

TRAUMA RESILIENCE FOR WHEN THINGS ARE DARKER



TITEN

**Neuroscience-informed
trauma exposure training**

At this time of writing in Autumn 2025 and as we bring this series on **trauma resilience** to its close, the current climate is **pretty dark**. Society is divided on immigration, police retention is low, suicide rates are climbing and there is a thick air of despondency that cannot easily be diffused by wise words from neuropsychology, ancient wisdom or contemporary police leadership training courses.

Whether you work in Counter Terrorism, or deal with Child Sexual Exploitation or Violence Against Women and Girls, whether you are out on the streets or wading through digital material, there is a lot that can bear down on the spirit and take the shine off the most incredible work that we have committed much of our lives to, at great cost.

AND YET.
YOU. KEEP. GOING.

And for this final offering, I will be only a mirror to the incredible resilience you already have.

What trauma gets dark round the edges

We have the PTEC, the Police Traumatic Events Checklist. It's a beautiful dedication in **your own words** (and numbers) to the service you give to making the civilian world a safer, kinder, happier place.

But there are darker moments in Policing that aren't described in the 'top ten' that make the PTEC: corners of contemporary Policing where many of us dwell, that aren't generic. But these moments may be monumental when it comes to our resilience and our sense of who we are and how we feel about the world we live in. Moments like...

When we safeguard paedophiles
When colleagues take their own life
When children die preventable deaths
When people take many lives at random without any clear ideology

Amid these hideous eventualities, **we persevere**. often with incredible results for those wronged. But what gives? We find ways to adapt. YOU FIND WAYS TO ADAPT.

Here, we offer nothing but the words of those in these roles themselves as testimony to the light they have found themselves to navigate these dark corners of humanity. Their resilience has come from their utmost commitment and resolve, because they are good at what they do.

They are good at what they do and they have survived.
But they have done so because they suffered first, and did something about it.
Over to you.....

"I THINK THE MAIN KEY AREA FOR ME PERSONALLY WAS TRUST THE LACK OF TRUST I HAD IN MY INTUITION AND ABILITIES. ACKNOWLEDGING WHAT WAS NOT ACTUALLY IN MY CONTROL WAS PROBABLY THE KEY TO BEING ABLE TO CALM MY MIND"

(FORMER CAIT OFFICER 2025)

"THERE CAN COME A TIME WHERE YOU CATCH YOURSELF TRYING TO GET INTO AN OFFENDER'S WAY OF THINKING, LIKE YOU ARE KIND OF COUNTER-GROOMING THEM TO GET THEM TO DO WHAT YOU NEED THEM TO DO IN ORDER TO GET TO A CONVICTION. IT FEELS OFF AND YOU FEEL THIS SHAME, PRETTY MUCH. BUT THEN YOU REALISE THAT THAT FEELING DOESN'T MATTER BECAUSE YOU'RE DOING ALL OF THIS, THE WHOLE THING, FOR THE VICTIM. AND OTHERS WHO MIGHT HAVE BECOME VICTIMS."

(CSE SAFEGUARDING LEAD, PPU 2022)

"I WAS A NEW MUM AND I'D BEEN OUT FOR A WHILE BUT IT WAS ALL STILL THERE RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME, ALL THE TIME. I JUST BEGAN TO AVOID NAPPY TIME AND EVEN LOOKING AT MY CHILD. I FELT I WASN'T A PROPER MUM... I HEARD THAT [MY COLLEAGUE] HAD THE SAME WITH THEIR GRANDCHILD AND THAT WAS YEARS AFTER SHE'D BEEN IN THE JOB AND SHE WAS JUST ALWAYS DETACHED. IT'S NOT SOMETHING YOU CAN SAY TO ANYONE BUT IT HELPED WHEN I DID HEAR THAT IT'S HAPPENED BEFORE TO OTHERS. YOU FEEL HUMAN AGAIN."

(CSE INVESTIGATOR, PPU 2022))

"BEING A MAN AND ALL THAT ... THE THINGS THAT THESE HORRIFIC MEN (MAINLY MEN) DO AND SEEING AND READING IT ALL THE DAY AND SEEING WHAT THEY ARE CAPABLE OF AND WHAT THEY THINK IS OK AND NOT STOPPING TO THINK IT'S NOT... AND WHEN THEY TALK TO EACH OTHER AND THEY'RE IN THIS WORLD WHERE THAT'S WHAT THEY ARE..., AND THEN YOU CAN'T HELP BUT SOMETIMES THINK, 'BUT I'M A MAN TOO' AND THAT FEELS REALLY HEAVY BECAUSE OF THE ASSOCIATION. BUT IT'S NOT YOU. YOU'RE THE ONE TRYING TO STOP IT. THEN IT FEELS ALRIGHT."

