

CORRECTIONAL OASIS

BECAUSE ALL ROADS GO BACK TO STAFF WELLNESS

VOLUME: 22



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FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

In this issue, we explore the complex relationship between moral resilience¹ and correctional culture, delving into the persistent challenge and at times tragic outcomes of some corrections professionals making unethical—even criminal—decisions. While these issues are often difficult to confront, we believe that it is essential that we examine them, try to understand them, and address them.

We recognize that these are weighty topics, but they warrant thoughtful reflection and open discussion within the corrections community. By engaging in honest dialogue about the factors that contribute to ethical lapses, we can work toward fostering a culture of integrity and professional accountability. Our goal is not only to highlight the challenges but also to encourage meaningful conversations that lead to solutions and a stronger, more ethical correctional environment.

Caterina Spinaris

Moral resilience has been defined as the capacity to maintain, recover, or increase one's integrity in the face of ethically complex, confusing, and/or distressing situations (Rushton, 2018).

¹Rushton, Cynda. "Moral Resilience: Transforming Moral Suffering in Healthcare." (Oxford University, 2018)

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THE HEART OF CORRECTIONS: LOST & FOUND

BY CATERINA SPINARIS, PHD, LPC

Preventable Tragedies: Understanding Root Causes and Exploring Solutions

Recently, another entirely preventable tragedy made the news. A group of Correctional Officers beat a restrained incarcerated person, Robert L. Brooks, to death. The assault was recorded on body-worn cameras apparently in standby mode. This raises a crucial question: **Why would these Correctional Officers risk their careers and, possibly, their freedom?**

This incident is far from isolated. Across the nation, we hear stories of seasoned, experienced corrections professionals engaging in serious criminal activities—whether it’s coercing incarcerated individuals into sexual acts, smuggling contraband, or, in the most extreme cases, inflicting bodily harm or even death. It’s easy to assume that these employees entered the profession with malicious intent, but that’s rarely the case. Most correctional staff don’t begin their careers with the intention of violating policies or causing harm to those in their care. Instead, we must ask: What happens over time that drives some corrections professionals to act in ways that betray their original, prosocial values? And, more importantly, what can be done to prevent this from happening?

Not Just One Thing: The Intersection of Risk Factors

Correctional Officers, by the very nature of their work, operate under conditions that can gradually erode their physical, psychological, moral, and

spiritual resilience. Over time, these challenges may undermine their capacity for self-regulation and weaken their ethical foundations. Simply implementing additional oversight measures, such as properly activated body-worn cameras, is unlikely to be sufficient to fully prevent excessive use of force or other misconduct.

It is important to acknowledge that the vast majority of corrections professionals endure these demanding conditions for long periods without compromising their integrity or engaging in misconduct. So, what distinguishes those who uphold their ethical standards from those who cross the line into criminal behavior?

I propose that **multiple risk factors must converge for a corrections professional to transition from ethical conduct to policy violations or criminal activity**. The following section outlines some of these risk factors, emphasizing that **it is often the combination of several elements—rather than any single factor—that contributes to ethical erosion**.

Underlying Factors: Systemic Issues Contributing to Correctional Officer Misconduct

Before examining the working conditions of Correctional Officers, it is important to consider several underlying factors that can contribute to staff misconduct and criminality. These broader systemic issues often extend beyond the immediate work environment and are deeply rooted in the recruitment, training, and leadership structures within correctional agencies.

Selection and Retention of Unsuitable Employees: The Cost of Poor Staffing Decisions

One of the key factors contributing to issues within correctional settings is the improper selection and retention of employees. The hiring process is vital in ensuring that Correctional Officers possess the necessary qualities for the role, such as courage, empathy, patience, and a strong ethical foundation. Regrettably, some individuals are hired who may hold harmful views, such as racism, or seek power over others, engaging in behaviors like bullying. These attitudes can be particularly detrimental in correctional environments, where balancing authority with support is essential. Officers who see their position as an opportunity to dominate, intimidate, or degrade incarcerated individuals are more likely to commit misconduct or criminal actions, as they fail to recognize the critical role of rehabilitation and the need to maintain a respectful, humane atmosphere.

