

Better Stress Management

With pressure on many officers going sky-high, the mental health of police personnel is a top concern for departments everywhere. However, there can still be some hesitancy to seek or provide adequate help or mental health support, for fear it could stigmatize users or lack the context needed for law enforcement.

Both those problems are solved with Mental Armor, a form of "resilience training" designed specifically for "high-stress operational environments" including law enforcement.



Photo courtesy of TechWerks

"We're bringing evidence-based skills that we know are effective across the board from clinical psychology and other fields," said Jill Antonishak, senior vice president of behavioral health for TechWerks, which is based in San Antonio, Texas, and created the Mental Armor curriculum.⁵ "There is a range of skills that have been shown to be effective and that you can put into practice the minute you walk out of one of our trainings."

Mental Armor is a suite of sessions and workshops designed to help create and hone certain coping skills that have been shown to benefit law enforcement personnel on a day-to-day basis. When TechWerks put the curriculum to the test with service members in the U.S. Air Force, personal resilience improved in a variety of areas.

"When the program was rigorously evaluated in the Air Force, they saw increases in resilience, higher levels of coping strategies ... stronger social connections, and being better able to manage their emotions in a way that maintains professionalism and the highest level of public safety," Antonishak said.

Effectively connecting agency personnel with the mental health services they need, when needed and in a discreet manner, has always been a major challenge for police chiefs and their departments. A phone app called Cordico was designed specifically for police and other "high-stress professions" to do just that.

"Cordico provides a complete wellness solution for law enforcement agencies. It's a way to develop and strengthen the agency's wellness culture," said David Black, founder and president of Cordico, which is based in Frisco, Texas.⁶ "The Cordico Wellness App includes self-assessments on topics such as PTSD, substance abuse, and sleep, as well as videos and guides on more than 60 behavioral health topics—all designed specifically for law enforcement officers."

According to company officials, Cordico app users were found to be more likely to use support resources. Tools and content on the app also can be tailored by agencies to ensure it is as relevant as possible to its personnel.

"Administrators can incorporate agency-specific content and one-touch access to agency peer support team members, therapists, and chaplains," Black said. "The app is completely anonymous and accessible at all times from any smart device—greatly increasing the chance officers will use the resources. Cordico also offers customers access to a growing library of online accredited wellness courses."

While these solutions were tailor made for police and other first responders, there are other potential solutions that are a little more out of the box for law enforcement. Still, that doesn't mean they're not grounded in science.

Originally created as a tool for addiction recovery, the Biosound Healing Therapy 5500XLS is part adjustable bed, part audio-visual system, and part day spa. Its developers say it can help with tension, depression, and even PTSD. It also has a training component, by helping officers adopt a less-stressful mindset while on the job.

"A lot of first responders spend a lot of time in a fight-or-flight state, but this helps teach them how to shift out of that," said Chris Gallant, chief operations officer and president of Biosound Healing Therapies, based in Clearwater, Florida.⁷

Although it does require training to operate, the training can occur through a phone-based session, Gallant said.

Whether it's improved wellness or an improved workflow, there are plenty of ways a law enforcement agency can work to better align with—and get the most from—its personnel. Better human resources lift all boats, with more efficiency and resilience meaning a better ability to stay focused on the critical tenets of police work.♥

Notes:

¹Sean Cassidy (president, PoliceApp.com), phone interview, October 28, 2021.

²Steven Power (president, RollKall), phone interview, October 29, 2021.

³RollKall, "Case Study: Kane County Sheriff's Office," press release, October 7, 2021.

⁴Gary Parish (managing director, HD BarCode), phone interview, November 2, 2021.

⁵Jill Antonishak (senior vice president of behavioral health, TechWerks), phone interview, November 4, 2021.

⁶David Black (founder and president of Cordico), email interview, November 1, 2021.

⁷Chris Gallant (chief operations officer and president, Biosound), phone interview, November 5, 2021.



Photo courtesy of Cordico

