



# Monthly Wellness Messaging Toolkit for Law Enforcement

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# MONTHLY WELLNESS MESSAGING TOOLKIT FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

## Introduction

This toolkit is designed to support enhancing law enforcement agencies' culture and understanding around wellness and resilience. Language is something we use every day, and a thoughtful approach to messaging is a meaningful way to communicate an agency's priorities, both internally among staff and externally to the community. Using the concepts in this toolkit across a variety of applications and correspondence methods will reinforce how an agency values mutual respect and officer wellness. In addition to improving staff morale, carrying these concepts into interactions with the community will reflect an emphasis on compassion, strengthening positive engagement and relationships between the police and those they serve.

## Using this Toolkit

There are a variety of ways the content of this toolkit can be integrated within agency practices. This toolkit provides a calendar with each month featuring a nationally recognized observance or wellness topic as a guiding concept. It includes key takeaways for promoting wellness strategies as they relate to the monthly topic and an associated resource meant to foster a deeper understanding of the theme. These messages may be tailored for staff newsletters, emails, mobile apps, bulletin boards, peer support team meetings, roll call trainings, and other communication channels. It is recommended that agencies use and customize the content and communication methods that work best for their organizations. The appendices include additional guidance on language to cultivate openness and inclusivity, as well as strategies to build resilience and affect positive culture change.



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**For additional wellness resources, contact  
OSW@theIACP.org or visit [www.theIACP.org/OSW](http://www.theIACP.org/OSW)**

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# JANUARY

## Mastering Work-Life Balance

Prioritize managing your time and energy both on- and off-duty. Building a healthy work-life balance ensures that you perform effectively, reduce stress, avoid burnout, and enjoy your career.

### Refocus on your purpose and ask:

- How does my work make life better for other people?
- Why did I join the policing profession?
- How can I add more meaning to what I do every day?

### Signs of burnout may include:

- Drinking too much alcohol or experiencing changes in eating habits
- Feeling frustrated, irritable, down, or overwhelmed
- Lacking motivation and feeling like you do not care about your work or that your work is not valued
- Experiencing physical symptoms, such as headaches, stomach aches, muscle pain, or difficulty sleeping
- Withdrawing from family or friends

### Incorporate strategies into your daily routines on- and off-duty to protect against the impacts of cumulative stress, such as:

- Practicing deliberate breathing or mindfulness exercises
- Building positive thinking patterns and gratitude habits
- Establishing a ritual to change gears physically and mentally between work and home

### Helpful Resource:



[Mastering Work-Life Balance](#)



### Make Healthy Selections on the Go

Choosing healthy food options can lead to clearer thinking, increased energy, and better overall health. Find balance and enjoyment in how you fuel yourself to operate at peak performance.

- When packing snacks for the day, consider simple options that provide healthy nourishment and will leave you feeling energized, such as fruit, jerky, granola bars, or trail mix.
- Fast food restaurants may be enticing, but highly processed foods can have negative health effects. Stop at your local grocery store or market to pick up pre-made salads, sandwiches, or other dishes that will provide the healthy and nutritious sustenance you need.



[Eating Well on the Go Fact Sheet](#)



# FEBRUARY

## Checking in on Physical Health

Prioritizing physical wellness will leave you feeling and performing your best, help protect your mental health, and ensure that you have the energy you need to lead a fulfilling life.

### National Heart Month

- Did you know that the leading cause of death in the United States is heart disease?<sup>1</sup> To keep yourself and your heart healthy, stay active, eat well, and, most importantly, be kind to your body.

### Make Fitness Fun

- Physical fitness doesn't have to be a burden; there are plenty of ways to stay active while having fun. Consider hosting a friendly competition to keep your colleagues motivated, sign up for a local 5k, or plan a hike with loved ones.
- Focus on physical health with someone in your life. Whether that be a colleague, family, or friends, incorporating a strong support system will ensure that you are held accountable and taking the best steps forward to maintain your peak physical performance.

### Consistency is Key

- Check in with your healthcare professionals regularly. Keeping track of changes in your health should be an important part of your wellness routine.
- Incorporate a workout routine into your daily life by setting goals or providing incentives; setting a schedule that will keep you motivated will help create positive habits.

