From the Desk of Dr. Jack:  Positive side of critical incidents

For many years I and many others have been working to develop programs and protocols designed to prevent and treat the possible undesirable outcomes of exposure to a critical incident. Often times our efforts have focused on indentifying and treating these aspects of critical incident survivorship.

There is another side to critical incident survivorship, one that is seldom discussed. This side has to do with becoming “stronger and smarter” following a critical incident. Becoming stronger and smarter following a critical incident involves many variables including (1) finding something positive in the experience and (2) placing the event into psychological history (it is in chronological history as soon as the incident is over).

I was recently contacted by a British police officer that, although much rarer in England than in the United States, was involved in an incident several years ago wherein he was compelled to shoot a suspect that had taken a hostage. The suspect was killed. He knew he did was what necessary to protect the hostage but like many other officers, it took him some time to psychologically and emotionally process the event. He described his experience this way:

“...I am also aware how having come through both the incident and the aftermath, that I changed in a positive way too. I believe that dealing with the incident made me more resilient, able to cope better with problems and difficulties (based on a mind-set that goes something like “If I can deal with all of that, I can deal with anything that life throws at me”). The incident also reinforced my personal levels of professionalism (and my expectations of it in others). Over time these positives have, I believe, come to the fore, whilst the negative reactions have faded.” (May 19, 2015)

We should remind ourselves that positive outcomes can result from not-so-positive experiences. We do not have to focus on the undesirable or challenging responses which are sometimes generated out of unpleasant or unwanted experiences. We have an ability to examine the other side of such experiences. We have an ability to achieve a better mental balance. To the degree this can be accomplished, we can move forward, through any aftermath of any critical incident.

If you have tried your best to put troublesome aspects of a critical incident behind you but are still experiencing difficulties, remember that you don’t have to go it alone. Seek support. Reach out. Talk it out. Sometimes all it takes is sharing your experience with others who care.

In this way, you too can become stronger and smarter...JAD
Mental Illness and Violent Crime

About 6 percent of the population, or one in 17 Americans, suffer from a serious mental illness, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. Studies suggest that the mentally ill are involved in only about 4 percent of violent crimes. But when untreated, severe mental illness is associated with higher rate of violence.

Happiness

“Happiness belongs to those who are sufficient unto themselves. For all external sources of happiness and pleasure are, by their very nature, highly uncertain, precarious, ephemeral, and subject to chance.”

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860)
German philosopher

Impact of Sleep Deprivation on Police Performance

Sleep deprivation is comparable to excessive drinking. A sleep deprivation study found that not sleeping for 17 hours impaired a person's motor skills to an extent equivalent to having an alcohol toxicity of 0.05 percent. Not sleeping for 24 hours was equivalent to a toxicity level of 0.10 percent. This level of deprivation would impair speech, balance, coordination and mental judgment. (From: NIJ.gov)

Ketamine - Special K

Research at Yale University continues to support the promise of ketamine as a treatment for depression. A recent article in an issue of Science journal said that administering small amounts of the drug regenerates synaptic connections, bringing patients almost immediate relief from depression’s debilitating symptoms. A derivative of ketamine, esketamine, is now available to treat recalcitrant depression with acute suicidality.

In larger doses ketamine is used illegally as a "party drug" known in street lingo as "Special K." Ketamine was first used medically as an anesthetic.