

How to break this cycle?

Somehow it has to do with "meeting the enemy and knowing it is you", but meeting it anyway. And finding out that the meeting was not as bad as we thought.

It is experiencing the fear of knowing ourselves, of risking the feeling that we are different, that we are unacceptable. It is facing up to the fact that if we are dependent upon the approval from others in order to "feel good about ourselves" that we will always be seeking approval. When we finally understand that we must accept ourselves and give ourselves the approval we seek and require that we break the cycle.

In contrast to Selye's notion that we should "Earn our neighbor's love"(26), I suggest that we emphasize the "as thyself" part of "love thy neighbor as "thyself." Loving oneself requires that we accept our once forbidden impulses and thoughts, see them realistically, and not deny or run from them. It requires that we develop the inner feeling of being "okay," of being acceptable, or being a worthwhile human being.

This experience is expressed by the Yaqui Indian, Don Juan to Carlos Castenada in another way (4:79-83). He speaks of the process of "becoming a man of knowledge," of "seeing," and specified the enemies, or barriers, in this process. He notes that when a man begins to learn, he is never clear about his objectives, that as he learns, he finds out that understanding himself, and the world, and life is not what he had orginally thought. He becomes confused and afraid. Fear, then, is the first enemy. He says that a man must defy his fear; must be fully afraid, yet not stop his learning about himself. If he continues in spite of Fear, Fear retreats, and it is conquered. He feel more confident and able to understand himself. He has attained clarity of mind and "can anticipate the new steps of learning and a sharp clarity surrounds everything." However, because the person thinks he understands and can do everything, he may stumble because this is a make-believe power, and thus his second enemy, clarity of mind. He must learn how to use this understanding; he must learn how and when to be patient, or to rush, and how not to fumble. If he does not learn this lesson, he may become a brave warrior or a clown. He will have understanding, but he will no longer develop. He must learn how to use this clarity of mind, this understanding, and see that it is only a point before his eyes; this will be true power. He then is invincible; he can do whatever he pleases. But power is also the third enemy. If he has no command over himself, is blinded by power, or misuses it, he becomes a cruel capricious man. To overcome power, to use it wisely, "he must keep himself in line at all times, handling carefully and faithfully all that he has learned."

By this time man will be at the end of his journey of learning, says Don Juan, and suddenly come upon old age, his last enemy, whom he cannot defeat, but only fight away. He must slough off his tiredness and live his fate through, not let old age cut him down into a feeble old creature.

This is the process of "loving oneself," of dealing with the inner tensions and fear which increase the stresses experienced from others, from organizations, and from the environment.

This requires overcoming the fear that Don Juan spoke about, a looking at oneself, at those "terrible" things hidden from view that cause anxiety when approached and which extract much energy in avoiding. If we were able as individuals and as organizations to "be up front with ourselves," we would not find it necessary to utilize defensive reappraisals or anxiety reactions, including physiological, and psychosomatic reactions to these unacknowledged and feared stressors.

This process requires that "to thine ownself be true and it follows as the night does the day, that thou shalt not be false to any man."

This calls for a complete restructuring of society. A freedom and openness, and acceptance of ourselves and of people as people. Not a fearful defensiveness against those parts of us which make us human, but an understanding of the thoughts, experiences, fears and conflicts, so that true self control can begin.

The Nature of Police Stress

In the recent past, the magnitude of stress problems has resulted in considerable more concern on the part of people in general for the effects of stress on people. Everyone is affected. So why, it is asked, be so concerned about police? Do they experience more stress than anyone else? At this point, there does not appear to be sufficient data to answer this question.

However, this does not seem to be the primary question. The more important question is what are the sources of stress which do exist for policemen and what are the effects of these stresses on police and citizens in general? And how can these be reduced/eliminated?

It appears that police are becoming more concerned about job stress, even though they may not have labeled it as such. The increase in police unions are, in part an attempt to improve working conditions which should help to alleviate some of their stress. Unless the police themselves become concerned about job stresses, I doubt that anything social scientists do will make much difference.

One reason that police may be slow to recognize the effects of stress on them is because it has been taken as "part of the job." The myth has been that "stress is a part of the job; if you can't take the heat, get out of the kitchen." The assumption here is that the "real men" can take it; the "others" can't.

For some men this attitude was encouragement and enabled them to become habituated to normal fears of policing, and may have been a positive experience. It may have helped them to "stiffen" their upper lip and learn to live with somewhat stressing conditions. However, I feel, that this attitude encouraged society to continually add new responsibilities and potential stress situations without any attempt to alleviate those stressing conditions already existing. Always, there was the exception that "you will cope!"