### Helpful Resource:



[Health Watch: Checking-in on Officer Physical Wellness with Your Doctor](#)



### February is Black History Month

Here are some ways you can support your fellow officers of color:

- Culture can be an important source of positive peer connection. Taking time to learn about Black history and creating opportunities for conversations about race and culture can help build trust and understanding, as well as form deeper connections and increase community resilience.
- Nearly half of all Black adults have some form of cardiovascular disease, which includes heart disease and stroke. Taking care of your physical well-being can reduce the risk of these conditions and help you manage your heart health.<sup>2</sup>

# MARCH

## National Sleep Awareness Month

While sleep deprivation is not exclusive to law enforcement, it is often amplified due to the unique stressors of the job and shift work. It is important to practice healthy sleep habits to prepare your mind and body for your shift.

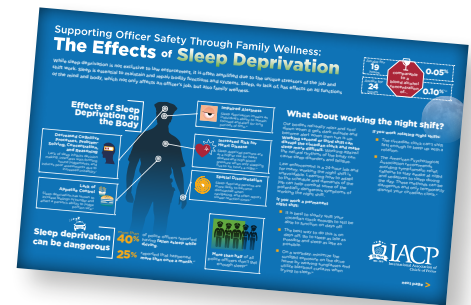
### Prioritize Sleep

- The number one purpose of your bed is for sleep; therefore, try to eliminate distractions in the bedroom, such as phones, televisions, or work equipment. If having your phone nearby is necessary for the job, try to limit use while lying down, and complete all necessary calls or correspondence before entering the bedroom.
- Establish a healthy sleep schedule. Quality time with loved ones and activities you enjoy outside of work are important, but understand when your “plate” is too full and be sure to get the rest you need to restore your energy. Build a family bedtime ritual to create a calming and relaxing environment.
- If you work a permanent night shift, it is best to slowly shift your circadian clock enough to still be able to function on days off. On a workday, minimize sunlight exposure on the way home and use blackout curtains when trying to sleep.

### Helpful Resource:



[Supporting Officer Safety Through Family Wellness: The Effects of Sleep Deprivation](#)



### March is Women’s History Month

Here are some ways you can support your female colleagues:

- Create an inclusive environment and use gender-neutral language when addressing officers and employees, avoiding phrases such as “policeman” or “brother-in-arms.”
- Nutritionally, women may have slightly different needs than men. Calcium, iron, and folic acid are particularly important for women and may need to be prioritized in dietary choices.<sup>3</sup>



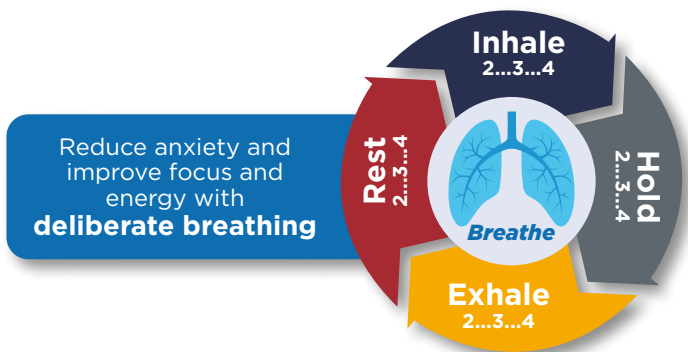
# APRIL

## Stress Awareness Month

Coming up with productive ways to work through life's stressors can help prevent negative long-term consequences and preserve your overall well-being.

### Coping with Stressful Situations

- Focus on your breathing. Often in times of stress, your heart rate can increase, and negative emotions can cloud judgment. Taking deep, controlled breaths can help to lower these effects and result in feeling calmer, both physically and mentally.
- Try meditation. Meditation is a calming technique that can reduce stress in your day-to-day life, allowing for a time of reflection and mindfulness where you can refocus your attention, center your body, and appreciate the good in your life. Before or after work each day, consider following a guided meditation through videos or apps on your phone or smartwatch.



### Leveraging Your Personality to Manage Stress

- Extroverts: If you're experiencing high levels of stress, consider talking with someone you trust. Sharing with someone can help prevent feeling alone and reduce accumulation of stressful emotions.
- Introverts: Taking your mind to a different place can elicit positive thoughts and help you relax. Consider playing your favorite song, listening to an audiobook, or exploring a new podcast.

