

Chapter 8

Wellness: A Matter of Health

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We all have seen at least one police officer whose belly hangs over the gun belt and who looks like, if he walked too fast, let alone had to run, he would not get very far. For many years, a lack of fitness was a common sight among older police officers. In more recent years, fewer officers appear to be badly out of shape or unfit. One reason for this change has been the adoption of the idea that a fit officer is a better officer, who is less of a liability to the community and the organization. This idea has risen to the creation of "wellness" programs.

The term *wellness* refers to "the active process of becoming aware of and making choices to create a healthier life, in all of life's dimensions" (Donatelle, Snow-Harter, and Wilcox, 1997, p. 7). Other writers explain that a wellness program "relies on individual fitness regimes prescribed according to the individual's specific needs, with the goal of maintaining or enhancing fitness over a period of time" (Coplay and Charles, 1998, p. 416). Police officer wellness, an attempt to reach and maintain optimum health, is an emerging managerial concern. As you know, policing can be stressful and hazardous. A fit officer will be in a much better position to tackle job tasks and cope with occupational pressures. As we see in this chapter, police organizations are beginning to realize a wide range of benefits is to be had simply by concentrating on the theme of employee wellness.

Certain topics immediately spring to mind when people talk about health and wellness. They include exercise, eating habits, nutritional diets, and healthy lifestyle choices, such as refraining from drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. Changes in these areas can help ward off or reduce stress and the accompanying chemical reactions within the body when it responds to a threat. In addition, medical experts agree that reaching and maintaining a healthy body weight reduces the risk of high blood pressure and other cardiovascular disorders. Furthermore, weight maintenance can improve blood sugar utilization, lower cholesterol levels, and decrease coronary disease. Stress also can be reduced by improving job skills.

One skill that will be addressed in this chapter is self-defense. Defensive tactics, even before using the option of deadly force, may be necessary to save officers' lives. Generally, self-defense and stress control through martial arts are not considered for a departmental fitness program. Traditionally, people look for running and weight lifting programs at health clubs for exercise. Not only can self-defense be a complete

exercise program, it can hone skills and develop confidence to control stress during many stressful job functions. It is hoped that administrators will see the value of developing fitness programs and encourage wellness.

The reality that policing contributes to a precipitous decline in one's health and fitness is no secret. The job itself is very sedentary. Officers spend a great deal of time sitting behind the wheel of a patrol vehicle. Shift-work, rotating assignments around the clock, stress, convenient fatty fast foods, heavy smoking, drinking, and sudden physical exertion all are lethal ingredients. Every year more officers die from a heart attack while on duty than are killed during a physical attack (Rachlin, 1996). Premature heart disease is higher among officers than civilians of similar ages in other occupations. The Institute of Aerobic Research (Rachlin, 1996) states that police officers over the age of 30 frequently are less physically fit than the general population. In short, the profile of a police officer, which includes poor aerobic conditioning teamed with sudden strenuous exertion, requires attention.

Since policing contributes to the decline of one's health and abilities even though fitness and abilities are required for the job, police administrators need to make changes for their personnel. Studies have shown that fitness is required to perform the functions of policing. Some common physical requirements of police work include wrestling, running, pulling, pushing, climbing, twisting, bending, and running. Any of these activities can be used to save a life. If an officer cannot perform any of these functions, somebody's life may be lost. Couper (1983) concludes that police departments should enforce minimum fitness standards to include those pertaining to general health and physical fitness. A balanced diet and routine physical exercise provide officers the ability to perform duties of the job and control negative stress physically and emotionally (Couper, 1983). In *Parker v. District of Columbia* (1988), an officer could not subdue a suspect and shot him. The court ruled that liability could be imposed on a municipality if it showed indifference toward adequate training of officers. The officer in this case had to resort to his firearm because he was physically unable to subdue the suspect.

In this chapter, we look at how tobacco, alcohol, and poor physical conditioning in general affects the mortality and morbidity of police officers and their ability to control stress in their lives and jobs. We see how police officers are in poorer physical condition than the general public and how stress can lead to idleness, the need to rely on excessive force, and increased liability to agencies. Good conditioning will decrease the costs of police downtime from illness and injury. We approach the concept of wellness from a holistic viewpoint, illustrating that not only the traditional methods of fitness programs, such as running, weight training, and diet, but also self-defense training and martial arts are alternative approaches to wellness. We see how stress plays an important part of the deterioration of police officer health and how stress management can be controlled by learning exceptional skills in dealing with the functions of the job. In short, the position taken in this chapter is that self-defense training, good nutrition, and aerobic exercise will decrease the liability of agencies and improve the effectiveness of officers.