A consequence of this "taking the heat" was the development of a cult of "supermen," who can do anything. Anytime there is a dangerous assignment a policeman is called, because he can handle it. It was not until just a few years ago, probably when I started working with police that it really occurred to me that policemen must experience fear just like anyone else. It is difficult to imagine my perceptions being that different from other people. If this is so, then society is helping perpetuate the superman myth and is, in part, responsible for the resulting stress.

How does a man who is repeatedly told that stress is a part of his job cope his anxiety when he is beginning to reach the point of too much stress? The fear of reaching that point exponentially increases the stress already being experienced. The fear of not being "superman" make it impossible to be fully "man."

Parallel to the recognition by police that stressors exist and that they can do things to reduce/eliminate them has been the increased feeling by the public that the damaging consequences of police stress may also affect them. The police may not experience a greater incidence of stress or more severe stress, but the potential negative consequences of it affect society in general more than stress from most other occupational groups. This has spurred many to call for better selection and training procedures, even more technology, to improve the quality of policing.

It occurs to me that the social change activities of the sixties which brought police into the spotlight so frequently are part of the reason that concern has been directed toward police. Many of the police reactions which were criticized were the result of police stress: the result of these unresolved fears and conflicts. Some over-reactions which appeared to be angry, hostile acts, were really defensive reappraisals to mask the internal conflict, generated by new, strange activities that appeared to be a threat to the American way of life. Also they desired to "do their best" to handle new, difficult, situations for which they had received little, if any, training. Indeed, this desire to be seen as competent by one's fellow man is natural; but, instead, they were called "pigs."

What are some of the external stressors (potential triggers) for police? Stressed may be triggered from social change, economic conditions, police organization, the total criminal justice system, the demands made on the policeman's time, their families who are also experiencing stress, the job of policemen in general, and from the cumulative and interactive effects of these stressors (9).

There are also some specific situations more directly related to the police work which are potential stress situations.

What does it do to a man to place him in a military uniform, equip him with military firepower, and send him out as a domestic military to "keep track of," "investigate," "arrest," "even wage battle on" other humans, his town's people, neighbors, perhaps even his family? And be called on to protect people, often from things they do not want protection from. The social nature of man impels him to seek acceptance from his fellow men. How does a person feel inside when he fears that he is not accepted by many; that most people don't want to live next door to him; attend parties with him or that he is just

wanted when there is a problem someone else can't handle. I suggest that it causes inner pain and conflict....stress.

A primary concern of police officers is that it is very difficult to maintain relations with non-police friends, or communicate with non-police in general. Once a man becomes an officer, he frequently looses his non-police friends and becomes more and more isolated, sees only other police and the citizens he comes into contact with on the job. We have developed an occupational group which is unacceptable to most people outside the job which they perform (which often is in response to the unresolved fears and conflicts of society).

The policeman is caught between the laws of the past and the social change of the future. He is a human being who may hold similar beliefs and notions to those he is arresting. He is a human being who has often felt the wrath of his department when he has transgressed the rules or moves of the department. He frequently feels that his department does not stand by him, does not view him as a responsible, intelligent person, and that he is alone out there fighting back the uncivilized hordes. The "we-they" feeling becomes stronger and stronger. The fears mount. And the stress comes.

Another fear, I think, is of not being a "real policeman." "Real policemen" do certain kinds of things and not others. Some positions they seek and others they do not because "real policework" involves fighting "crime" not coddling criminals, not doing psychotherapy, not preventing crime, but arresting the bad guys. There is a kind of mystique that if you are a real policeman you will be in certain assignments. And the legend continues. And if an officer prefers the police positions which are more in the helping and administrative area, he risks not being seen as a real policemen, not being "adequate", "or a real man."

The stress of not fitting the mythical he-man policemen is hard to cope with. I feel that part of the conflict between the "old guard" who has come up through the ranks and the young, perhaps better educated officer has to do with the feelings that there are new ways of viewing police work, and other ways of relating to people. The officer has a feeling that it isn't right to treat people "that way," and he doesn't like being treated "that way" by the department, but raise objections causes you to risk censure......and stress.

And what is the price policemen pay for admission to the fraternity or "supermen?" Ulcers, headaches, tension, alcoholism, heavy smoking, heart disease, and possibly early death. In addition there are the more subtle costs in the form of growing cynicism, broken communication with family, no time to call one's own, feelings of discontent, frustration, to hell with it, decreased feelings of concern about people and their needs. And where does it end (9)?