### Helpful Resource:



[When Stress Builds Up: Strategies to Overcome Cumulative Stress and Burnout](#)



### April is National Counseling Awareness Month

Take advantage of the wellness resources your agency provides. Consider:

- Exploring your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). EAPs provide a multitude of resources, such as counseling, financial guidance, and family wellness support.
- Connecting with a counselor. This can often lead to decreased stress and anxiety symptoms and may aid in discovering the root cause of common stressors.



# MAY

## Mental Health Awareness Month

Although typically not outwardly visible, mental health is just as important as physical health. Proactively finding ways to improve your mood and seeking help when necessary can provide many short- and long-term benefits.

### Check-in with Yourself

- The law enforcement field can be stressful and unpredictable, sometimes involving distressing calls and fearful situations. It is important to reflect on your experiences daily and ensure your mental and emotional well-being are top of mind.
- Having a good work-life balance is crucial for your mental well-being. Establish routines to assist with the transition from work to home each day and unplug from work responsibilities when you are with loved ones.

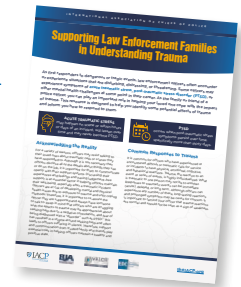
### Cultivating Connections

- Mental well-being can be affected by social relationships. Creating healthy boundaries and practicing constructive communication can help strengthen connections with friends and loved ones.
- Check in regularly with your loved ones and friends to support their wellness journeys. Helping others improve their own mental well-being can be fulfilling and can encourage a positive environment outside of work.

### Helpful Resource:



[Supporting Law Enforcement Families in Understanding Trauma](#)



### May is Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month

Here are some tips on how to support your fellow AAPI officers:

- Spend time this month learning more about AAPI heritage. Make an effort to learn more about those around you who may be of a different cultural background.
- Research shows that AAPIs may be less likely than other racial groups to take action on their mental health and may experience more high-pressure cultural expectations. Encourage individuals to seek help for challenges they may be facing.<sup>4</sup>

### 20-20-20 Technique



Every  
20  
minutes..



..take a  
20 second  
break..



..and focus  
on something  
20 feet away

Practice the 20-20-20 technique to refresh your mind and mitigate eye strain: every 20 minutes, take a 20 second break, and focus on something 20 feet away.

# JUNE

## National Safety Month

Staying vigilant about safety for yourself and others will help build confidence, increase readiness, and maintain wellness.

### Preparing for Duty

- Before each shift, ensure your equipment is duty-ready – meaning it fits, works properly, and is in its appropriate location. Do checks throughout your shift to ensure everything remains intact.
- Wear body armor and use reflective gear while performing traffic duties. Ensure these materials do not become worn down and replace them before the expiration date.
- Clean your firearm regularly, monitor your OC/pepper spray expiration date, and spark test your electronic control device before every shift. Consider the positioning of equipment on your belt so you know where these tools are placed for efficient access.

### Practice Mental Readiness

- Prioritize taking care of your mental and emotional health to help you think clearly and react to urgent needs in a safe and timely manner. Practice mindfulness by taking short breaks to reset throughout your day.
- Communicate clearly with other first responders to maintain safety and effectively support the community. Exercise compassion when engaging with others – forging positive relationships can build understanding and support.
- Seek support from others after traumatic calls. Review and use your agency’s available wellness resources, such as an Employee Assistance Program or a Peer Support Program.

### Helpful Resource:



[Prep for Duty Poster](#)



### June is LGBTQ+ Pride Month

Here are some ways to support your fellow officers in this community:

- Make a conscious effort to respect your colleagues’ preferred pronouns. Use generic terms such as “partner” or “loved ones” when referring to relationships and families.
- Use gender-neutral terms when engaging with others. Do not assume an individual’s gender based on appearance, and use “they/them” if you are unsure.

# JULY

## Living in the Moment

Focusing on what's important and taking time to recharge are key factors of meaningful connection. Staying present and appreciating the people and environment around you boosts gratitude and grounds you in your values.

### Parks and Recreation Month:

- Take time to go on a walk, enjoy a picnic in the park, or spend time outdoors. Don't forget to protect yourself from the elements by hydrating and taking safety precautions, such as using sunscreen and wearing proper clothing.
- When enjoying moments with your family, remember to stay present and focus on your immediate environment. Consider unplugging and concentrating solely on those around you to build strong, meaningful connections.