THE HEALTH TOLL OF POLICE WORK

Being physically fit offers many advantages. Increased health benefits, better self-esteem and confidence, and less loss of self-control because of stress are a few benefits that immediately come to mind. Cardiovascular efficiency not only helps the heart but also aids in reduced recovery time after an injury, illness, or stress. Enhanced muscle tone, increased strength, more flexibility, and higher endurance levels translate into better daily functioning, more stamina, and fewer injuries from pulls and strains. Higher levels of fitness strengthen the immune system, reduce infections and chronic disease, and promote better stress management. Better stress management, in turn, will lead to fewer citizen complaints against officers and their agencies and reduce situations of liability. All these are very important issues for police officers and police administrators, especially the relationships between fitness and heart ailments and between stress and agency liability.

According to Collingwood (1988), research about the physical fitness of police officers indicates the capacity for low-work, a high incidence of early retirement and disability, a high mortality rate, and higher than average health risk. The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) found in a two-year study that police have a heart attack risk higher than the general population, resulting from high job stress and sedentary work, smoking, and poor diets (Collingwood, 1988).

Aging results in a decline in the heart's ability to pump blood and deliver oxygen while removing metabolic waste products. The components of cardiovascular pump performance are the maximal heart rate that can be achieved, the size and contractibility of heart muscles, and the stiffness or flexibility of the vessels (Seiler, 1996). Heart rate ranges between 220 for young children to about 180 for men age 60 or more. The heart rate decreases due to aging. There is no strong evidence to suggest that training can influence the decline in the heart rate. Although heart size in active older adults has been shown to be similar to that of active youth, it is larger than their sedentary, same-aged peers. Maximal stroke volume of blood pumped by the heart appears to decrease because of a reduction in physical training and a loss in the elasticity of the vessels, which increases the peripheral resistance and elevates blood pressure. Increased peripheral resistance produces a decrease in maximal blood flow to working muscles (Seiler, 1996). Good breathing techniques, such as *qi gong*, help oxygenate the muscles (cardiopulmonary efficiency) during training and while at rest.

Research on *qi gong* breathing techniques shows an increase in lung capacity over others in that age group who are not using the techniques. The two-year research also illustrated that although lung capacity generally declines in the early to mid-30s, those involved in the experiment did not decline. The test group included subjects between the ages of 30 and 65 (Massey et al., 1993). Since aging affects the heart's efficiency, it is imperative that a regimen of regular exercise for officers be implemented to help the heart maintain efficiency superior to that of their sedentary peers of the same age group.

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chi. *Qi gong* concentrates on breathing and cardiopulmonary functioning. *Qi gong* has been used in clinical settings to improve health and wellness. It has proven to bring positive results with high blood pressure, stroke, cardiovascular efficiency, bone density, sex hormone levels, cancer, and even early stages of senility (Seaward, 1997). Data indicate that *qi gong* can be a significant factor in promoting health. Similar studies in the United States are taking place with support by the National Institute of Health's Office of Alternative Medicine (Seaward, 1997).

After age 25, aerobic fitness declines each year at a rate of 1% per year. Without aerobic fitness, the decline is much faster (Donatelle et al., 1997). The prevalence of obesity in the American adult population is 27% for women and 24% for men. One in three people over age 45 is obese, mostly because of reduced physical activity. Only 25% of the variability of body fat on the body is genetic. Therefore, officers can control how much body fat they carry and how much they weigh by the amount of exercise and how much food they eat (Donatelle et al., 1997).

Research comparing police victims of heart attacks with the number of officers killed in the line of duty shows the number of officers killed feloniously was minuscule. This finding led the Nassau County (New York) Police Department to begin a voluntary fitness program in 1994. Of the 3,100 officers in that agency, 1,500 are striving to achieve better health (Rachlin, 1996). Administrators first worked with union leaders and informed them that the new fitness program was intended to reduce heart attacks and that it was strictly voluntary. No one would lose his or her job for not participating. It was also pointed out that officers dying of heart attacks while lifting or chasing were not treated the same as those who were killed in the line of duty (Rachlin, 1996).