In contrast, Correctional Officers who can effectively combine their authoritative attributes with a genuine desire to help and de-escalate tense situations contribute significantly to a safer, healthier environment for both staff and incarcerated individuals.

Similarly, agencies may fail to dismiss employees who demonstrate problematic behaviors, such as a "mean streak" or a lack of ethics, which promote harm by disregarding the rights and dignity of others.

Inadequate Training: A Threat to Safety and Success

Another key issue is **insufficient or inadequate training**. Many Correctional Officers are not provided with the proper training to effectively

manage the psychological challenges of working with incarcerated individuals. While physical restraint techniques are commonly emphasized, skills like emotional self-regulation, conflict resolution, and de-escalation strategies tend to be minimized or overlooked entirely. Without proper training in these critical areas, Correctional Officers may resort to unnecessary aggression or excessive force when faced with challenging situations. Training in emotional intelligence (EQ) and understanding the root causes of conflict would better equip Correctional Officers to manage difficult interactions without prematurely resorting to physical force or engaging in excessive uses of force. Additionally, in-service training and refresher classes are essential to ensure that Correctional Officers continue to develop and refine these vital skills throughout their careers.

Toxic Leadership: The Impact on Staff and Facility Culture

Unethical leadership—whether formal or informal—can have profound, negative impacts on the conduct of Correctional Officers. Leaders who fail to model ethical behavior, maintain integrity, or hold themselves accountable for their own actions set a poor example for the staff they interact with or supervise. In these toxic workplace environments, misconduct will go unchecked and inevitably increase among Correctional Officers. Leaders who prioritize a culture of respect, accountability, and transparency, on the other hand, will foster a workplace environment in which Correctional Officers are more likely to adhere to professional standards and engage in positive, prosocial interactions with incarcerated individuals. When leaders neglect their responsibilities to promote ethical behavior and create a healthy work

culture, these failures will contribute to a workplace environment in which Correctional Officers are much more likely to commit acts of abuse or unnecessary violence.

Taken together, these factors—poor employee selection and retention, inadequate training, and toxic leadership—create a perfect storm for staff misconduct and criminal activities within correctional facilities. These underlying failures, regardless of other conditions or challenges, significantly contribute to Correctional Officers committing criminal atrocities against incarcerated individuals. Therefore, addressing these root causes is essential to improve the overall operations of correctional facilities and to ensure that Correctional Officers perform their duties in a manner that is humane, ethical, and just.

Inside the System: The Harsh Realities of Correctional Officers' Working Conditions

Having considered these external, systemic factors, let us now examine the working conditions of Correctional Officers. Typically, Correctional Officers work in environments where they are vastly outnumbered by incarcerated individuals. However, even under the best circumstances, at some level, they are often fearing for their safety. The environments where they work tend to be harsh, both physically and psychologically. They endure verbal abuse, threats, and even potentially life-threatening exposure to bodily fluids—all while being responsible for the safety of incarcerated individuals and coworkers. While enduring taunts and threats, Correctional Officers must remain professional and neutral, exercising vast amounts of self-control and refraining from retaliation. These high-pressure environments, compounded by severe understaffing and overwhelming workloads,

leave many Correctional Officers perpetually on edge and in a continuous state of hypervigilance.

Chronic Sleep Deprivation: The Toll on Health and Performance

Due to persistent understaffing, Correctional Officers may be required to work double—maybe even triple!—shifts at least once a week, and in some cases, as many as three or four times per week. These extended hours often leave them with only three to four hours of sleep in a 24-hour period—sometimes for years on end.

Extensive research has consistently shown that chronic sleep deprivation not only undermines physical health but also significantly impairs cognitive functioning, decision-making, and emotional regulation. It heightens vulnerability to anxiety, depression, and even suicidal thoughts.

While the staffing crisis facing correctional agencies nationwide is well understood, it is equally important to recognize the toll that prolonged sleep deprivation takes on Correctional Officers. Depriving them of adequate rest compromises both their physical and mental well-being, neglecting their fundamental biological needs. Over time, this can contribute to a sense of dehumanization, as they may feel disregarded, undervalued, and pushed beyond their limits.

