



Strike out: PTSD

TODD LANGUS PSY.D.



TACTICAL WELLNESS

A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR CAREER SURVIVAL

HOW RESPONDERS ARE TRAINED TO THINK



“Probability” *Versus* “Possibility”



Behaviors Developed for Job Survival

- ▶ “All or Nothing” thinking (Win or Lose)
- ▶ Be all things to all people all of the time
- ▶ Detachment
- ▶ Always be right
- ▶ Have an answer for every problem
- ▶ Always maintain control
- ▶ Rapid decision making



Behaviors Developed for job Survival (continued)

- ▶ The “20 minute fix”
- ▶ Black and White thinking
- ▶ Denial
- ▶ Everyone is a threat
- ▶ Always preplan/have an answer for all situations
- ▶ Defend your position/actions



Unconscious Mindset that Interferes with Treatment and Staff

- ▶ Problem solver not problem “haver”
- ▶ Keep things to yourself
- ▶ Black and White thinking of job
- ▶ “All or Nothing” mentality (Win or lose)
- ▶ Tunnel vision (focus on problem)
- ▶ Trained to control every situation
- ▶ Cannot show weakness
- ▶ Handle problems alone
- ▶ Repress Feelings



How Responders are Traumatized

- ▶ The person is not psychologically prepared for the situation
- ▶ The person is psychologically prepared for the situation; however, there are rapidly changing events that their brain cannot keep up with

How Trauma is Experienced



- ▶ Freeze Frame: Locking in of the split second where incident has greatest impact
- ▶ Rigid emotional state tied to specific moment doesn't go away when moment is past
- ▶ Ex: "I thought I was going to die." Identify officer's feelings of vulnerability and any individuals they thought of at that moment
- ▶ Ex: "I knew the baby was dead, but I had to keep trying in front of the parent."



Lethal Emotions for the Responder

Fear

- ▶ Internalized as weakness
- ▶ Antidote: Explain the bodies need for fear

Helplessness

- ▶ Internalized as a loss of control which means they have failed
- ▶ Antidote: “Purposeful acts of will.”



Most Widely Used Defense Mechanism for Trauma Reactions:

ALCOHOL

It is not only accepted in the business, it is encouraged.

Post-incident stress indicators:

Behavioral signs

- Change in activity level
- Change in speech patterns
- withdrawal & isolation
- Emotional outbursts
- Suspiciousness
- Change in communications
- Loss or increased appetite
- Alcohol consumption
- Inability to rest or relax
- Little things bother them
- Hyper-alert to environment
- Bodily complaints
- Exaggerated startle response
- Psycho-motor agitation or retardation
- Change in sexual function
- Staring into space
- Look like day dreaming
- Calling in sick
- Poor work performance
- Relationship problems

Post-Incident stress indicators (Cont.)

Emotional signs:

- ❖ Anxiety
- ❖ Guilt
- ❖ Denial
- ❖ Depressed
- ❖ Grief
- ❖ Shame
- ❖ Fear of uncertainty
- ❖ Loss of emotional control
- ❖ helplessness
- ❖ Hopelessness
- ❖ Inappropriate emotional response
- ❖ Fear and apprehension
- ❖ Anger
- ❖ Irritability and agitation
- ❖ Outbursts of rage
- ❖ Flashbacks

Post-Incident stress indicators (Cont.)

Physical signs:

- ✓ Fatigue or weakness
- ✓ Muscle tremors/twitches
- ✓ High pulse or blood pressure
- ✓ Rapid heart beat
- ✓ Thirst
- ✓ Visual problems
- ✓ Nausea/vomiting
- ✓ Dizziness
- ✓ Grinding teeth
- ✓ Fainting
- ✓ Chest tight or pain
- ✓ Chills or sweating
- ✓ Difficulty breathing
- ✓ Tearful reactions
- ✓ Psychomotor agitation or retardation
- ✓ Appearance declines

Post-Incident stress indicators (Cont.)

Mental/cognitive signs:

- ❑ Confusion
- ❑ Difficulty concentrating
- ❑ Memory loss or gaps
- ❑ Poor decisions
- ❑ Impulsiveness
- ❑ Hyper-vigilance
- ❑ Problem solving difficulty
- ❑ Loss of time or place
- ❑ Disturbing thoughts
- ❑ Nightmares/sleep disturbance
- ❑ Intrusive images
- ❑ Recurrent recollections
- ❑ Obsessive rumination

Signals Of Developing Stress Reactions

- Withdrawal from Normative, Strengthening, or Pleasurable Activities
- Alterations in Mood Patterns: Despondent, Irritable, Anxious
- Physical Symptoms Irrespective of Stimulus
- Loss of Energy/Fatigue after Rest

Impacts Of Stress

- Normal Habit Patterns Altered: Physical, Emotional, Behavioral Changes
- Self-Image and Identification with Others is Altered
- Perceptions and Response Tendencies Altered
- Constant Control of Demeanor under Continuously High Arousal



Vicarious Trauma

VICARIOUS TRAUMA

Vicarious Trauma: is the process of change that happens, over time, because you care about other people who have been hurt, and feel committed or responsible to help them. Over time this process can lead to changes in your psychological, physical, and spiritual well-being.



RISK FACTORS

- ▶ That which is used to save others is the very thing that causes injury to ourselves.

RISK FACTORS CONTINUED



We do the job because we care,

Because we are naturally empathetic,

And because many of us have experienced trauma ourselves.