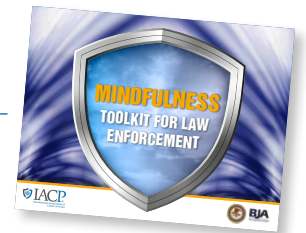
### Social Wellness Month

- Focus on your social well-being by engaging with your community through participation in local events and connecting with residents.
- Relationships are strengthened when an individual feels understood and when there are positive experiences to share. Focus on being present and responsive to others in your life to convey trust, care, and a desire to connect.

### Helpful Resource:



[Mindfulness Toolkit for Law Enforcement](#)



### July is Minority Mental Health Awareness Month

Here are some tips to support the mental health of your minority officers:

- Educate yourself on the mental health challenges minority communities face and learn how to create a healthy environment.
- Learn proper terms regarding different racial and ethnic minority communities to establish a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere for your minority officers.
- Ensure everyone feels respected in their workplace. Respect any accommodations that have been made for religious practices, to include considerations for appearance, uniform, and scheduling.

### 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 Grounding Technique



**5**  
things  
you can  
see



**4**  
things  
you can  
touch



**3**  
things  
you can  
hear



**2**  
things  
you can  
smell



**1**  
thing  
you can  
taste

Practice the 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 grounding technique to engage all your senses and connect you to your immediate environment: acknowledge 5 things you can see, 4 you can touch, 3 you can hear, 2 you can smell, and 1 you can taste.

# AUGUST

## Emphasis on Education

Openness to learning is a valuable quality when it comes to self-improvement. Educating yourself on relevant topics and promoting knowledge to those around you fosters positive connections and mutual understanding.

### Educate Yourself

- August is the start of the school year, and while you may not be a student, you can still prioritize educating yourself. Spend time this month researching training courses that can help in your personal and professional life. Through organizations like the IACP and the BJA VALOR Initiative partners, you can find numerous virtual and in-person training opportunities on a wide array of topics.
- Explore higher education. Take some time to consider your career objectives and research what pairing of experience and education you will need to reach your goals and find success during your career and in retirement. Benefits of pursuing a higher education degree can include broadening your perspective, improving your writing skills, building your network, receiving higher pay or promotional opportunities, and may guide you toward new passions as you approach retirement.
- Remember that education does not have to be formal. Reading a book or listening to a podcast are great ways to expand your knowledge, stimulate your imagination, and think critically about different issues. Visit your local library for free resources.

### Educate the Community

- Consider scheduling a “Coffee with a Cop” event this month. These events allow you to connect with members of your community to discuss issues, identify priorities, and build strong, trusting relationships.
- School-police partnerships can facilitate positive relationships between law enforcement and the community. When providing services at schools and during school events, authentic and constructive interactions with parents, students, and school administrators can help build an inclusive, safe environment.

## Cultivate a Positive Environment

Your environment can have a major impact on your mental health and overall mood. Here are some helpful tips to brighten up your surroundings:

- Natural light enhances serotonin. If possible, expose yourself to sunlight throughout the day to boost your overall mood. If there are no windows in your workspace, consider buying a light therapy lamp that mimics natural light to brighten up your space and your day.
- Organization is key when it comes to law enforcement work. Take time to regularly declutter your workspace. Ensuring your space is clean and organized can lead to lower stress levels and increased productivity.
- Decorate your surroundings at work with items, photos, or mementos that are personally important to you. Surrounding yourself with objects or keepsakes you care about can lead to feelings of happiness and comfort.

### Helpful Resource:



[Law Enforcement Retirement Toolkit](#)



# SEPTEMBER

## National Suicide Prevention Month

Suicide prevention efforts are most effective when multiple strategies are employed. Fostering an agency-wide culture of understanding can be supplemented by promoting resources, providing support, and continually reminding each person that their life is valuable.

### 988: The Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

- The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is a national network of local crisis centers that provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, seven days a week in the United States.
- If you or someone you know is battling suicidal thoughts, text or call 988 for assistance.

### Peer Support

- Peers can be a valuable tool in suicide prevention and resilience-building efforts. Be a positive peer by sharing recovery-oriented messages, decreasing barriers to seeking mental health services, normalizing help-seeking behaviors, and sharing healthy coping skills including resilience and connectedness.
- If a colleague is showing signs of suicide risk, peers can use personal and professional experiences to meet them where they are and ask about suicide in a way that may elicit an honest response. Ongoing support can also help prevent a crisis in the future, so continue to reach out and provide assistance in the way that the colleague prefers.
- As a peer supporter, be sure to practice self-care and take advantage of consultations with clinicians, debriefings for difficult situations, and/or flexibility for time off.