Corrections Fatigue: The Breakdown of Resilience

At Desert Waters, we use the umbrella term **Corrections Fatigue** to describe what happens to Correctional Officers and other correctional professionals due to prolonged exposure to work-related stressors without positive resolution. **Corrections Fatigue leads to cumulative negative changes in staff's health, functioning, and**

personality—their sense of identity, worldview, spirituality, emotions, and behaviors. Without proper intervention, Corrections Fatigue can spread among staff, infecting the overall work culture and perpetuating a toxic cycle of elevated stress and interpersonal violence.

Corrections Fatigue exists on a spectrum. On one end are mild symptoms, such as occasional difficulty falling asleep or feeling more irritable than usual. On the opposite end, there are extreme symptoms, like suicidal ideation or even homicidal thoughts. In between, staff may experience debilitating anxiety, panic, depression, PTSD, hypertension, heart disease, and diabetes.

The "Us Against Them" Mentality: A Dangerous Divide

In the dangerous environment of corrections, an “us against them” mentality often takes root. Correctional Officers, constantly exposed to hostility and abuse, begin to see incarcerated individuals as adversaries—even as less than human—rather than people under their care. This is a defense mechanism driven by the survival instinct, the drive to protect oneself, and it erodes empathy, justifies excessive force, and reinforces a culture of dehumanization. Left unchecked, it fosters an environment where misconduct becomes normalized, spiraling into a culture of violence, and, ultimately, the kinds of senseless tragedies we too often see in the news. Correctional Officers may end up acting in ways they never imagined, often crossing lines that once seemed unthinkable.

Pack Mentality: The Normalization of Dehumanization and Abuse

Given that Corrections Fatigue infiltrates entire workforce cultures, it’s also essential to consider the impact of “pack mentality” on behavior. This is sometimes referred to also as mob mentality.

The Influence of Group Behavior: Impact of Group Dynamics on Workplace Culture

In toxic workplace environments, Correctional Officers may begin to tolerate, accept, or even participate in criminal behaviors that are condoned, or engaged in, by colleagues—especially those they respect or view as leaders. This dynamic fosters an unethical culture, where cruelty, neglect, and criminal misconduct become normalized and even institutionalized as “the way we do things here.” Individuals may feel pressured to conform in order to belong or to protect themselves. As stated earlier, given the severe understaffing in correctional facilities and the staff-to-incarcerated-person ratios under even the best circumstances, it’s not a stretch to infer that such behaviors may stem from Correctional Officers’ fear for their lives. It’s also not a stretch to speculate that these behaviors may additionally stem from toxic cultures that promote retaliation against Correctional Officers who try to abstain from, prevent, or report excessive uses of force against incarcerated individuals.

Historical and Research Parallels: Examples from the Past

This phenomenon is not unique to correctional settings. Historical examples, particularly during times of war, illustrate how individuals—who may not have initially harbored a cruel outlook on humanity or malicious intent—became complicit in or condoned, horrific acts. This often occurred due to a shared sense of loyalty, fear of exclusion from the group, or a desire to conform. In such

circumstances, the collective mentality bolstered the acceptance of criminal actions, leading individuals to abdicate personal responsibility, suppress their moral judgment, and surrender both to the demands of the group.

Similarly, experimental studies on obedience have shown that large percentages of people may inflict harm on others when instructed to do so by someone in a position of authority, such as a psychologist conducting an experiment.

The Calculated Descent into Abuse: The Dangerous Progression

When dehumanization of incarcerated individuals becomes entrenched in the workplace culture, staff's normalization of abuse may no longer manifest in isolated incidents of brutality in the heat of the moment. Instead, such acts may become intentional and premeditated, carried out "in cold blood." These behaviors may be engaged in proactively, as a prevention effort whereby Correctional Officers violently convey a threatening message to incarcerated individuals: "We run this joint. You'd better fear us."

Addressing the Root Causes: A Call for Systemic Reform

These heartrending realities highlight the need for system-wide reforms to address the root causes of Corrections Fatigue, so that a healthier, more supportive workplace environment can be fostered—one where professionalism, accountability and compassion, rather than conformity to toxic, even criminal behaviors, are prioritized.