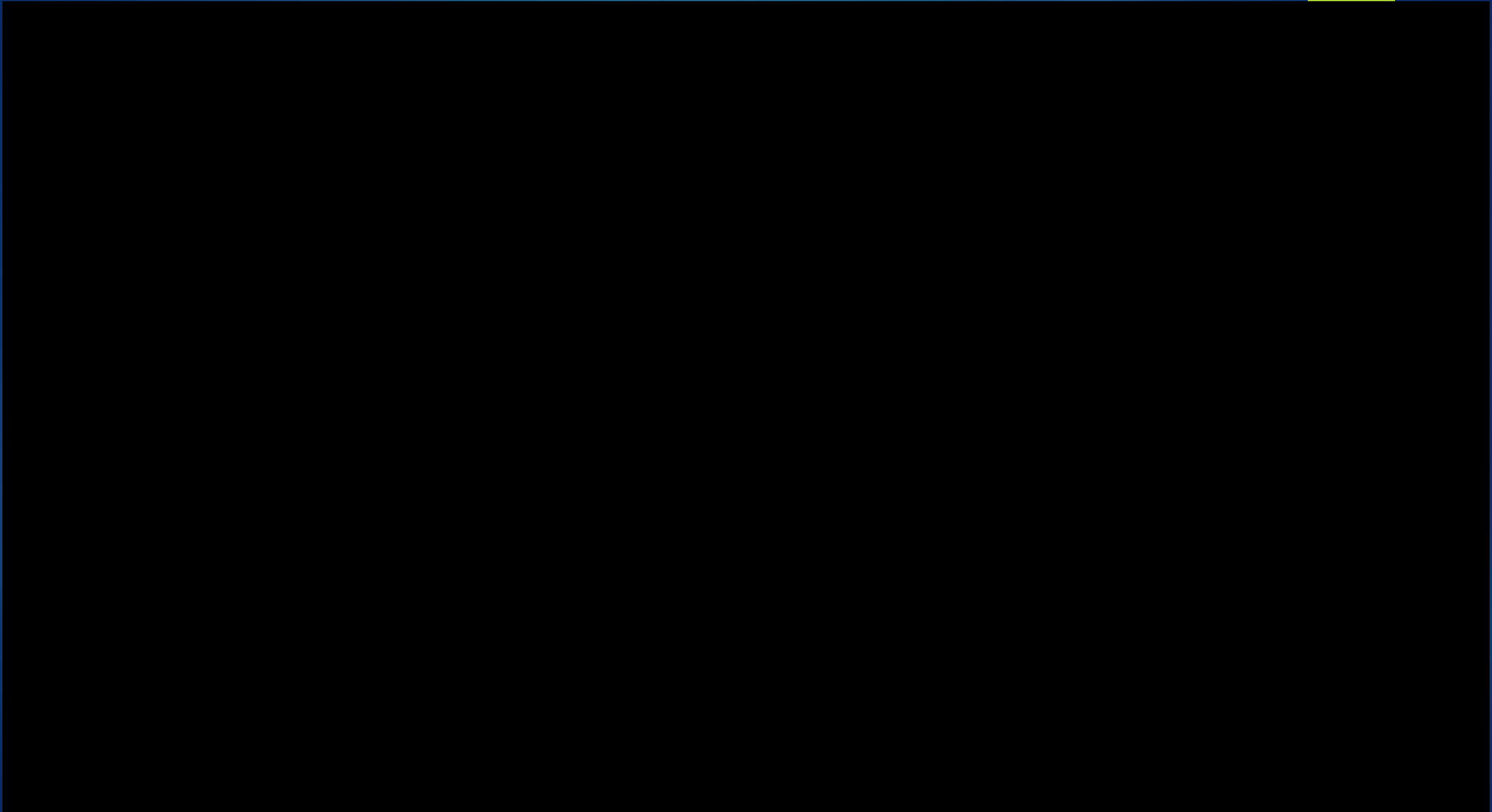
ALWAYS REMEMBER

- ▶ *If your compassion does not include yourself, it is incomplete.*

-The Buddha

REACTION TO VICARIOUS TRAUMA

- ▶ Difficulty managing your emotions (Stuffing).
- ▶ Difficulty accepting or feeling okay about self.
- ▶ Problems managing boundaries between self and others.
- ▶ Problems with relationships.
- ▶ Difficulty making good decisions.
- ▶ Physical problems.



Ways to overcome:

- ▶ Mindset. Use the negative incident as an opportunity. (ex: 911)
 - ▶ Honor your gifts.
 - ▶ Don't take things for granted
 - ▶ tomorrow is not promised
 - ▶ Celebrate your gifts

How to overcome (Cont.):

- ▶ Surround yourself with people with positive attitude.
- ▶ Exercise
- ▶ Proper diet.
- ▶ Out side work activities.
- ▶ Counseling.
- ▶ Focus on positive things in your life.
- ▶ Remind self "IT IS ONLY A JOB NOT WHO I AM."

Keys to Enjoying Your Life and Career

- ▶ Embrace your freedom to choose how you respond
- ▶ Skills only improve with practice
- ▶ Devote time to hobbies & activities you enjoy
- ▶ Maintain friendships outside of your career
- ▶ Spend time with people who are optimistic about life
- ▶ Volunteer somewhere for a cause you believe in
- ▶ Find the humor everywhere you can grab it...laugh
- ▶ Listen to your intuition
- ▶ Embrace your “purpose” in life
- ▶ Accept that you walk your own unique journey
- ▶ Find people you feel safe confiding in
- ▶ Learn to live in the moment



Dr. Todd Langus, Psy.D

Trauma Specialist

drtoddlangus@gmail.com



*14101 Yorba St. Suite 104
Tustin, CA 92780*

(714) 393-6111