In addition to preventing heart disease, fitness programs can do much to help reduce back injuries. According to the American Association of Occupational Health Nurses (Pucetti, 1995), 85% of all adults suffer from back pain at some point in their lives. The annual cost for back problems, which includes compensation benefits, medical treatment, and pensions, topples the \$14 billion mark. In 1992, for example, more than 800,000 disabling back injuries were related to work. Back injury to people below the age of 45 is the leading cause of disability in this country. The ITT Hartford Life Insurance Companies estimate that 8% of a company's payroll goes to covering disability costs (Puccetti, 1995). Obviously, prevention can be less expensive and result in more productive employees.

Yoga and tai chi exercises are used in the treatment of back problems at the Alexian Brothers' Medical Center in Elk Grove Village, Illinois. Although scientific research has been scarce, it is now beginning to emerge. The clinic, Alt-Med, offers a successful alternative treatment to surgery. In three years, the clinic has had over a 90% pain-resolution success rate for persons with chronic and acute back pain who have not had back surgery (Karuhn, 1994). The same exercises can be used in a fitness program to prevent back problems.

Police administrators need to provide fitness programs in an effort to cut down worker compensation claims. Over a two-year period, officers in the Elgin (Illinois) Police Department (EPD) filed 110 workers compensation claims. The EPD roster contains 159 sworn personnel. The claims represent 30% and 38% of the officers for

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each of the two years, respectively. During fiscal year 1996-97, 49 EPD officers incurred \$112,475 in workers compensation claims. That figure reached \$229,803 for 61 worker compensation claims in fiscal year 1997-98. To put these dollar amounts into a meaningful context, the annual in-service training budget for the entire EPD hovers at the \$100,000 mark (Sarro, 1998). While one can only guess how many claims a fitness program could have prevented, it is pretty clear that changes would be welcomed.

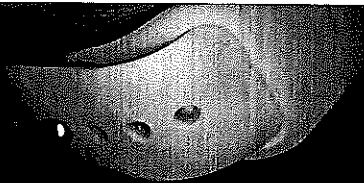
Research into the physical fitness of police officers finds a low capacity for physical activity, a high incidence of early retirement, greater disability rates, an excessive mortality rate, and a higher-than-average health risk in this group (Collingwood, 1988). The IACP-sponsored study indicates that police officers have a heart attack risk that is higher than the general population. Much of this debilitation is attributed to high job stress and sedentary work, smoking, and poor dietary habits (Collingwood, 1988). As you can see, health issues ought to be of paramount importance to police administrators.

THE REALITY OF POLICE WORK

According to Alpert and Dunham (1998), relatively few police officers are killed in the line of duty. However, around 15% of all police officers are assaulted every year and approximately 21,000 officers sustain injuries from these incidents. Most assaults stem from an attempt to escape custody (Doerner, 1998, pp. 201-203). As one might imagine, the constant threat of violence has a corrosive emotional impact on officers (Alpert and Dunham, 1998).

These figures are instructive because they indicate that physical confrontations are a foreseeable event in police work, making physical fitness an imperative. One good argument in favor of fitness standards being job related comes from an understanding of the people with whom the police have contact. Men between the ages of 16 and 24 are responsible for the majority of crime in this country. This profile does not change much from one year to the next. For our purposes, this observation boils down to the fact that the police are fighting criminals who generally are in better physical shape than they. It stands to reason, then, that physical fitness is not a luxury for police officers; it is an absolute occupational necessity.

Given this information, one would think that police officers should, and would, want to better their conditioning. For example, Copay and Charles (1998) report that incoming police academy recruits tend to register average fitness scores. Krajick (1979) also finds that officers between the ages of 21 and 35 were in average physical condition, which medical doctors readily admit is terrible. Furthermore, officers between the ages of 36 and 52 are in worse shape than their counterparts in other occupations. Additional proof comes in the form of *life expectancies*, how long one can expect to live. The average police officer does not live long enough to enjoy the "golden years." The typical police officer is dead by age 60. When compared to the general population, the average police officer can expect to have 15 fewer years of life.



COST OF ABSENTEEISM

Exact workers compensation costs charged to the police sector are not readily available. However, one can arrive at an estimate for these expenditures. Suppose that the average yearly salary is \$40,000 for all levels of officers under the position of chief. This figure works out to approximately \$20 per hour. An annual downtime of ten days spells a staggering cost for police organizations. For example, if there are 21,000 injuries to officers annually (Maguire and Pastore, 1998) and these officers are off-duty for an average of five to ten days, the total cost lies somewhere between \$16 and \$33 million in lost productivity (\$20 per hour multiplied by an eight-hour workday equals \$160 per day, which when multiplied by five days yields \$800, which is then multiplied by 21,000 for a grand total of \$16.8 million). An emphasis on defensive training, in addition to physical fitness, will help deflect these costs, let alone the untold costs stemming from lawsuits involving excessive force. As you can see, it is in the best interest of police managers to encourage defensive tactics training as part of a departmental total wellness program.