The harsh truth is that everyone has a breaking point. When subjected to enough stress and enough danger over an extended period without effective relief, people experience a breakdown in

their cognitive, emotional, moral, and behavioral controls. Simply monitoring Correctional Officers with body-worn cameras will not fully resolve the issue.

The solution is not to merely police Correctional Officers through technology. We must acknowledge, and respond to, the overwhelmingly toxic environment they work in and its impact on their well-being. Yes, individuals must be held accountable for their heinous, criminal actions. However, we must also understand the context in which those actions occur. We cannot continue to demand that severely understaffed and chronically sleep-deprived employees work without relief in environments that erode their physical, psychological, and spiritual health, and be surprised when these conditions contribute to catastrophic events.

Beyond Oversight: The Need for Support Systems

Correctional professionals, particularly Correctional Officers who bear much of the burden of correctional work, need more than just oversight—they require robust support systems, improved working conditions, and regular opportunities for rest and recovery to mitigate the physical and psychological tolls of this career. It is essential that we provide these professionals with the time and resources necessary to (a) get enough physical rest, and (b) process the emotional strain their work inevitably creates. Ideally, the latter should be a regular practice, occurring as a monthly check-in, rather than something addressed only in moments of crisis. They need to have time to "cool down," inspect themselves for signs of **Corrections Fatigue**, and repair any damage before it becomes unmanageable.

In short, Correctional Officers need ongoing support that prioritizes their well-being to prevent the devastating consequences of unchecked **Corrections Fatigue**.

Strengthening the Corrections Workforce: Rigorous Employee Selection, Training, and Retention

At the outset, it is crucial that new employees are selected based on their ability to balance the dual roles of rule-enforcer and mentor/helper. This requires a thorough recruitment process that evaluates emotional intelligence (EQ) and interpersonal skills, both of which are essential for the demanding nature of the role. Additionally, new hires should undergo both initial and ongoing in-service training focused on self-regulation and effective interpersonal communication to navigate the complexities of their work.

Furthermore, when evidence shows that, despite efforts at remediation, employees continue to violate policies and pose a liability to the agency—endangering both those it serves and employs—it is essential that the agency take decisive action. This includes being prepared to sever ties with employees who can no longer be trusted to uphold the agency's values or ensure the safety of others.

Building a Healthier Workplace: Ethical Leadership and Organizational Integrity

Additionally, we must foster leadership, formal and informal and at all levels of the agency, that is rooted in integrity, self-accountability, and transparency. Leaders who exemplify these qualities create a culture in which these values are upheld and where Correctional Officers feel supported, rather than isolated, in their demanding roles. Ultimately, by focusing on the well-being of

correctional professionals and equipping them with the tools to succeed, we can create safer, more humane environments for both staff and incarcerated individuals.

Breaking the Cycle of Abuse: Promoting A Culture of True Safety

If we fail to implement policies and practices that support Correctional Officers in these essential areas, we will continue to demand what may be impossible—sustained professional and humane performance within systems that actively erode their humanity. Under such conditions, the likelihood of some Correctional Officers disregarding the humanity of those in their care increases. Without critical interventions, the cycle of abuse—directed both at incarcerated individuals and fellow staff who do not conform to this toxic culture—will persist, perpetuating tragedies like the ones described above. It is crucial that we recognize the need for systemic correctional reforms to break this cycle and create an environment where both Correctional Officers and incarcerated individuals can thrive with dignity and respect.



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CAN YOU SAY “NO”?

BY SUSAN JONES, PHD, WARDEN (RETIRED)

The words from the famous song, *The Gambler*, are particularly on point for today’s correctional leaders: “You’ve got to know when to hold them, know when to fold them, know when to walk away, and know when to run.” Wardens work in an environment that is sandwiched between institutional operations and politics. The amount of money that is spent on prisons in this country means that they are “in play” in nearly every political conversation and budget debate at all levels of government.

Some politicians have spent time touring facilities, talking to employees, and reading reports that detail the operation of the system. However, it is rare that the people who are making political decisions for the corrections department have a great depth of knowledge about daily operations of institutions or have the background to know how to maintain the stability of a corrections system while maintaining a safe environment for the employees, the inmates, and ultimately the public. However, corrections leaders do possess this knowledge and have a thorough understanding of the delicate balance that is needed to maintain the stability that creates that safe environment.