### Agency-Wide Action

- Be proactive and educate yourself and others on identifying signs of suicidal ideation and effective intervention and prevention techniques.
- Building a trustworthy referral network is important. Explore services available through Employee Assistance Programs, local mental health providers, and hospital systems to create a positive, culturally competent clinical partnership.

## September is National Hispanic Heritage Month

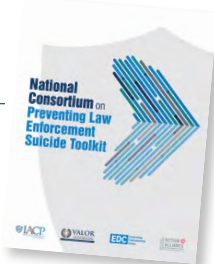
Here are some ways you can support your fellow Hispanic officers:

- Ensure that Hispanic officers in your agency feel respect and support from fellow coworkers – every officer should feel safe and regarded in their workplace.
- Suicide rates among Hispanic Americans have been increasing across the past decade, and cultural beliefs may cause additional stigma surrounding mental health. Emphasize the importance of discussing these topics, just as you would with physical wellness.<sup>5</sup>

### Helpful Resource:



[National Consortium on Preventing Law Enforcement Suicide Toolkit](#)



# OCTOBER

## National Depression Education and Awareness Month

You are not alone. Feelings of depression are common and may seem overwhelming, but taking small steps can help you maintain a state of emotional well-being.

### Avoid Thinking Traps

- Thinking traps are counterproductive patterns in thinking that undercut resilience. Having the ability to identify thinking traps can provide you with more control over your emotions. Common thinking traps are:
  - Mind reading: believing you know what someone else is thinking or expecting them to know what you are thinking.
  - Me: believing you are the sole cause of all problems.
  - Them: believing others or circumstances are the sole cause of all problems.
  - Catastrophizing: believing the absolute worst case will happen.
  - Helplessness: believing you have no control and negative events will affect all areas of your life.
- Utilize mental cues that are meaningful to you and provide instructions to help avoid thinking traps. For example, an effective mental cue for the “them” trap is “look in the mirror” because it is a reminder to consider how you are contributing to the situation.

### Stay Connected and Active

- Look for support from people who make you feel safe and cared for and make facetime a priority. Talking to someone face-to-face about how you feel can play a big role in relieving depressive symptoms.
- Find ways to support others. Sign up to help at community shelters, volunteer at a local animal rescue, or simply do something nice for someone else. Reflecting on this type of activity can help you evaluate the positive impact you have on the world.
- Movement is a powerful tool to help relieve depression symptoms. Exercise will help you feel energized, fight fatigue, and improve your mood. Focus on how your body feels as you move to help refocus your mind and ground your emotions.

## October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Here are some facts and tips to raise awareness:

- Educate officers on the best ways to approach a scene, both tactically and emotionally. Discuss effective ways to speak with survivors using trauma-informed and supportive language.
- Domestic violence calls can lead to cumulative trauma for responding officers, which can contribute to feelings of hopelessness. Don't be afraid to ask for help or speak to someone; just because you were not the direct victim, does not mean it cannot affect you.

### Helpful Resource:



[Enhancing Officer Wellness and Resiliency in Policing](#)





# NOVEMBER

## Cultivating Meaningful Connections

Engaging authentically with loved ones provides numerous internal and external benefits, improving your sense of belonging and connectedness. Spending quality time with others, while also protecting your boundaries and needs, can be accomplished through intentional and thoughtful communication.

### Practice Active Listening

- When a family member or friend is engaged in sharing a story or experience, think of open-ended follow-up questions to ask and try not to interrupt or turn someone else's story into a personal anecdote.
- Express body language and actions that show you are attentive to the information being shared, such as:
  - Maintaining eye contact
  - Putting your phone down or turning off the television
  - Smiling or nodding your head to express positive feedback
  - Repeating information back to ensure you have a comprehensive understanding

### Fostering Family Wellness

- November marks the start of the holiday season, which for many is a period of celebration, joy, and quality time spent with loved ones. However, it may also be overwhelming or emphasize feelings of grief. As you work through this range of emotions, do your best to be present this month when spending time with family and friends. Unplug, leave work responsibilities at your agency, and focus on those around you.
- While staying safe and providing support for your loved ones as a law enforcement officer are important, ensure that you are feeling supported as well. Take time to have conversations with your family this holiday season to ensure everyone's needs are being met.