TRENDS IN POLICE FITNESS REQUIREMENTS

By now, you are well aware that a number of perils are associated with policing. The debilitating consequences of such risks as heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, colon cancer, depression, and anxiety are well documented. Given this background, what exactly are police agencies doing to combat this problem?

Just about every law enforcement agency in this country requires incoming personnel to demonstrate some level of fitness prior to being hired. These entrance standards range from checking cholesterol levels to heart monitoring to demonstrations of physical capability. Unfortunately, in-service practices do not always mirror preservice requirements. Regulations or policies addressing postacademy fitness are noticeably absent in many agencies. Garner (1997), for example, surveyed 63 municipal police agencies and sheriffs departments in Texas. Only three agencies had a mandatory fitness program for officers. Almost two-thirds of the departments had no directives at all pertaining to officer conditioning.

A police fitness program should consist of a uniform system for wellness management, provide standards that promote the attainment and retention of good health and physical fitness, and enhance the overall effectiveness of the agency. Departments that have been successful in requiring ongoing fitness standards for employees also have disciplinary measures in place for those not meeting the standards. Furthermore, as Professor Camp explains in Chapter 7, negligent failure to train can cost an agency severely. Usually, litigation against agencies for failure to train flows from two sources. The first are citizens whose rights have been violated by an officer who lacks proper training. The second source are subordinates who suffer injuries in the course of duty because of insufficient training (del Carmen, 1994).

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One pocket of resistance to mandatory in-service fitness standards are collective bargaining units. It can be extremely difficult to get unions to conform voluntarily with fitness standards. As Professors Hunter and Merritt explain in Chapter 10, the purpose of a bargaining unit is to protect job rights. Consequently, these units are quite reluctant to grant agencies further grounds for employee dismissals.

Another reason for the lack of fitness standards stems from the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). According to the ADA, fitness performance tests must be relevant to the job. The standards must be constructed in such a way that failure to perform at a certain level will be detrimental to discharging the tasks of the job. As the next section explains, there are some very valid ways to measure fitness that can transcend these objections.

Measuring Fitness

The Cooper Center for Aerobics Research in Dallas is a good source to validate benefits of police fitness because of its research involving defensible, job-related standards. The Cooper Test measures fitness through four different trials: a timed 1 1/2 mile run (cardiovascular stamina), the number of push-ups a person can perform (upper body strength), the number of sit-ups one can do (abdominal strength), and the sit and reach (determines flexibility by inches reached beyond the knees). Fitness in these categories measure fitness for the job; flexibility also helps reduce injuries. Flexibility of back and legs, more than any other aspect, helps prevent back injuries (Anderson, 1996; Pucetti, 1995).

Boards of police commissioners set police hiring and promotion standards in Illinois. They also conduct hearings to discipline and dismiss officers. These boards require police applicants to take several tests to earn a spot on an eligibility list. One such requirement is a physical ability test called the POWER test. Recruits must pass the POWER test during the first week of attendance at the academy or they are dismissed. The POWER test is a modified version of the Cooper Test. It measures flexibility (sit and reach), cardiovascular stamina (a 1 1/2 mile run), upper body strength (bench press), and abdominal strength (sit-ups). The four categories are separated by gender into age standards. Some academies also use a weight threshold.

Typical height-and-weight charts, while used in some locales, do not take muscle mass into account. Because of this shortcoming, the Palatine (Illinois) Police Department measures excessive body fat in addition to administering the POWER test. The U.S. Department of Defense also uses a height-and-weight chart, along with a body fat measurement.

One study reports that over 80% of responding police agencies say they use a physical ability test for employment qualification (Swanson, Territo, and Taylor, 1998). Before the enactment of Title VII in 1972, the principal physical requirement used in officer selection was based on height-and-weight charts. Because these standards discriminate against women and some ethnic groups with small body size,

they no longer are used as hiring criteria unless the agency can show that these factors relate to actual job performance.

Some departments abandoned height-and-weight charts and adopted obstacle courses. However, these agencies quickly learned that they could not defend their reliance on an obstacle course when challenged by women who had a disproportionate failure rate. In *Harless v. Duck* (1980), the court struck down physical agility requirements because the job did not specify how much strength was needed. Another department was challenged successfully when it required candidates to scale a 6-foot fence, but the city had an ordinance that limited fences in its jurisdiction to 5 feet (Swanson et al., 1998).