Being a warden requires using your knowledge to ensure that a political fad does not create an unsafe system, while at the same time implementing new policy. This is a tricky balancing act and sometimes it is an impossible task. I used to think that good professionals were those who stayed and fought against harmful change or harmful policy, and I do still believe this. However, I also believe that most leaders face a point in their career when they must decide if this is the time to walk away or the time to run.

As a warden, it is important that you prepare yourself for this point in your career. Are you prepared to walk away? Are you financially prepared, and perhaps more importantly, are you emotionally prepared to walk away? Many corrections leaders are people who plan, implement, review, revise, and re-implement many facets of their career and of their life; but most corrections professionals that I have talked with over the years do not have an exit strategy. They have not imagined their life after corrections and can’t even conjure a vision of what that life might look like.

An exit strategy, financially, emotionally, and socially, should be a part of every warden’s portfolio. Who are you going to be after corrections is done with you? Each of us should have an answer to this question, prepared in advance of need. The political reality that wardens operate within requires this type of preparation because you will be confronted with many opportunities to decide if this is the time to exit or to make a stand.

If you decide to make a stand and try to change the policy direction that you confront, a realistic appraisal of your power and ability to make change is important. In fact, there are many success stories of wardens using a politically charged agenda to mold initiatives into an opportunity to create positive change within a

correctional system. People in elected and appointed positions rarely want to destabilize the prison system and get someone hurt, so they are often willing to listen to corrections professionals and modify policy to ensure safety. In such an instance, information is your best ally. Don't misunderstand, changing policy is a fact of everyday corrections, but with the right type of information in the hands of legislators, the change can often be implemented safely.

A policy change may be the right thing to do, and even a dramatic change in policy can usually be implemented successfully, if the power to safely implement the policy is in the hands of corrections professionals. I have heard from wardens throughout the country who say, "We can do anything that is required," and I believe that statement. A warden who has chosen a great team has a strong base of knowledge with which to accomplish change. For instance, when prison systems throughout the country were charged with removing tobacco from institutions, this was accomplished in a safe manner with few injuries or incidents.

But what happens when you do not believe you are able to safely implement a policy initiative? What if you truly believe that the orders you receive will destabilize the system and lead to injury? Are you prepared to walk away, or do you believe it is more honorable to stay and "ride it out?" Only you can make that decision. As a leader, your employees may admire your willingness to ride it out with them and this may be the right decision. Is walking away ever the right decision? What does it say about a leader that refuses to be part of a change that is not founded on good correctional practice? Is that person a coward or a hero?

The answer to this question depends entirely upon your position in the system and your values; no one can give you the right answer. As a leader in corrections, you owe it to yourself, and your employees, to position yourself so you can make the right decision for you and the system. If you leave, as opposed to implementing a policy that you believe will get someone hurt, there will be those who see your exit as cowardly. There will also be those who see your action as admirable.

Have you prepared yourself to make that choice? If not, I urge you to consider the idea of a realistic exit strategy. My hope is you will not need it and your departure from this work will be based on age and time in service; however, as a warden, you owe it to yourself to be prepared. You owe it to yourself and your employees to position yourself to be able to say "No."