### Helpful Resource:



[Supporting Officer Safety through Family Wellness: Communication in Officer Families](#)



### November is Native American Heritage Month

Here are some ways to support your fellow tribal police officers and engage with local tribal community members:

- Connect with tribal law enforcement agencies in your surrounding area and work on building a positive and collaborative relationship between departments.
- Learn proper terms for various cultural practices of tribal communities to create a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere for tribal police officers and community members.
- Native or Indigenous people who experience depression or anxiety may seek help from a spiritual or traditional healer. Support others in the wellness practices that make them most comfortable.<sup>6</sup>



# DECEMBER

## Pause and Reflect

Taking time to reflect provides an opportunity to assess your individual values and how you use them to contribute to the world around you. Reflection is an important part of how you view yourself and helps you find a sense of fulfillment.

### Reflecting on the Year

- Take time to identify what you have learned, things that you are grateful for, and what you have accomplished over the last year.
- Spend time recalling one accomplishment from each month this year and how your actions positively impacted your loved ones and those in your community. Acknowledging what you have achieved will often leave you feeling a sense of pride and satisfaction.
- Identify a new goal you would like to achieve or a challenge you would like to overcome in the next year that will build upon what you have learned from this year. Establishing a plan to prioritize learning and new experiences can provide motivation and a sense of hope for the future.

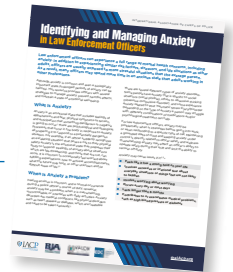
### Look for the Good

- Practice gratitude this month and focus on the positives in your life. Recognize that you are not able to control every aspect of life, and instead use your energy to focus on navigating the situations within your control.
- Avoid negativity bias. In the field of public safety, it is easy to get caught up in focusing on the negative aspects in life. Practicing gratitude will not interfere with your capacity to notice potential dangers but will allow you to identify and process positive experiences more deeply.

### Helpful Resource:



[Identifying and Managing Anxiety in Law Enforcement Officers](#)



### Focus on Your Finances

Here are some tips on how to maintain financial wellness in your life:

- Set financial goals. If you have a specific financial objective, spend time calculating how much you will need to save each month to achieve that goal. By planning ahead and staying on track, you will feel satisfied and accomplished.
- Saving money can be challenging; take the time to create a reasonable budget to ensure all of your needs are being met while still saving for emergencies. You don't have to handle the budget on your own; there are plenty of free online budgeting tools that can ensure your budget is realistic and beneficial.

# APPENDIX A

## Key Terms

While integrating new wellness messaging in your department, it is important to think about how agencies can reframe language to make communication more accurate. The following are common phrases used in law enforcement along with alternative phrases to use in their place. Being more cognizant of language used in written and verbal communication across the department can increase clarity and avoid negative connotations.

Terms to replace:	Instead use:	Why?
“Committed” suicide	“Died by” suicide	“Committed” sounds like a criminal act.
“Celebrating” Domestic Violence Awareness Month	“Honoring” or “Recognizing” Domestic Violence Awareness Month	Violence should not be celebrated. Survivors should be honored.
Identify someone by their mental illness. Ex. “a schizophrenic.”	“Person with _____.”	A person is not defined by their mental health diagnosis.
“Anniversary” of a tragedy	“Year mark”	“Anniversary” is a celebratory term.
“Triggering/Triggered”	“Activate”	These could be considered violent terms.
“Execute” a plan	“Facilitate” or “Organize”	These could be considered violent terms.
Mental health “issues” or “problems”	Mental health “conditions”	Issues/problems sounds negative.
“Victim”	“Survivor”	“Survivor” conveys more dignity when referring to someone who has survived a crime/attack.
“He or she”	“They/Them”	More inclusive without making assumptions.

# APPENDIX B

## Weekly Resilience Tips

Resilience is a way to navigate adversity and grow in the face of challenges. These weekly resilience tips are simple actions individuals can take to strengthen their well-being. These 52 tips can be included throughout the calendar year in agency-wide communications, posted throughout department facilities, or disseminated in training materials as helpful reminders.