Failure to Comply

Some agencies now require officers to maintain their fitness after basic training. Altamonte Springs (Florida) Police Department has had such a mandatory fitness program since 1987. Minimum standards are required, with rewards for those who exceed the standards. In yet another example, the Mobile (Alabama) Police Department uses the minimum physical ability test established by the Alabama Peace Officers Standards and Training Commission. It incorporates a graduated sequence of discipline for officers who fail to comply with the wellness standards requirements (Mobile, Alabama, Police Department, 1998). As Box 8-1 shows, discipline ranges from the first step, an observation, up to the sixth step, which is a three-day suspension for noncompliance. Officers who demonstrate progress toward meeting the fitness standards, even though they do not actually satisfy the standards, are not disciplined.

Box 8-1 An Example of Graduated Disciplinary Guidelines

Violation 1: Performance observation.

Violation 2: Letter of reprimand.

Violation 3: Letter of reprimand and officer/cadet will not be considered for promotion.

Violation 4: Extra job privileges, voluntary overtime privileges and/or where applicable, take home car privileges are suspended.

Violation 5: Officer will be declared ineligible for scheduled merit raise.

Violation 6: Three-day suspension.

Source: Mobile [Alabama] Police Department, *Manual of Written Directives*.

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Written Directives.

The Mobile Police Department has a sophisticated mandatory wellness program and holds each officer or cadet responsible for his or her own fitness. Training is the responsibility of the unit commanding officers, including supervisors. The department tests officers annually for compliance with the physical standards. Officers who fail are subject to the disciplinary provisions that Box 8-1 outlines.

Just as in high school physical education classes, sometimes a forced fitness program will produce real injuries, feigned injuries, officers with doctors' excuses to circumvent the program, and officers who are just reluctant to participate. Many agencies use monetary incentives to prod officers into compliance. The California Highway Patrol (CHP), for example, provides a cash incentive of an extra \$130 per month to participants. This supplement actually saves the CHP millions of dollars a year from workers compensation claims, lawsuits, and dismissals. The CHP also has an attractive disability retirement incentive that produces a tidy financial savings (McDermott, 1987, pp. 18, 23).

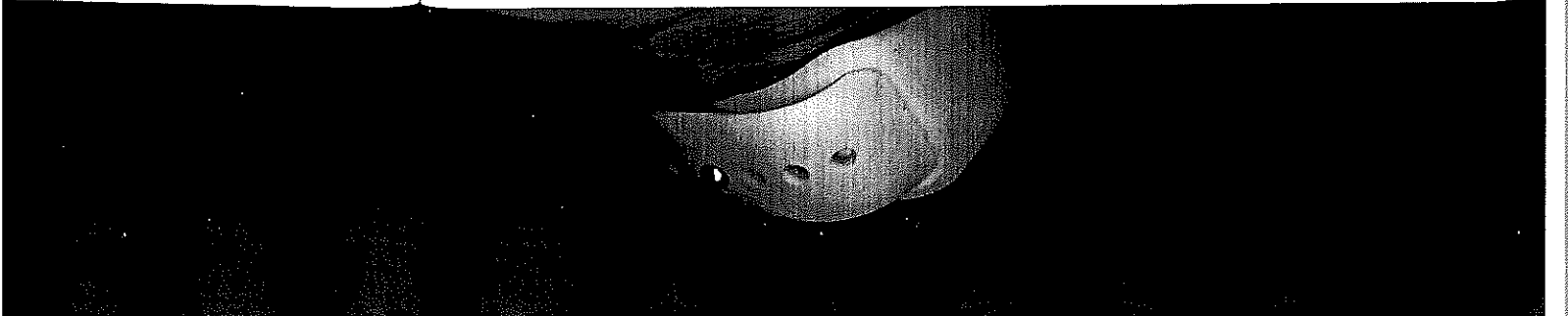
The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Civil Rights acts make it difficult, but not insurmountable, to implement fitness standards for police officers. Some administrators are afraid that fitness requirements will violate these statutes so they take the easy way out and ignore the issues. But the civil liability inherent in negligent hiring, training, and retention makes it difficult to deploy unfit police officers who are unable to perform life-saving duties. This failure to protect the public with professional police services is indefensible. If it can be illustrated that an officer who satisfies minimal physical fitness standards could have effected an arrest without injury to the suspect, then the department might become liable through "negligence to train" theory. This analysis suggests that agencies that sidestep the issue of physical fitness are flirting with a considerable risk. However, physical well-being is more than just being in shape through exercise. It also includes monitoring other health-related factors, such as tobacco and alcohol use.

