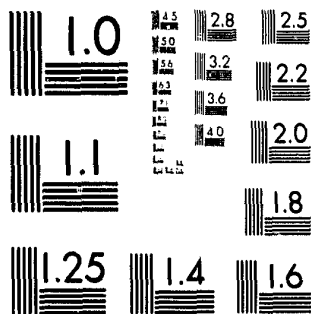


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AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF CRIMINOLOGY

EMOTIONAL CONTROL TRAINING AND
RELATED STRESS REDUCTION METHODS

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ACQUISITIONS

EMOTIONAL CONTROL TRAINING AND
RELATED STRESS REDUCTION METHODS

My remarks to you today are based on two axioms:

- a. that both police and prisons work is stressful, and
- b. that both the psychological and physical effects of stress may be reduced by the practice of appropriate reduction methods.

My purpose in addressing you on the topic of stress and stress reduction rests in the following aims:

- a. to give you a very brief idea of the nature of stress and its impact upon the individual, and
- b. to briefly discuss certain stress reduction methods capable of development and utilisation by training staff, for the purposes of:
 - (1) recruit training, and
 - (2) personnel development programs.

These remarks should not be considered in isolation but should be viewed against a broader background of

occupational health. Examples and references are almost exclusively police due to my greater familiarity with that service. But, what I have to say concerning emotional control training has, suitably adapted, equal application to the prison service. More general comments concerning self-relaxation apply equally to all employees, probation officers just as much as anyone else.

One more explanatory remark before getting down to the substance of what I have to say. The stress reduction methods outlined here are not presented as developed training packages. They are merely mentioned and discussed. It will be up to you individually to decide if they are of relevance or interest. If that decision is made, it will then be up to you and your superordinates to determine the best application of methods to suit your particular needs. The needs of one police force or prison service are not exactly the same as another. Viability in training programs, as in most fields, demands relevance. Relevance can only be achieved by proper consideration of local needs and experience. No doubt we shall be able to expand on some of these points later during the discussion period.

Having said that, I turn now to the substance of my remarks. Firstly, I intend to take a quick look at police stress and then describe the impacts of stress. A brief consideration of the implications of stress for police follows. After that, an account of emotional

control training is given. Finally, a very limited discussion concerning self-relaxation methods is presented.

Police stress

The police occupation has been termed stressful by a number of writers, including both practitioners and behavioral scientists. (Hayton, 1974: 1204; Kroes *et al*, 1974: 154; Reiser, 1972: 16).

The stressors to which police are heir are quite numerous but I do not propose to attempt an exhaustive listing here. Some, such as frustration, are common to most workers. Others are restricted to a limited number of occupations. A few are unique (or almost so) to the police (and prison) service. There is no clear line dividing in-service and what I term "out-service" stressors. For example, the effect of shift work upon both individual physiologies (Froberg *et al*, 1972) and family life (Kroes, 1974; Reiser, 1972; Sharman, 1975) have been well remarked upon. A clearer distinction can be made between those stressors external to an individual, *eg*, faulty equipment, and internal stressors (or, perhaps, I should say variables), *eg*, fear, anger, frustration. I have tried to simplify the situation by placing some better known police stressors in various categories in Figure 1, of which you should each have a copy. Even so, I should caution that the stressors or variables are not as clear cut

FIGURE 1

POLICE STRESSORS

OCCUPATION

	in-service	out-service
internal	(A) Frustration (B) Anger (B) Fear (B) Conflict of values	(B) Feeling of never being completely off duty
external	(A) Administration (A) Equipment (A) Inter-personal conflicts (A) Under/over work (B) Shift work (B) Discipline (B) Postings (B) Unpleasant assignments (B) Crisis situations (C) Assaults/verbal abuse (C) Courts	(B) Social isolation (B) Marital discord

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- A = common stressors
- B = limited stressors
- C = unique (or near unique) stressors

Most of the stressors itemised here are listed in KROES WH. (1976).
Society's Victim - The Policeman, An Analysis Of Job Stress In Policing.
 Springfield, IL: CC Thomas.

as they may appear. Many of them overlap with others to varying degrees, depending on circumstances. Many, too are interrelated with others, depending on circumstances.* To save time, I shall not discuss these various stressors separately. I think you will all recognise their significance. The main point is that they are numerous and range across the entire spectrum of a policeperson's life. Naturally, they are not all experienced concurrently all the time but, the potential for stress in the police service does seem considerable.