And what of the struggle to become middle class? How does this add stress? If it is true, and there seems to be support for the belief that police come largely from working class backgrounds, how does he cope with the feelings that police arrest far greater numbers of people from his own type of background (or lower), and carefully avoid the white collar crime, most heavily represented in that social class to which he aspires? And then the interaction of this sociological stress with the unresolved internal fears adds to the strain.

The Experience of Stress

In interpreting what I believe Don Juan to be saying or at least to identify what I feel, perhaps at the expense of an appropriate interpretation of Carlos Castenada, I feel that the emotional turmoil which we see evident in various symptoms of maladjustment in life is the result of the personality factors which determine how we react to stressors. Simply put, I believe that the stress comes because we have given into fear--fear that we would not live up to expectations, do as we should, not be loved, not be acceptable, that what we are thinking and feeling was so abnormal and unacceptable and that death, damanation to hell, or isolation from important others would inevitable result. Because we have been stopped in our growth at the level of fear, we have no choice but to build up the facade, to find psychological as well as physical mechanisms to inwardly cope with the fear--fear caused by our lack of understanding about ourselves. These feared, yet unverbalized and unexplored corners of our minds and experiences become the breeding ground for projections, displacements, suspicions, unacceptable impulses, worrying, and all the physical and psychological reactions to stress.

Don Juan says that if a man does not defeat fear, he becomes a bully or a harmless, scared man, but defeated. If the man does defeat fear and achieve clarity of mind, does not understand how things work, how things fit together, he becomes a brave warrier or a clown. And if he does not learn to command himself (rightly use power), he becomes a cruel, capricious man. Often, perhaps, these steps are not sequential or clearly defined, but may be symbolic of the processes of mental health. It is in that vein that I want to consider them, as symbolic of "being true to oneself" and developing an accurate appraisal of situations, and a direct coping with situations, as opposed to defensive reappraisal, over-utilization of defense mechanisms and anxiety reactions. My interpretation is that a man who gives into fear does not achieve clarity of mind and control of power is the man who has either defensively redefined fearful situations to cope with them or experiences physical and/or psychological anxiety reactions.

In addition, there is another problem which should be noted. Frequently it has been said that the police role changes a man and causes him to become more like the sterotype. That even though he may appear different from the norm when he enters police work, he adapts the police role. I suspect that this is true. But I also suspect that the way a man changes and the extent to which he changes are partly determined by the unresolved conflicts.

How do we recognize the presence of stress in a policeman? The following sketches indicate some general personality characteristics and behaviors which might be evidence of the experience of stress. It is never wise to diagnose on the basis of one situation, so these are presented as samples of clues that the individual may be experiencing stress.

--Officer A who has performed well for 8 years, but begins "smarting off" to his supervisor

--Officer B who has worked well for 10 years but who begins to come to work obviously smelling of alcohol, and may even drink on the job

--Officer C who is overly zealous in pursuing any one type of criminal behavior

—Officer D who begins taking things from businesses when they have been robbed, or when he goes to check them out, or out of the evidence locker

—Officer E who is not only suspicious of people on the street, but is accusing his family and friends of being out to get him

—Officer F writes twice as many force memo as the average officer

—Officer G who becomes overly hostile to any drunk he sees

—Officer H who always works overtime, always has to be at the station to be in on what happens

—Officer I has the reputation of a "ladies man" who is always preening and loudly boasting about his accomplishments

—Officer J who is quiet, very hard working (sometimes almost obsessively), who must do a perfect job always and who becomes depressed at any negative criticism

—Officer K who is very defensive and denies any criticism made to him

—Officer L who avoids a dialogue of any kind with the boss

—Officer M who wants to put all "long hairs" in jail

—Officer N who spends excessive time finding women who are impressed by his uniform

—Officer O who is overly consciencious about "cleaning things up" and very aggressively sets out to forcible erradicate evil (evil as he defines it)

—Officer P who will work nowhere but in the detective division because that is where "real police" work is done

—Officer Q who goes through several packages of anti-acid per day

—Officer R who takes an excessive number of sick days

—Officer S who has, or almost has, a large number of accidents, including automobile accidents

—Officer T who takes unnecessary chances driving and drives excessively fast whenever possible

—Officer U who changes mood very rapidly

—Officer V who has frequent temper tantrums when he is displeased

—Officer W can never relax. He is either vigourously chewing gum, gnashing his jaws, tapping with his fingers, tapping his feet, and reminds you of a tiger ready to spring