(PPU DIGITAL EXPLOITATION, 2022)

WHY YOUR RESILIENCE IS SO POWERFUL IN THIS DARKNESS

As a nod of respect to all of you who operate in the more shadowy side of policing, here is a little insight into how brains evolve and why yours are so powerful. Doing what you do, you are defying your own DNA in order to help others. This is huge. This is what changes species. This is how we become better humans- not just in our lifetimes, but epigenetically for generations to come. A line of work such as policing threat to life, harm to children and violation of norms has an evolutionary disadvantage.

As **living creatures**, we avoid physical harm to preserve life and we evolve to preserve the species and protect the young from harm.

As **mammals**, there is a sanctity to procreation that enables us to maintain intimacy and support for each other in our continuation of the species.

Developing **from primates**, we have refined our capacity to develop connectivity with each other on a more philosophical level, like with religion.

It is in our very DNA to preserve life, protect the young, honour procreation and respect ideologies. Policing homicide, Child Sexual Exploitation, Violence Against Women and Girls and Terrorism required us to think about what it takes to go against everything that makes us who we are. You already do this, but here's a quick Cheat for Life.

MINSDET TECHNIQUES:

SAFE, SATISFIED, CONNECTED.

Our reptilian brains need us to be safe.

Remind yourself that you are as safe as you reasonably can be to do your utmost to help protect the vulnerable and generate even more safety for THEM.

The mammalian part of our brain gets much out of everything being OK 'enough'.

This can be a tough one when we are in the dark, but it's achievable by reminding ourselves that what we do means something. We bring a bit of 'light', as it were: our expertise, even our kit and -most importantly- our commitment to honour those for whom we do our best.

Our primate brain is where resilience excels.

It is activated by compassion and our connection with others. Remind yourself that you are not alone in your commitment to this work, you have common ground with colleagues, with others working for local authorities, intelligence services, the NCA, other emergency responders. charities, even news agencies. What you all have in common is your willingness to get stuck in.

FORCE ADVICE:

Finally, some words for forces, for decision makers, leaders, managers, units and teams and all those who have accountability to people other than themselves.

. Authenticity is pretty much all that matters. Policing is threat-based work which raises the value of having a team and a station and a force having your back: and doing so genuinely. Every force has its glitches when it comes to wellbeing, TRiM, psychological assessments, referrals and peer support. The real mark of a decent, trustworthy and safe working environment is one that is honest about what it can deliver and what it cannot.

. Have faith in yourself, even if you trip on your words and try to get everything 'right'

Difficult and emotive issues often come with linguistic trip wire where we find ourselves catapulting ourselves over our words, into a quagmire of potential social backlash. We mean well but we use a phrase or a suffix or a noun that now has a whole lotta meaning associated with it and it's completely not what you meant, and so you silence your good intentions and lose faith in caring in the first place. Don't do that. Take a breath and say what you think in your own words. Offer a caveat first perhaps but ask that people try to listen in to your intention and engage with that. Because our intention is our heart. And that works with our mind. And together they can do great things.

"THE SECRET TO
GIVING A
SHIT.... IS JUST
GIVING A SHIT"



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(ACC, LINCOLNSHIRE POLICE 2024)

FORCE ADVICE (cont):

- Join national discussions and task groups

"There are 43 ways of doing things in UK Policing" is a popular phrase. An increasingly popular adage to that is,

"...AND 43 WAYS OF
F***ING IT UP".

The thing is, just having a few individuals from different forces offering you a team approach to something that your force needs is a very very refreshing way of feeling a joint effort without the pressure of local scrutiny.

If you can, find a task group or a couple of like-minded folk in different forces with the same ideas, talk. No one is an island. Nor is any force.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Guidance on working with extreme digital material was produced with Dr Jess and Police Care UK in 2019 and is available here. The College of Policing offer a video of Dr Jess talking about secondary and vicarious trauma, the transcript for which is available from jkm35@cam.ac.uk.

The Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale is available (https://www.naadac.org/assets/2416/sharon_foley_ac15_militarycultureho2.pdf)

(Bride, B.E. et al., 2004. Development and validation of the Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale. Research on Social Work Practice, 14, 27-35.)

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THIS IS DR JESS SIGNING
OFF FOR TITEN'S TRAUMA
RESILIENCE SERIES 2025.

WITH LOVE X



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