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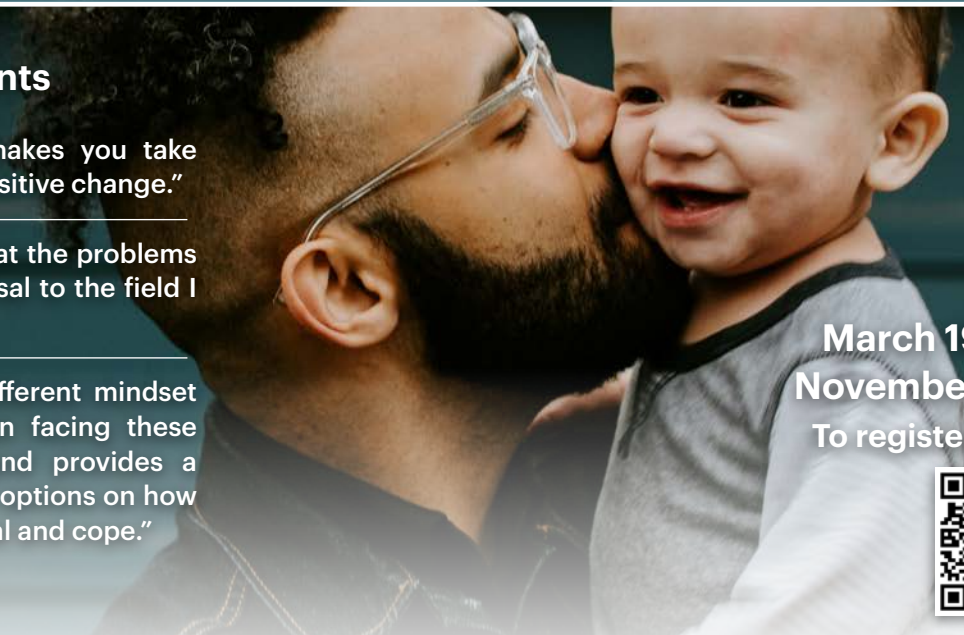
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- What Might My Loved One Face at Work?
- Help for the Family
- The Basics of Self-care
- Family Scenarios



SANDCASTLE: HOW SHARED TRAUMA BETWEEN CORRECTION OFFICERS CAN AFFECT AN AGENCY AND ITS CULTURE —PART 1

BY SAMUEL RAPOZA, CCS, NCCS

Trauma is not something unfamiliar to those who work in emergency or first responder occupations. Indeed, it is common for those in the fire, EMS, police, emergency medical, and corrections professions to encounter a variety of traumatic experiences during their careers. The frequency of these occurrences can range from often to rare, and their effects on an individual can similarly vary. Profound psychological impacts can follow just a single traumatic event and repeated exposure to trauma need not take place for serious consequences to result. What can sometimes be overlooked, however, is the social fallout spawned from traumatic experiences shared by first responders and emergency service professionals, including

the effects such experiences can have on an organization and its culture.

It should be understood that the bonds formed through shared traumatic experiences can be both constructive and destructive. Much like how water is needed to mold and build a sandcastle, water is also the force that can destroy it as waves wash the structure away. Thus, the long-standing effects of trauma can potentially be quite harmful and develop into severe mental health disorders. When speaking of the “constructive” results of trauma bonds, it should be noted that this is solely in reference to the bond itself, and not the possibly negative effects of the underlying trauma. Consequently, the bonds created between officers who

have shared experiences in traumatic situations should not be viewed as a support system meant to replace professional or clinical intervention.

Trauma Bonds

For the purposes of this discussion, the term “trauma bonds” will be in reference to the bond created through shared traumatic experiences. However the term “trauma bond” typically refers to abusive relationships where there exists a power imbalance, such as with hostage situations, domestic violence, and sex trafficking.

Oftentimes, the strong bonds between soldiers formed through shared traumatic experiences have also been referred to as “trauma bonds.” This bonding has been known to increase unit cohesion and can

result in lifelong connections that continue well past deployment and back into civilian life. Without drawing any clinical conclusions, observationally, parallels can thus be found between the contributing factors that may facilitate the formation of trauma bonds among both military personnel and correction officers. The creation of such bonds among members of both groups occurs in circumstances that are unique to their professions.

In addition to the life-and-death aspect of some experiences of soldiers and correction officers, there is often an additional sense of violence associated with them. There also exists an “us versus them” mentality, either overtly as with military combat situations, or more subtly as seen between the incarcerated population and correction officers. Even though soldiers are more likely to experience this when facing an enemy in an open combat scenario, correction officers also work opposite to, what could be seen as, a hostile, opposing force; that being the incarcerated population. Moreover, considering that correction officers are overwhelmingly outnumbered in

most situations, the perception of danger is heightened and underscores the sense of an ever-present threat.

Isolation from family and friends can also contribute to the forming of trauma bonds among soldiers. It is similarly common for correction officers to work in areas where there is limited or no contact with the outside world, including their own family and friends. Access to outside calls, cell phones, internet, social media, and possibly even a television can be extremely limited inside a correctional facility, even for the staff. Though soldiers are certainly away from family and friends for greater lengths of time than correction officers, and under far different circumstances, it can certainly be said that the very nature of both occupations hinders contact with family and friends which can contribute to feelings of isolation.