—Officer X reminds you of a "banty rooster" and appears to be always trying to prove himself to everyone

--Officer Y who begins to be blue, depressed, sometimes talks of ending it all

--Officer Z who always blames someone else for his problems

--Officer AA who believes that anything he does to enforce the law is okay

--Officer BB who always responds the same to stress situations, regardless of the facts of the situation

--Officer CC who never volunteers a personal opinion or feeling

--Officer DD who appears okay but frequently does things that just don't seem to fit or make sense for the situation

--Officer EE who always has a smart, sarcastic remark

--Officer FF who handles situation with physical violence when he could handle them by talking

--Officer GG who abruptly changes his typical habit patterns

--Officer HH whose work performance, enthusiasm, interest, or confidence decrease

These are examples of the men Don Juan calls defeated: the bully, the fighter, the clown, the cruel, capricious man. The men who have been arrested in their development toward becoming a "man of knowledge." The men who succumb to the external stressors because the internal stresses are not resolved or even in the process of being resolved.

One stress which is not often mentioned is the stress experienced by a person who is in process of becoming a "man of knowledge" and who is working in an organization which is trapped in the fear state. Indeed, it becomes a problem of how to remain sane in an organization and work role which are insane, how to be "in process" and unable to assist the organization which is still reacting to unresolved fears, to open up communication, to find ways for human needs of the officers to be met without interfering with the needs of the organization. He struggles to keep from being labeled a trouble-maker because he sees and understands and tries to make changes, but is stymied at every turn. My hypothesis is that this type of stress is different from the other type because this individual may recognize the cause, and remove himself from the organization, leaving it to its fears and stresses. And we all are the worse for it

Coping with Stress

And the answer? What is the answer? Not only for policemen, but for us all.

How to overcome fear...how to achieve clarity of mind, how to wisely use power and overcome the fatigue of old age?

My dream is that we develop a society which promotes a preventative approach to mental health, not a remedial one. One which assists people in learning to cope with problems in appropriate ways.

My stress is the feeling of frustration knowing that this type of world may never exist. That we will always be faced with treatment and remedial procedures, which are always more difficult than prevention. One step, however, which would facilitate such a development is the recognition and acceptance by society that stress exists, that ignoring fears and conflicts will not help them go away, that they must be faced and coped with. This would mean that the stigma placed on psychological/psychiatric assistance must be removed. Caring for one's inner self must not be seen as "sick," as weak, but as a positive desired step. In fact, some type of personal growth experience might be required in the selection of standards for police work, or for retention or promotion.

In the meantime while we are still faced with the need to relearn our coping procedures, how does one uncover those inner conflicts and begin/resume the process of becoming a man of knowledge? It may be that here is where dealing with the problems of inadequate training, lacking of communication, inability to participate, lack of good relations with superiors, role ambiguity, is important. It may be that selection procedures are revised to seek policemen who are in the process of becoming 'men of knowledge.'

But the question also arises of how to help present officers who are experiencing stress and how to keep future officers from conforming to the written and/or unwritten role expectations and experiencing stress.

Perhaps simple awareness of the problems, removal of stigma, opportunities for understanding one's inner self, and improved role definitions will help greatly.

It is important to note that Don Juan makes it clear that becoming a man of knowledge, or "getting one's act together," is a life-time process, not a one-time event. One is always in process. After overcoming the basic fear, a person can handle any challeges, and he will be able to meet the requirements of achieving clarity of mind and control of his power. One is always in process. The process is never finished, unless he has given in to fear before he ever started, and then he must reconcile himself to a life time of defensive reactions and/or anxiety.

Stress is on a continuum. At certain points we all reach the point of "too much" and we have to expend additional energy to cope. The examples of possible types of stress reactions are given to show the wide varitey of ways people may react which indicate a person may be experiencing stress. The duration of the response, its severity, or its occurrence with other stress reactions, are indicators that the individual is trying to reduce the stress he is experiencing.

How can you identify a person who is coping satisfactorily? He will respond directly to the source of the stress. He does not overly utilize any of the defenses, or experience constant emotional responses. His behavior is appropriate for the particular situation and falls within some range of normal. The range of his behavior is also predictable. His reactions would not typically be classed as violent, aggressive, impulsive or weird. He is emotionally responsible and may experience the entire range of emotions, but they are appropriate to the stimuli he is responding to. He is flexible and handles the situation according to its characteristics.

