

Energy Therapy for 1st Responders

What is occupational trauma?

Occupational trauma is trauma that occurs within the setting of someone's work. As with all trauma, there's no one-size-fits-all definition, or simple explanation of what can trigger trauma. A situation that might be traumatic for one individual might not develop trauma in their colleagues. In other situations, a seemingly minor circumstance might ignite trauma.

Certain occupations are exposed to more events that can create trauma. Police, military and EMTs regularly encounter death, abuse and individuals that have been traumatized themselves. It's not surprising that many people in these occupations begin suffering a mental toll. Often, this manifests as PTSD.

At the same time, these occupations come with a unique culture, which sometimes makes it difficult to talk about mental health or seek treatment for trauma.

The wounds of physical trauma may eventually heal, but the unseen wounds of emotional or psychological trauma can last a lifetime – resulting in post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), an emotionally disabling condition. Left untreated, they may experience intense bouts of prolonged depression, explode unexpectedly in anger with little provocation or constantly be on edge.

Effects of Prolonged Stress

Cortisol production increases with prolonged stress and affects blood pressure, insulin levels, immune function and the body's inflammatory response. In individuals with PTSD the result is a constant "on" of the sympathetic (fight or flight) nervous system. On an individual level trauma causes various psychological disorders such as: high levels of anxiety, depression, terrifying nightmares, alcoholism, drug use, rage, and self-harm. Trauma can even manifest through out the physical body in various ways: pain, severe numbness, mutism, and sickness.

Holistic Treatment

Historically, Western trauma treatments have focused on talk therapy and drugs. In recent decades trauma healing has proved to be a holistic endeavor, and as the practice of energy therapies such as Reiki and Healing Touch are becoming more mainstream and even accepted in the medical community, these therapies boast a myriad of physical and psychological benefits that include trauma healing.

Reiki is meant to support the body's own natural healing process and has been credited as safe way to help overcome both physical and psychological ailments and is often used as a complimentary approach with other treatments.

Healing Touch as a complementary therapy has seen great strides in reducing PTSD symptoms in combat-exposed marines. In one study at Camp Pendleton, Healing Touch and guided imagery therapy, "...actually decreased symptoms below the threshold for PTSD diagnosis" (PR Newswire, 2012). Reiki has also been discussed in terms of targeting each chakra in the bodies of veterans. Each chakra was blocked or put off balance as a result of being a soldier in a combat exposed zone. Reiki was used to clear these energy fields to restore overall wellbeing for the veteran (McCutcheon, 2014).

Energy therapy doesn't replace medical care, it doesn't replace psychological care, but it provides a unique way to help and support people in states of imbalance and distress.