A majority of stressors are situational. That is to say, they occur external to the individual. Of course, not all stressors are equal in impact. (See Holmes & Rahe, 1967). Some may occur as brief events, *eg*, dragging a decomposed cadaver from a river, whilst others may extend over lengthy periods of time, *eg*, difficulty in establishing social relationships with non-police neighbors.

Impact of stress

At times of tension or shock, whether resulting from the abusive language of an irate motorist or the immediate prospect of having a large, aggressive drunk take one apart, neurons in the brain send coded instructions

* The classification and definition of stressors (variables) of this nature is quite complex. It is assumed that attendees as practitioners are not greatly concerned with such matters and so the matter is not pursued further. However, those interested in reading further on the matter of such classifications are referred to PF Wernimont (1972).

to the hypothalamus. There, the electrical impulses are converted into chemical secretions. One of these secretions stimulates the pituitary gland which itself releases yet another secretion. This secretion, known as ACTH acts upon the adrenal glands causing amongst other things the release into the bloodstream of catecholamines and steroids. These products are designed to protect the body's inner environment. Catecholamines stimulate the sympathetic nervous system in terms of fight or flight responses to perceived threats. Steroids seal off fresh wounds, create tissue swelling around broken bones, and convert fat and protein into usable energy.

These reactions worked well in the days of our ancestors. When periodically threatened by neighboring clans or aggressive animals, rapid decisions had to be made to fight or run away. At such times, for limited periods, the body produces extra strength, speed, and agility, accompanied by a reduced sensitivity to pain. It was a good reaction to danger. Once such encounters terminated, the stress reactions could run down. Between encounters it seems probable the levels of stress were normally insignificant. Today, although we may face somewhat fewer life and death situations, many of us face a greater frequency of lower intensity but significant stresses - some of them, as we have seen, of an ongoing nature. These stimuli all engender stress reactions. Thus, our reaction mechanisms don't switch off nearly as frequently as did those of our ancestors. The upshot is

that continued stress reaction in the body is deleterious to our psychological and physical health. The body will actually make itself sick in its efforts to cope with stress. (Mehrabian, 1976). For those who are continually exposed to highly stressful circumstances, the result can be serious. Ultimately, death can ensue. But, more frequently, stress may contribute to psychological and physical states such as anxiety neurosis, diabetes mellitus, hypertension, ischemic heart disease*, gastric ulcers, colitis, eczema, dermatitis, and perhaps migraine. (See Mehrabian, 1976: 60). Not all stressed persons experience such reactions, of course. Individual coping and adaptive capacities are critical. But any highly stressed person not already sick must be inevitably pushing his mind and/or body close to ill-health. Police (and prisons) personnel by being members of a stressful occupation run the risk of suffering the unhealthy reactions itemised. Whatever can be done to reduce levels of stress experienced by members is *ipso facto* desirable.

Implications for police

Ill-health ultimately leads to sickness absence and sometimes to discharge. The agency, the individual, and the public all suffer by virtue of loss of work, loss of life satisfaction and income, and loss of taxes. Such outcomes are obviously wasteful in both human and economic terms. More importantly, members who push themselves close to

* There is considerable disagreement between physicians and psychologists on this point.

their limits of tolerance, in some instances, suffer performance decrement, *ie*, they perform less effectively. Programs that aim at reducing the causes of such waste would seem worthwhile. Emotional control training is one such program.