The recognition that stress exists and that the bad effects can be reduced or eliminated with appropriate life style changes is a first step in

coping the stress. These changes may involve understanding what we are doing and why we presist in doing the things that cause stress and strain. Others have found that learning how to relax has reduced strain for them, Jacobson (10) provides easy-to-follow instruction for relaxation.

One new, revolutionary procedure which offers the potential of reducing the physical and psychological symptoms of stress, as well as possibly helping the individual to tap into his inner self and begin to understand it, is biofeedback. Biofeedback is a process by which one is able to learn of the existence of bodily signals (electrical energy) and how to regulate them. In biofeedback, the individual is given feedback from heart, muscles, brain, blood pressure, temperature, skin response, etc. When the individual receives a signal (auditory or visual) concerning the duration and intensity of signal, he can teach his body to control the function. Tension and migraine headaches can be eliminated/reduced, muscle tension reduced, blood pressure lowered, heart rhythm stablized, and temperature altered.

"Biofeedback is a curious mixture of startling simiplicity
and challenging complexity. It is deceptively straightforward:
tap into the mysterious within directly from the surface of the
body, use of a simple device to convert the activity of the body
system into a form which can be sensed, and voila, the person
can identify the feelings he has when the body is signaling the
monitor device to say "blood pressure up," or "blood pressure
down," or "heart rate up," or "temperature down" or "more alpha."
It is very simple as a part-psychologic, part-medical compass on
the road to satisfying better physical and mental health. Yet
it is deceptively complex in the way it achieves its results.

Biofeedback is simple in concept only. It is probably the
most complex of all the discoveries about man's being, for it
points straight to the greatest mystery of all: the ability of
the mind to control its own and the body's sickness and health.
Biofeedback involves endless interactions among arrays of deep
and surface emotions, interactions among the higher mental
activities of reasoning and judgment, as well as the convoluted
dynamics of highly complex body circular processes (such as
those carrying messages through the brain-spinalcord-motor nerve-
muscle-muscle sense-spinal cord-brain circuit). The mechanism
of biofeedback is deeply affected by the malleable, manipulable
aspects of the psyche, those interacting emotion-through com-
plexes that are so susceptible to influences such as rapport,
warmth and understanding, indifference or insensitivity. ....
Biofeedback helps the individual to become aware of his own
internal world of psychologic functioning. The awareness need
not be conscieous awareness; it may spread only through sub-
consciousness, where it mobilizes the mind's intelligence to
direct the body's responses according to the meaning of the
fed-back information. ....Biofeedback acts primarily as a temp-
orary intermediary to give you information not ordinarily avail-
able to you about the deep within. ....Biofeedback is a very
private process. It unquestionably will lead to genuinely indiv-
idual explorations of the subjective and physiological self. It

has the potential to offer one the security of one's own mind,
the capacities of one's own body (Brown pp. 9-10)."

This process which directly works on both the symptoms, as well as the
inner self, seems to me to offer great potential in coping with stress and re-
ducing the stress we feel because we can understand it.

Summary

Sources of stress, reactions to stress, as well as theories of stress are
legion. In general, it can be said that stress may be of four types: the
internal stresses of the individual; the stresses from interaction of two or
more individuals; stress from an organization; and stress coming from the en-
vironment or social system. This paper has proposed the notion that the
internal stresses of the individual resulting from unresolved fears and con-
cerns may accentuate the experience of stress from the other sources. Other
stresses appear to be more easily coped with if we have satisfactorily resolved
the basic question of our own worth and value, and can face our humanness with
out the necessity of jumping over humanness to "supermanness."

This process of "becoming a man of knowledge," according to Don Juan, or
"getting one's act together," in the street idiom of today, is a process that
involves overcoming these fears in order that we can "see" and understand and
come to appropriately use the power that we develop as a result of the process.
And it is a life-long process. The further one travels down this road, the
more impossible it is for him to be content perpetuating the myth and untruths
in society. A this point, the individual typically exercises one of two
choices: he valiantly struggles to change the systems he is immersed in or he
withdraws and leaves the system to continue it's never-ending spiral, because
he cannot remain a mute participant in a destructive system.

It is impossible for an individual to continue in the process of "becoming
a man of knowledge" and enter or remain in an organization which does not sup-
port the exploration and acceptance of the self and which does not operate in
such a way as to enable the self to fully develop, but instead operates in a
way to increase the type and intensity of emergency and long defenses necessary
to combat the stressors.

At this point, the criminal justice system will have no option then, but
to reconsider itself as a total system and become an organization which is in
process of achieving knowledge.

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