THE HAZARDS OF TOBACCO INGESTION

The World Health Organization (1998b) estimates that tobacco products are responsible for 6% of all deaths throughout the world. Closer to home, over 400,000 deaths in this country were attributed to tobacco and over 100,000 deaths to alcohol in 1991 (World Health Organization, 1998a). Tobacco causes more deaths than all other forms of substance abuse combined. Effective medical intervention rarely is possible for most tobacco-related illnesses.

Available data suggest that, globally, approximately 47% of men and 12% of women smoke. The health consequences from this tobacco epidemic in both developed and developing countries are devastating. Since the middle of the 20th century, tobacco products have killed more than 60 million people in developed countries. Currently, tobacco is responsible for 3.5 million deaths worldwide every year.

Tobacco is known to be the probable cause of about 25 diseases. The sheer scale of the impact tobacco has on disease throughout the United States still is not fully appreciated. For example, tobacco is the leading cause of lung cancer. According to



Box 8-2 An Example of Policy Guidelines Regarding Smoking While on Duty

The use of tobacco products while on-duty shall be as inconspicuous as possible at all times. In no event will a member or employee smoke a tobacco product in any public or private place where smoking is prohibited by state law or city ordinance.

Source: Tallahassee [Florida] Police Department, *Manual of Written Directives*.

the World Health Organization (1998a), it also kills even more people through many other allied diseases. Tobacco also is instrumental in cancers at other sites, heart disease, stroke, emphysema, bronchitis, lung fibrosis, and other chronic lung diseases. Lifetime smokers have a 50% chance of dying from tobacco-induced ailments. A quarter of these consumers will die about 22 years earlier than the normal life expectancy.

Tobacco cessation produces positive health benefits. For example, the risk of coronary heart disease decreases by 50% one year after quitting. Within 15 years, the risk of dying from coronary heart disease approaches that of one who has never smoked. Furthermore, according to the World Health Organization (1998a), 10-14 years after cessation of smoking, the risk of mortality from cancer decreases to nearly that of those who have never smoked (World Health Organization, 1998c).

Police work exposes officers to situations that compromise their physical and mental well-being. Some officers resort to tobacco products as a mechanism to relieve this stress. However, it already is evident that smoking and chewing tobacco exert a detrimental effect upon a person's health. In recognition of this unhealthy effect, some agencies have banned tobacco ingestion. Other agencies restrict tobacco usage for merely cosmetic reasons. As Box 8-2 displays, some agencies appear to worry more about the public appearance than the health of their employees. Regardless of why the policy may be in place, the truth remains that tobacco usage is detrimental to one's health, and by controlling or even eliminating its use among officers, both individuals and their agencies reap the benefits.

THE HAZARDS OF ALCOHOL INGESTION

Excessive drinking leads to more than 100,000 deaths annually in the United States (Doyle, 1996). In 1992, drunken driving accidents made up 25% of this number. Alcohol-related homicide and suicide accounted for 11% and 8%, respectively. Cancers that are partly attributable to alcohol, such as those of the esophagus and

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such as those of the esophagus and

larynx, contribute an additional 17%. About 19% resulted from alcohol-related strokes. Another major contributor is a group of 12 ailments wholly caused by alcohol, such as alcoholic cirrhosis of the liver and alcohol dependence syndrome. These 12 ailments represented 18% of all alcohol-related deaths in 1992.

According to the ADA, a person who uses alcohol regularly suffers from a disability. An employer may have to make an accommodation if the alcoholic is qualified to perform the essential functions of the job (Moriarity and Field, 1994). But, if an employee uses alcohol in a manner that affects job performance or conduct so that he or she is not qualified to do the job, then an employer may discipline, fire, or deny employment. In fact, some agencies have adopted a “zero tolerance” toward officers who report for duty in a less than optimal condition. Unfortunately, alcohol consumption, like tobacco use, is difficult to govern because for many officers, both items work as stress reducers. Still, existing data on the negative impact of these products offer support for police agencies willing to implement, for health reasons, policies against the use or consumption of both products.