1. Write down one realistic work-life balance goal you would like to work towards, both personally and professionally.
2. Think about a challenge you are facing and identify a purposeful first step you can take to overcome it.
3. Reflect on a difficulty you have faced in the past and think about a positive outcome that came as a result. Share this with a loved one to build trust and strengthen your relationship.
4. Identify a personal characteristic you are proud of, take note of when it is illustrated through your personal and professional life, and think about how you can leverage it to accomplish your goals.
5. Take time this week to schedule any overdue medical appointments. Make sure you are keeping regular checkups with your healthcare providers and be prepared to discuss any health-related concerns.
6. “Catching up” on sleep all at once when you have been deprived is not as beneficial as getting consistent rest. Try to prioritize sleep whenever possible, even if it’s for a short period of time.
7. Find stretching routines to use at various times of day, such as when you wake up, before you go to bed, or when you are sitting at your desk.
8. Minimize screen time before you plan to go to bed and instead identify an activity that helps you wind down and relax. If you are unable to fall asleep after 20 minutes, get out of bed and engage in a different calming activity for a while, then return to your bed when you feel ready.
9. Research and save a few quick, standard, nutritious recipes you can turn to when you are trying to choose what to eat. This will help you feel prepared and less overwhelmed.
10. Drinking water helps to maximize your physical and mental performance, transport nutrients throughout your body, aid in digestion, regulate blood pressure, and protect organs and tissues. If you regularly drink beverages besides water, such as coffee, energy drinks, or soda, swap water for one of those drinks instead.
11. Take time to consider signs that you are experiencing exhaustion, such as irritability, body aches, or inability to focus. Check in with yourself often and when you notice these, make it a priority to take care of your needs.

12. Practice the 20-20-20 technique to refresh your mind and mitigate eye strain: every 20 minutes, take a 20 second break, and focus on something 20 feet away.
13. Be strategic in your grocery shopping. Purchase items that will work for your lifestyle and can be used for well-rounded meals. Consolidate your shopping trips to leave yourself more free time for other activities.
14. For a situation you anticipate causing stress, identify an aspect that is under your control and create a plan to help give you a sense of preparedness.
15. Think about a quick, enjoyable mental activity to refocus your energy when you're feeling overwhelmed. These can be word games, math problems, creative imagery visualizations, or some similar distraction to take your mind off a stressor when needed.
16. Set aside time each day, even for a few minutes, to decompress and refocus. Think about how your daily routines positively impact the lives of others.
17. Use progressive muscle relaxation to consciously physically reduce your stress. Focus on one muscle group at a time, squeeze, hold, then relax your muscles to help relieve tension.
18. Create different music playlists to influence your mood. These can feature songs that you find uplifting, calming, or help you to focus on a task.
19. Transition your mindset from work to home at the end of each shift. Take a walk, read a chapter of a book, call a friend, listen to a podcast, or engage in activities you find enjoyable that are unrelated to work.
20. Make a list of activities you enjoy and find valuable, then think about how often those can realistically be incorporated into your life. These should remain a priority, whether incorporated daily or less frequently.
21. Understand the effects of vicarious trauma, which can occur with continual exposure to job-related stressors. Take time to recognize these signs, which include irritability, guilt, helplessness, fatigue, and numbness, so you can decompress and get support when needed.
22. Routinely check your tactical gear and patrol car, making sure to address any potential issues.
23. Practice taking slow, deliberate breaths to regulate your physiology when your stress response is activated. Do this each day so your body is trained to handle stress.
24. Take time to explore resources available to you through your job. Make sure you understand the benefits of your Employee Assistance Program, financial plans, and any support personnel available to assist.
25. Stretching promotes flexibility, mobility, and can help protect your joints. Practice different stretches each day to help keep your muscles in good condition for your job duties and activities outside of work.