Foreign Environments

Another shared element in the experience of soldiers and correction officers is that they both work in what can be considered “foreign environments”. Although in somewhat different contexts, both serve in locations that are

generally inaccessible to the public. These further isolates those who work in these areas as these environments are not conducive to the coming and going of normal daily civilian life. Whereas police, fire, and EMS personnel work within familiar public areas, the more isolated work environments of soldiers and correction officers can prevent them from feeling grounded.

Although these challenges can provide an inherent benefit by reducing complacency and keeping staff in a higher state of alertness, they can also breed more feelings of social isolation. Many soldiers and correction officers often feel that those who have not had similar experiences lack the ability to understand and empathize with them.

More parallels no doubt exist between the experiences of soldiers and correction officers. As social beings operating in a foreign environment, cut off from family and facing overwhelming numbers of an opposing, hostile force while also dealing with high-stress, often violent life-and-death situations, it should thus not be at all surprising that bonds are

created among those who have shared such experiences.

For correctional administrators, especially those who have not served as a frontline correctional officer, it is thus important to understand that the very nature of a correction officer's duties presents a likelihood that they may, at some point in their careers, experience some form of traumatic experience. Furthermore, one possible outcome of correction officers having shared traumatic experiences is the formation of a trauma bond with one or more of their coworkers. It can sometimes be difficult for some administrators to understand the connection many officers seem to have with one another. This observation, however, is not meant to discredit the experience and qualifications of any administrator who did not rise through the ranks. Rather, it is simply to suggest the need to be aware that there exists the possibility that officers may have a higher level of trust in those who have had experiences like their own.

Gallows Humor

The effects officer trauma bonds have on a workforce or an agency as a whole may present

themselves anecdotally as in the case of the commonly seen "gallows humor," although such instances are nearly impossible to measure or quantify. Oftentimes, despite good intentions on the part of correctional administrators, officers may blame their agency's leadership following a traumatic experience. Once separated from the event in question, it would not be surprising to see the officers involved shift their frustration to those in leadership positions, questioning or criticizing command decisions for the circumstances leading or contributing to the event. Criticizing a lack of intervention or resources made available to officers following a traumatic experience has been seen as well.

Whether such reactions come from a sense of guilt or uncertainty over an officer's opinion about their own performance during an event or whether it is simply a way to shift blame to internally justify what happened, officers complaining about a seemingly unrelated matter following a serious incident may appear out of character for those officers or inappropriate given the gravity of the situation. In hours or days following an incarcerated

individual's suicide that occurs during officer break time, it wouldn't be surprising to overhear the responding officers criticizing the conditions of the staff break room or the length of their break time. Given the nature of the event this may appear out of place, however officers may use such comments as a way to pivot from one obstacle to another. It is also possible that these criticisms are used simply to avoid directly addressing the event itself.

Many officers often feel that administrators who have never been an officer have a lack of perspective and empathy for what they face every day. Understandably, this can be frustrating to administrators, but those who are able to gain the trust and confidence of officers, tend to do so by consistently demonstrating care and understanding, even when rebuked by those same officers. This is not meant to excuse rude or unprofessional behavior on the part of the officers, but more so to gain an understanding as to why some officers may withhold giving their full trust to a staff member who has not experienced events similar to those that they have faced. This also goes back to the officers' belief that civilians

lack the ability to empathize and understand them. Attempting to tell an officer with whom you have no shared connection, that you “get it” or understand what they go through, can seem condescending and may do more damage than good. Patience and empathy, and