USE OF FORCE AND STRESS

Earlier in this chapter, I explain that assaults resulting in injuries to police officers represent a formidable outlay for police departments. No doubt, the emotional toll from this potential danger also generates negative stress. While physical fitness may be one way to control the problem, another option is self-defense training. Proper preparation will increase self-confidence in handling attacks and lessen the possibility of injury to the officer and the suspect.

Stress also can cause officers to overreact to situations, especially in less-than-lethal confrontations where the officer wants to maintain the upper hand. Uncontrolled stress can lead to verbal abuse or excessive use of physical force, which invites claims of police misconduct and brutality. Reiss (1968) found that most complaints of police brutality in Chicago turned out to be mostly verbal abuse. However, officers are more likely to strike out or lose composure when they are angry or frightened rather than when they are collected and self-assured. Being able to control stress helps officers maintain composure. Poise gained through self-confidence in self-defense training, for example, does not make an individual more violent or aggressive. Rather, fear, insecurity, and a lack of confidence elicit the poor decision making that leads to violence. The positive implications for management are fewer lawsuits by citizens and injured officers, fewer citizen complaints, and less downtime for officers because of injuries.

The term *self-defense* usually is used in a very narrow context. The training actually is more encompassing than just punching and kicking. It involves taking care of oneself both mentally and physically, protecting against sickness and disease. Self-defense training should include an approach of total wellness, with a goal of absence of disease and disease-producing manifestations, such as negative stress. It includes a lifestyle of exercise and good nutrition that promotes health. It is important to develop consistency of personal daily routines that foster a healthy,

confident lifestyle that helps control stress, thereby reducing inappropriate police behavior.

Police officers encounter three categories of stress in their personal and professional lives: eustress, neustress, and distress. *Eustress* (positive stress) comes from pleasant and desirable things or events, such as a vacation or a promotion. *Neustress* is neutral and does not affect a person either negatively or positively; it has no significant impact on an individual. *Distress*, or negative stress, can lead to potentially serious consequences, such as excessive force and ill health if not controlled. This negative stress can be broken down into two other types: acute and chronic. *Acute distress* is intense and usually causes physiological changes and altered perception. However, it is not ongoing and usually subsides after the confrontation ends. Physically attempting to subdue a resisting suspect would be one such example. *Chronic distress* is not as intense, but may last over an extremely long period of time. Going to work every day to face an unbearable supervisor (Seaward, 1997) or the anticipation of a possible physical confrontation during a call for service would fit here.

Negative stress originates in unpleasant situations that threaten personal well-being. Negative stress can be prolonged and trigger inappropriate responses. The application of excessive force when arresting a driver after a high-speed pursuit would be one such example (Conroy and Hess, 1992). Since police officers cannot always avoid contact with negative stress, they must learn how to control it. Several factors can aggravate negative stress. Poor nutrition, lack of exercise, and lack of self-confidence are just a few. Poor control during negative stress situations can be prevented by a healthy diet, staying physically fit through exercise, stress control techniques, and having self-confidence when dealing with negative stress situations, especially during confrontations where there is the potential of being physically injured or killed.

CONTROLLING STRESS

Several institutionalized methods are used to prevent detrimental consequences of negative stress, including exercise, meditation, flexibility and breathing (yoga), martial arts (*qi gong*, *tai chi*, *tai su*, etc.), and other relaxation techniques. Zorn (1994) writes about the increased health benefits of *qi* (pronounced che) *gong* breathing to reduce stress. For millions of Chinese people, *qi gong* is the only route to a long, healthy life. Some Western scientists now are studying the effects of Eastern styles of exercise.

The benefits of correct exercise are unquestioned. Almost everyone recognizes the advantages of an adequate exercise program; it is the type and amount of that exercise program that are a mystery. The documented benefits of exercise are numerous. According to Rice (1992), positive effects for an individual include increased respiratory capacity, improved muscle tone, stronger skeletal and connective tissues, heightened cardiovascular functioning, better circulation, lower LDL cholesterol and triglyceride levels, increased HDL cholesterol, more energy,

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improved sleep, a higher metabolic rate and lowered body fat, reduced risk of injury from slips and falls as the body becomes more resilient, and slower aging.

Some tangible mental benefits also are associated with proper exercise. They include increased feelings of self-control, independence, enhanced self-confidence and self-esteem, decreased mental fatigue from work pressure, improved mental functioning and alertness, emotional cleansing of tensions from interpersonal conflict and job stress, reduced levels of stress, and relief from mild depression (Crews and Landers, 1987). Both the physical and psychological benefits help mitigate the consequences of negative stress.

