

Entitlement: The Hidden Threat to Resilience in Law Enforcement

Our profession requires us to be mentally tough and resilient. We face constant stress, hardship, setbacks and problems. Those who work the streets know that these things come with the job. We understand how important is to not let things get you down, and how the ability to bounce back quickly, is an essential job skill. One thing that gets in the way of this important job skill is entitlement. In this article we will take a look at what it is, how it hurts you, and what you can do about it, so that it doesn't make you less tough, weaker and less resilient.

Are You Entitled?

We normally associate entitlement with wealthy, powerful, arrogant, and snobby people. People who believe that they are better than anyone else, or those shifty types who think they don't have to work for a living. Sometime we think of it as people who go around thinking that the world revolves around them and that the world in everyone in it owes them something.

These are all extreme examples, being a good, hardworking person you might think there is no chance that you might be "entitled". Just like many of the ego driven curses that manage sneak behind out defenses to stir up trouble from the inside, entitlement can creep up on even the best LEO when we aren't looking. You don't have to berate a store clerk, or yell "I want to speak to the manager" to have some degree of entitlement at work in your life. It might be more subtle than that. Here are a few ways it might show up in a LEOs day to day life.

1. Seniority: Do you rely heavily on your seniority? Have you paid your dues? Been there done that?

Have you ever thought, "I shouldn't have to handle this, this is a rookie's job"? Maybe you have been in your position for a long time, cops tend to respect seniority, and it has some perks. Does this mean you should be exempt from certain responsibilities? Does your seniority mean that you don't have to do all parts of your job? Do you believe that you are "too good, or too senior" for certain duties?

Historically, the downfall of many leaders has been linked to their refusal to stay grounded in service, and a refusal to get their hand dirty with grunt work. They lose touch, lose perspective, and make a lot of enemies. Seniority is a form of entitlement when misused.

2. Rank and Respect: Do you expect and demand respect? Do you insist on rank? Do you evoke

your rank even in social situations? Does your rank or title make you feel that people should treat you

with a particular level of deference? And when they don't, do you find yourself angry or defensive? Do you feel "entitled" to respect? Respect, much like trust, is earned and maintained through actions, not demanded through job titles.

"If someone succeeds in provoking you, realize that your mind is complicit in the provocation."

- Epictetus

Entitlement to respect can blind us to opportunities for personal growth. It also hurts our ability to build real, respectful relationships within our departments and with the community. If they are worried about you blowing up and lashing out, they will be too worried to tell you when you have missed something, or are overlooking something critical. When you fail, the rank or title you insisted on will sound more like an insult and an accusation when people use it.

3. Claiming Perks, and Avoiding Work: We have some perks. We get some benefits for being a LEO, as you rise in rank, and seniority those perks increase. Free carwashes, Free coffee, courtesy apartments with deep discounts, a take home car, and so many more little incentives. When we have been years on the job, or rise in rank, the perks get better. Bigger nicer offices, better cars, higher pay. We are human and as humans we get used to things. We get accustomed to the perks that come with the job. Then we begin to take them for granted. After some time we are no longer grateful and appreciative, we take these things for granted. We start to feel like we have a right to these things. We don't feel like we should have to earn them, or work for them because they are already ours. When one of those perks is taken from us or goes away, we get offended, and feel like someone has stolen from us or done us wrong. Don't think so? Just talk to a cop after the clerk forgot to apply the discount and they had to pay full price for their Chipotle. Feeling like you are "owed" a perk is pretty entitled behavior.

The Nobility of Service, Not being a Noble

The concept of entitlement calls back to nobility, titles like "King," "Prince," or "Duchess." These titles came with privileges, but they were also supposed to come with responsibilities to those they governed. The problem arises when the focus shifts entirely to perks, and the sense of duty fades. In law enforcement, this can pop up in leaders who distance themselves from their teams or in officers who feel too senior to engage with the day-to-day challenges of policing. The true nobility in law enforcement lies not in titles but in service. When we see every task, no matter how small, as an opportunity to lead by example and grow, we build resilience. When you reject entitlement, you invite challenge, growth, humility, connection, and are able to build resiliency.

Combat Entitlement

1. **Reframe Your Mindset:** View every task as an opportunity to serve and lead. Ask yourself, "How can I set an example here?"
2. **Get Feedback:** Encourage honest feedback from peers and subordinates to identify blind spots where entitlement might be creeping in. This means taking the rank off for a minute, and guaranteeing that there won't be any payback or punishments for negative feedback.
3. **Practice Gratitude:** Focus on the privileges you already have, not the ones you feel you're owed. Gratitude fosters resilience and makes you happier.
4. **Stoic Virtues:** Apply the Stoic principles of humility, service, and self-control to your thoughts, actions and daily life.
5. **My Tip:** For me personally, my own conversations with myself, brutal humility works. I tell myself, "Nobody owes you shit Steve."

"If you want something good, get it from yourself."

- Epictetus

Resilience and mental toughness are muscles, you have to use them or else they atrophy. Entitlement makes you soft and weak. Entitlement hurts your relationships. As law enforcement professionals, we are not owed respect, comfort, or ease. Instead, we are called to earn them through our actions daily.

My advice: Earn everything.

Amor Fati

- Sgt. Steve