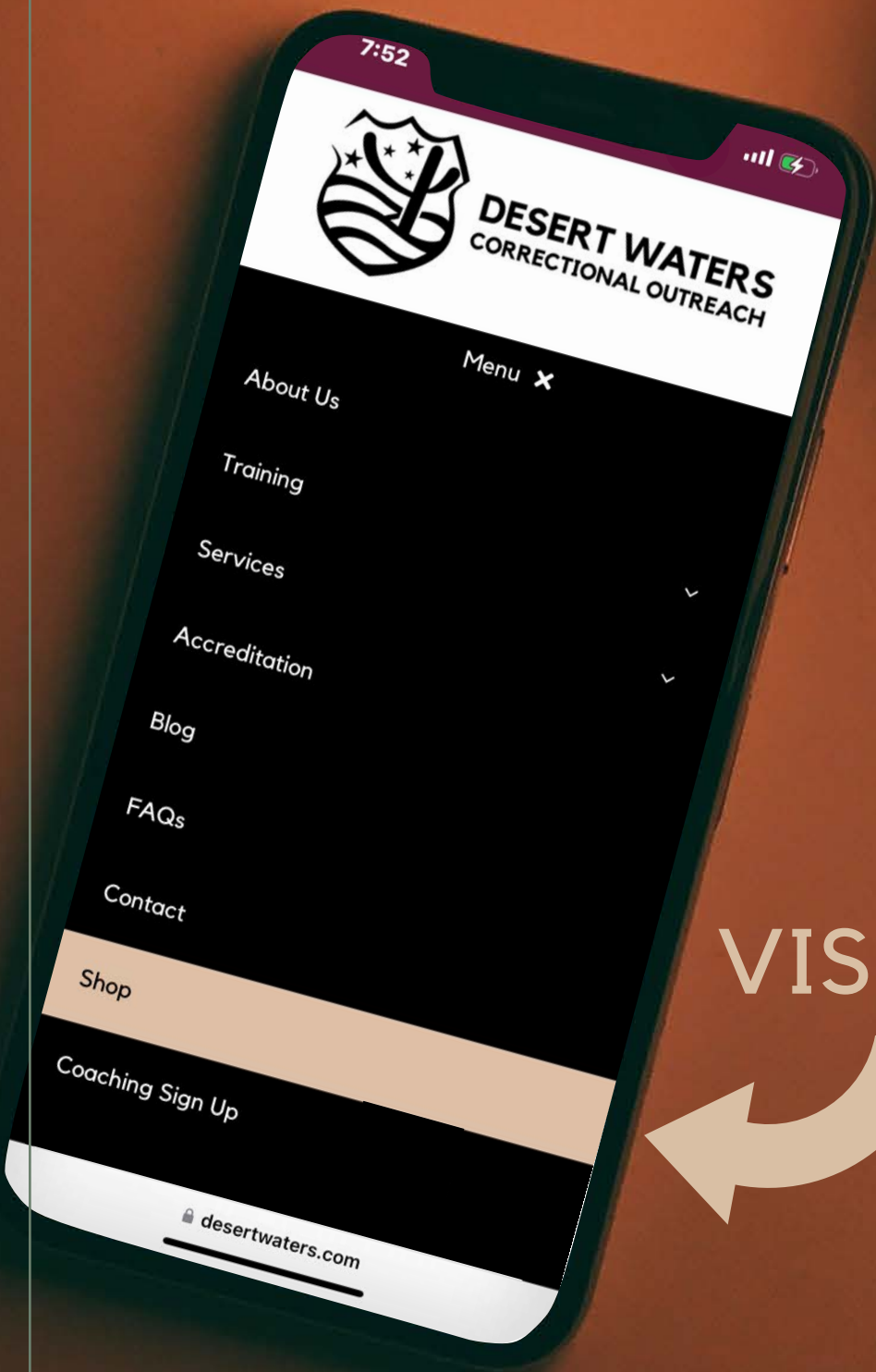
perspective often are the best ways to navigate through these situations.

To be continued in the next issue of the Correctional Oasis.

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Mission

Improving the wellbeing of corrections and other public safety professionals through training, consulting, and other essential resources to foster resilience, mental health, and overall wellness in these challenging professions

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Support Desert Waters Correctional Outreach

We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing the well-being of corrections staff and other public safety professionals, and to also assist their families. Contributions by individuals like you enable us to offer some services at no cost, and to keep our products affordable for agencies. Consider joining us in our mission by making a tax-deductible **donation** today. Thank you for your support!

Desert Waters Correctional Outreach is a non-profit corporation which helps correctional and other public safety agencies counter Corrections Fatigue in their staff by cultivating a healthier workplace climate and a more engaged workforce through targeted skill-based training and research.

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