Many police employees 'frequently perform tasks under stressful conditions, the result of which may produce detrimental behavioral effects'. (Earle, 1973: 47). Confrontations and other situations in which police are deliberately provoked are tailor made for high stress and inappropriate police behavior. I suppose the behavior of many Chicago police during the 1968 Democratic National Convention will always be evoked in this regard. The forces of law and order in the US received a great deal of adverse publicity on account of ill-disciplined police behavior on that occasion. Police were pelted with bags of urine and faeces, they were verbally and visually insulted. The demonstrators (or rather the radical, organised elements amongst them) were entirely successful in their tactics. It should be mentioned that Hong Kong and Japanese police have held firm in far more trying circumstances. The point is particularly interesting inasmuch as Chicago police recruits are amongst the most rigorously selected in the entire US (See *Time*, 13 Sep 68). In addition to large scale confrontations, police are, and much more frequently so, faced with insults and other provocative behaviors often deliberately designed to trap them into unwise moves. Prison officers, too, will have experienced similar

situations, whether at large scale disorders such as the Bathurst gaol riots of 1974 or the mere routine insults aimed at them both inside and outside corrective facilities. In all such circumstances *self-control* is the "name of the game", it is essential. No one needs a diploma in psychology to realise that uncontrolled anger clouds clear thinking and sound judgment. Self-control results in reduced individual stress and thus has a positive effect on health, and better performance. It is for these reasons that I support emotional control training for police and prison officers. It should not be considered as anything but one of a battery of measures designed to improve members self-control. It is my personal view that we are entering an era in which declining social and political consensus, with its accompanying lessening respect for authority, and politicization of prisoners will ensure stressful years ahead for both your occupations.

Emotional control training

Perhaps the best way to avoid unpleasant or excessive stress is to remove oneself from the stressor. In government service such a tactic is often not possible. If a stressor cannot be avoided or perhaps reduced in intensity then, in some situations, a process of habituation can be effective. This is partly the basis of emotional control training - habituation.

After hearing the term frequently for some years now, few police are stressed by the epithet "pig", when applied to them. And so it can be with other epithets and insulting and obscene expressions. If they are experienced sufficiently frequently, they become everyday events and no longer stressful.

The basis of emotional control (EC) training lies in four to seven videotape sequences. Each sequence contains 2½-3 minutes of monologue. The monologue is directed at the viewer by a negative mannered speaker. Speakers will normally range from a fairly conservative appearing person to a radical. Themes should be directed at areas in which police may be sensitive, *eg*, allegations of corruption, lack of education, oppression, and personal and family habits. Presentation should be graded from mild and oblique criticism at first through to a rabid, obscene, and violence threatening finale. (See Danish & Brodsky, 1970).

During the initial sequence presentation, viewing recruits should be suitably briefed to perceive all remarks as being aimed at them personally. They should, too, be encouraged to manifest their reactions. Although a degree of larrikinism can intrude into such situations I think you will be surprised at the level of aggression displayed. A post-mortem should be held directly after each screening and recruits encouraged to examine their reactions. Their attention can be usefully drawn to the need for controlled

handling of strong, 'personal feelings in stressful situations'. Ideally, EC training will be held in conjunction and synchronised with the human relations component of their syllabus. By the time the final sequences are viewed, reactions tend to be almost blasé. The recruit at that stage is hopefully aware of the psychosocial social processes involved and much better able to control his reactions, knowing that abuse directed at him is not personal but aimed at him as an authority figure. (Reiser, 1972: 86). Recruits evidencing less than desirable levels of control can be identified and appropriate measures taken.

Scripts for the videotape sequences need to be very carefully designed to accord with current events, political issues, and slang. Hair and grooming styles, and apparel should be fashionable. When I ran an EC program some years ago, I hired students from a University drama club. They found it difficult to believe they could be paid for insulting policemen! Care should be taken with production and should sufficient in-house expertise not be available, resort should be made to specialists. Poor production will inevitably spoil the intended effect.

To the best of my knowledge, the effectiveness of EC training has never been evaluated. As Danish and Brodsky point out, the relevance and utility of the themes employed and the training itself needs to be subjected to careful research and evaluation.

EC training should be carefully integrated within the total recruit self-control training effort. The total effort will include counselling, controlled abuse on the drill square, and education concerning the psychosocial factors involved.

EC training is designed to assist members in coping with events of a provocative and short term nature. Looking at Figure 1, we see that many stressors are of the ongoing type. We cannot hope to avoid or diminish the intensity of most of these stressors and so it is helpful if we can utilise a coping or reduction method possessing a general application. Again, single approaches are not the complete answer, diet, exercise, sleep, good personal finance management, avoidance of all excesses, are all important. However, it seems to me that self-relaxation techniques may hold some general utility for police in the reduction of general stress levels.