- 26.** Set appropriate boundaries around your work life and home life, including discussing with loved ones what areas of conversation you would like to avoid. Come up with a list of conversation prompts that are unrelated to work to use with loved ones.
- 27.** Take time to look at your general monthly budget to get an idea of your average costs and keep yourself on track financially. Go over your short- and long-term goals, keeping those in mind when making financial decisions. When you have a clear idea of how you can cover essential expenses, you are better able to responsibly take advantage of opportunities for leisure, entertainment, and recreational purchases.
- 28.** Reflect on the most important people in your life and how often you respond positively when they share good news. Practice building support in relationships that could use more attention and use active listening skills in your conversations to prioritize your personal connections.
- 29.** Getting enough sleep is important to stay energized and focused. Discuss sleep needs and patterns with loved ones and work with them to build routines that work for everyone.
- 30.** Think of something you enjoy and how it can be scaled up or down based on your capacity. For example, if you like outdoor activities, take walks outside a few times a week, plan hikes once a month, or schedule a camping trip once a year.
- 31.** Practice the 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 grounding technique to engage all your senses and connect you to your immediate environment: acknowledge 5 things you can see, 4 you can touch, 3 you can hear, 2 you can smell, and 1 you can taste.
- 32.** Participate in department activities to connect with colleagues beyond the typical functions of your role.
- 33.** Take time to consider an important lesson you have learned recently and something you have taught someone else. Reflect on how those things add value to your life.
- 34.** Identify people in your life you can turn to for support when working through a difficult situation and places that feel safe and comforting you can go when you feel overwhelmed.
- 35.** Reflect on your sense of purpose and focus on the things within your control when considering how you can make a difference.
- 36.** Write down three characteristics you are most proud of in yourself. Acknowledging the good in yourself can lead to a more positive outlook on your life and well-being.
- 37.** Intentionally unplug from social media and seek out more positive stimuli. Create a list of activities you find enjoyable that you can turn to when you need a break.
- 38.** Set a short-term goal for yourself and identify the first step you need to take to progress. Try to break down the goal into smaller, more manageable objectives to ensure success.

- 39.** Ask someone in your life what they consider to be one of your strongest characteristics and share what you think theirs may be. Use this to develop a strategy for expanding characteristics you may wish to improve.
- 40.** When you notice counterproductive thoughts, intentionally take a step back to see if you have the complete picture and try to challenge your assumptions. Try to look at situations from someone else's point of view to add a new perspective to your perception of the world.
- 41.** Make time to cook with a loved one—making and eating food together promotes connection and positive eating habits.
- 42.** At the end of each day this week, write down one positive thing that happened and reflect upon how it made you feel.
- 43.** Exposure to sunlight helps produce Vitamin D, which can support bone health, lower blood pressure, prevent disease, and promote good mental health. Try to enjoy 10-30 minutes of sunlight each day, depending on your sensitivity to the sun.
- 44.** Ask a colleague, friend, or family member to share something they are excited about and focus on being actively and authentically engaged in appreciating their response.
- 45.** Consider a characteristic you admire in someone else and let them know when you notice them using it.
- 46.** If there is a difficult conversation you are anticipating or have been delaying, take time to outline your thoughts so you can approach the subject productively and respectfully.
- 47.** Keep a tally this week of how many times you feel proud of a personal or professional accomplishment.
- 48.** Identify people in your life that you can discuss work-related issues with, and those you would like to keep separate from those topics. Explore strategies for different communication styles when engaging with individuals in these separate categories.
- 49.** Each day this week, consider something you are grateful for and take time to reflect on why it matters to you.
- 50.** Look into any resources available to you regarding financial planning and make it a point to utilize any services that might be helpful to you.
- 51.** When considering a challenge or goal in your life, make a list of things you can control and things you cannot control. Focus on those you can change, while recognizing that there are many factors that are beyond your influence.
- 52.** Pick a new ingredient you are interested in trying and incorporate it into your regular meals and snacks.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Heart Disease Facts,” Center for Disease Control and Prevention, May 15, 2023, <https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/facts.htm>.
- 2 “Celebrate African American History Month!” Office for Health Equity, March 4, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/features/african-american-history/index.html>.
- 3 “Healthy Eating and Women,” Office on Women’s Health, February 17, 2021, <https://www.womenshealth.gov/healthy-eating/healthy-eating-and-women>.
- 4 “Asian American/Pacific Islander Communities and Mental Health,” Mental Health America, August 11, 2023, <https://www.mhanational.org/issues/asian-american-pacific-islander-communities-and-mental-health>.
- 5 Sally C. Curtin, Kamiah A. Brown, and Mariah E. Jordan, Suicide Rates for the Three Leading Methods by Race and Ethnicity, 2000-2020 (Hyattsville: National Center for Health Statistics, 2022), <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db450.htm>.
- 6 “Native and Indigenous Communities and Mental Health,” Mental Health America, August 11, 2023, <https://www.mhanational.org/issues/native-and-indigenous-communities-and-mental-health>.





**International Association of Chiefs of Police**  
44 Canal Center Plaza #200, Alexandria, VA 22314  
703.836.6767 | [www.theiacp.org](http://www.theiacp.org)

