



The Amesbury Police Department (OFFICIAL) has joined forces with Michelle Baker, owner of Dynamic Balance, to raise funds for team APD to provide neurofeedback service to those in the department. The goal is to help law enforcement members regulate their nervous system to reduce the symptoms associated with high levels of stress, "which in this industry, especially, is better known as hypervigilance", says Chief Craig Bailey.

According to Dr. Kevin Gilmartin's book, Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement, hypervigilance is 'the necessary manner of viewing the world from a threat-based perspective and having the mindset to see the events unfolding as potentially hazardous'. Dr. Gilmartin goes on to state "Every day, officers are exposed to a series of unknown events, any one of which could be perfectly harmless or lethally dangerous". Dr. Gilmartin also compared hypervigilance to being on a roller-coaster. When we are on our assigned shifts we are at a high state of readiness (hypervigilance) and when we go home we are at a lower state, this constant up and down can have serious health impacts. Other studies have shown that the longer one is exposed to constantly having to adjust one's state of readiness the more one is likely to stay in that elevated state, leading to further disruptive symptoms.

As Baker points out, this constant state of high alert can have long lasting, negative impacts on a police officer's health including adrenal fatigue, high blood pressure, overly startled reaction time, headaches and even a stroke, just to name a few. Chief Bailey went on to mention that high levels of work-related stress also result in some officers reporting challenges in their personal lives. This industry has seen high levels of self-medication, suicide, divorce rates, etc., all of which can be attributed to these stressors and, more importantly, avoided.

The Benefit of Balance, Inc. is a non-profit founded by Baker and her team that raises awareness and funds for many different populations living with a dysregulated nervous system. The program with the Amesbury Police Department will provide officers with 45 minute sessions/2 times weekly of neurofeedback training and heart rate variability exercises to guide

the brain into a more relaxed state, allowing for conditioned default reactions to stress to be minimized while helping to create stronger neural pathways, encouraging a more healthful and supportive stress response. Participating officers will have this option available free of cost to them and the city of Amesbury through The Benefit of Balance, Inc. Baker states this process will help officers make better decisions on the street because a more relaxed nervous system can help strengthen instinct and not bias. It helps officers make better decisions in both their professional and personal lives through emotional intelligence and not through subconscious stress related barriers.

Neurofeedback is not covered by insurance and can be cost prohibitive out of pocket, however, the results are long term, non-invasive, drug free and can have life altering effects both at work and in every aspect of one's life. Chief Bailey and Baker are working together to raise funds so that these officers have access to this wellness initiative.

If you would like to contribute you can Venmo a donation to @thebenefitofbalance or go to www.thebenefitofbalance.org to donate through PayPal.



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