SELF-CONFIDENCE TO REDUCE STRESS

In some instances, police brutality is the result of officers not having the necessary confidence and skill to counteract suspect resistance. Their fear results in overre-acting with excessive force or a continued emotional response after the suspect is subdued. Being in shape, the product of an exercise program, is necessary when confronting a hostile suspect. As you might imagine, this preparation also can help decrease liability for police administrators.

As previously noted, the astute administrator must provide ample incentives for officers to train regularly. Once there is an administrative mind set that this type of training is part of the totality of wellness, administrators will begin providing opportunities to polish the skills for confident self-defense. To become ingrained, a technique must be practiced 2,000-3,000 times. A maintenance program also is needed to maintain these acquired skills. Take, for example, a person who used to be quite active in a sport, say, basketball. Even though considerable time has passed, that person may still be able to recount how to perform movements and how to execute techniques in his or her mind. However, the body probably will lag behind without periodic practice or maintenance.

Police managers should provide in-service skill development as a means to reduce and control stress in situational conflicts. Officers should have opportunities that will foster weight reduction, stamina, flexibility, and enhance strength and coordination development. Fitness will increase productivity, reduce liability, reduce worker compensation claims, reduce complaints from the public, increase longevity, improve health, and prevent disease and stress.

CONCLUSION

Regardless of one's occupation, repeated exposure to stress, tobacco, alcohol, a sedentary lifestyle, and an inadequate diet can exert detrimental effects on a person's performance, health, and wellness. This statement is especially true for people involved in policing. What factors mold a person's wellness? Experts (Donatelle et al., 1997, pp. 7-8) mention the following as positive steps toward achieving better health and a more wellness-oriented lifestyle:

- Exercise aerobically at least three times per week.
- Engage in other forms of moderate to strenuous exercise.
- Quit smoking.
- Limit alcohol consumption to two drinks per day and seven drinks per week.
- Eat wholesome, nutritious food.
- Reduce daily consumption of caffeine.
- Practice safe sex.
- Engage in practices like meditation and deep breathing exercises to reduce stress.
- Avoid inappropriate hostile or aggressive behavior.
- Avoid inappropriate passive behavior.
- Balance your life with family, work, social, and other activities.

Wellness does not depend on a person's age, intelligence, or physical condition. One can view wellness on a continuum that ranges from negative (premature death) to positive (optimal health). Moving a few steps in the right direction on the continuum or making improvements can be more important than one's actual location on the wellness continuum. Many people believe that high levels of wellness come through adopting a holistic approach in which the interaction and balance among the mind, body, and spirit are emphasized.

The road to wellness is an individual responsibility but also should be an organizational concern. A healthier police officer lives longer, is more productive, and has fewer complaints from the public. A healthier officer takes off fewer days, has fewer disabilities, and lives longer after retirement. Obviously, one can make a coherent argument that mandated fitness standards after officers leave the basic training academy should be in place. A physically fit officer can serve the public better than an unfit officer. At the same time, management might be held liable for not providing the public with officers who can handle the job physically. Once an organizational commitment is made to a fitness program, other positive benefits will follow. These programs also can reduce stress and its accompanying pitfalls.

Police administrators should develop a well-rounded employee assistance program (EAP) and take a high-quality approach to its operation and improvement. Police executives may need to achieve support in the community, typically in form of gaining access to adequate fitness and health facilities. The cornerstone of an EAP is prevention. In other words, there must be a commitment to deliver all types of health-related programs. These efforts may include retirement preparedness workshops, a peer counseling program, an awards and recognition program to promote participation, the ability to quickly deliver professional counseling services any time of the day, "turn-around" interventions aimed at smoking cessation and cholesterol control, and access to substance abuse treatment programs.

Perhaps the Commission on Law Enforcement Accreditation (the topic of Chapter 10) needs to make its policy on fitness standards mandatory for agencies instead of optional. Furthermore, if fitness standards do become mandatory, supervisors and managers must lead by example. Are administrators ready to do this? Younger officers are eager to be physically fit when they first join the force. We need to maintain that desire and enthusiasm.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by the totality of wellness?
2. Prepare a wellness philosophy for your department.
3. What are the benefits of developing a fitness program for your department?
4. Prepare a policy statement concerning mandatory fitness for all police officers.
5. What are some of the resistance factors in establishing a fitness requirement? Who is holding back mandatory physical fitness standards? Are administrators responsible for holding back mandatory fitness standards?
6. What is your definition of a physically fit officer? Compare that with the wellness philosophy you just prepared.

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