Self-control and self-relaxation

Policepersons generally are 'action-oriented individuals who are interested in ideas and concepts only to the extent they can be quickly, convincingly, and readily applied to the realities of everyday policework'. (Lovitt, 1976: 312). I am thus somewhat hesitant in raising the topic of self-relaxation training as I know it will inspire negative reactions amongst many police and

prison officers. Nevertheless, I feel the time has arrived when there is a real need for you to actively explore such areas.

An interesting little article appeared in the *Police Review* last year, urging police training officers to take a serious look at yoga (which includes meditation) as a possible solution to the problem of police stress. (Blaikley, 1976: 1422). The author referred particularly to the stress related problem of the high rate of sickness absence in British police forces; stemming he claimed, from work pressures and long hours.

Biofeedback is another method being strongly advocated as not only a sound method of stress reduction but, incidentally, of improving classroom performance. (Mulholland, 1973: 104). The technique is expensive though in terms of technological apparatus. Lack of access to the apparatus would no doubt make its widespread use in a force impossible. Alternatively, its use could be confined to those physically capable of attending their force's training establishment. It is noted that the Los Angeles Police Department has already run pilot programs in which an initial batch of 20 officers received training in biofeedback with the direct aim of reducing stress. (Reiser, 1976: 27).

You will all be familiar with the claim that transcendental meditation (TM), which derives from yoga, is

effective *inter alia* in alleviating stress. Some of you may in fact have seen a letter in the TM literature purporting to be from an English policeman in which he acknowledges its usefulness in reducing personal stress and improving his health and work performance. Quite sophisticated research, although not without its critics, suggests that TM is indeed successful in reducing stress for many practitioners. (Bloomfield *et al*, 1975: 192 *et seq*). Essentially, TM helps its practitioners to relax and "slow down", *ie*, encourages parasympathetic dominance. Any method that can do this deserves consideration, not that I am advocating police forces adopt TM - far from it. For a start, I doubt if many policepersons could be interested in the concept, despite wide interest shewn by government agencies overseas.

There are other meditation methods (Schwartz, 1974: 39) which can also be effective in inducing relaxation and it may be that between them they have something to offer highly stressed workers of whatever occupation. Self-control through self-relaxation is a valuable skill for highly stressed employees. As one writer has said, 'deep relaxation could be as necessary to our survival today as quick wits and emotions were to the survival of the earliest and nakedest human beings'. (Campbell, 1974: 38). Even a brief look at the literature indicates there is a rapidly growing interest in self-control and stress in recent years. Quite probably, in the future, people will routinely use self-relaxation methods 'to cope with a wide variety of life

stresses' thus permitting the dissipation of tension and maintaining their ability to 'remain calm in otherwise stress-provoking situations'. (Goldfried & Merbaum, 1973: 104).

Inasmuch as stress for police and prisons personnel can be expected to increase in the years ahead, and given the fact that performance and health can be improved by the use of appropriate stress reduction methods, it seems that police and prison training officers (given the opportunity!) could profitably turn to the methods just mentioned, and others, to see what could be profitably utilised. Don't be put off by their non-action orientation. It may be that by a process of elimination, or perhaps synthesization, an acceptable and suitable self-relaxation technique could be either found or developed.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion I intend merely to reiterate the main thrust of my remarks.

- a. police and prisons work is often stressful,
- b. stress can be injurious to health and work,
- c. stress can be wasteful of human and financial resources,

- d. stress can lead to embarrassingly inappropriate workplace behaviors,
- e. EC training is a suitable method (combined with others) for raising affective thresholds of recruits,
- f. training officers could profitably explore some of the general stress reduction/relaxation methods being currently offered with a view to, either by a process of elimination or synthesization, developing a technique acceptable by and suitable to the personal development of their colleagues, and
- g. most importantly, I wish to emphasise that for both police and prisons officers, for the present and the future, the name of the game is self-control.

Self-control means improved health, and improved performance.

Thank you very much for listening to me.

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