



**POLICE
—²—
PEACE**



**MINDFULNESS
MEDITATION TRAINING
TOOLKIT**

SPRING 2021

INTRODUCTION

The ‘Mindfulness Meditation Training Toolkit’ will take you through the planning of an evidenced-based wellness program consisting of mainstream, intensive cognitive training to address stress, anxiety, depression and pain using the practices of mindfulness meditation.

This Mindfulness Meditation Training will help facilitate the following outcomes for police departments:

- Reduced PTSD, burnout, anger and fatigue
- Increased resilience and emotional intelligence
- Better decisions in the field
- Better awareness
- Enhanced concentration
- Sharpened decision making
- Increased overall well-being
- Better job performance
- Fewer incidences of mental illness

QUESTIONS TO ASK UPFRONT

When you desire to introduce an ‘officer wellness program’ to your department, there are several questions to ask yourself beforehand which will shape the program and impact your ultimate results.

Here are questions to ask yourself as you begin this stage of the process:

1. Do you have an existing youth dialogue program?

- a. If yes, what’s working and what isn’t working?
- b. If no, why not?

2. And are you interested in a youth dialogue program?

- a. If yes, why?
- b. If no, why not?

3. What are your program objectives?

- a. Greater community engagement
- b. Building public trust
- c. Creating new channels of communication
- d. Establishing new relationships between officers and young persons
- e. Improving outcomes for young persons so they don’t become ensnared in the criminal justice system

4. What success metrics are essential to you?

- a. Lower community violence
- b. Lower arrest rates among young persons
- c. Broad community support

5. What stakeholders will your program be important to?

- a. Public, youth oriented departments
- b. Schools
- c. Elected officials
- d. Local businesses and associations
- e. Parent groups
- f. Other _____

6. How long will your program run for?

- a. 6 months
- b. 12 months
- c. Other _____

7. What initiatives would you like to include in your program?

Later on, you will have the opportunity to complete a worksheet where you list them

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Departments know too well the pressures that come with police work. Serving as an officer is not just a job, it's a life and a calling which means the pressures of serious work can severely impact mental well being if not handled in a healthy manner.

What does research tell us about this?

Researchers across the country have documented decades long studies on military and police personnel. What they have found is that those individuals suffer from high rates of blood pressure, insomnia, high levels of stress hormones, heart problems, PTSD and suicide. Research has shown that the life expectancy of a police officer is 22 years less than the average life expectancy in the U.S.

What can be done?

Among successful approaches to reverse the deleterious effects of policing, mindfulness meditation as been studied. Mindfulness meditation has shown the potential to help officers make better decisions in high stress situations, improve attention for long periods of time and reduce the toll the job takes on emotional and psychological well being.

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the act of being fully present, aware of where one is, and what one is doing and not overly concerned or reactive to outside stimulus. Everyone is capable of being mindful. However, most people lose the capacity as we are constantly faced with stimuli, thoughts of the past, concerns about the future and the fast pace of life.

How does mindfulness work?

Mindfulness works as to change certain areas of the brain. In research, before and after MRI scans analyzed the physical changes in the brain of study participants. What they found was three changes occurred:

- The amygdala, or part of the brain that processes fear and triggers responses, shrank
- The pre-frontal cortex, the part of the brain that oversees decision making, impulse control and decisions, becomes thicker
- The connections between the amygdala and the rest of the brain are reduced, and the connections between the pre frontal cortex and the rest of the brain become more active.

PRE-CHECK LIST

Training Pre-Check List

Location

- Is the site a calming space, within or outside of the police station?
- Is it somewhere familiar, where officers already congregate?
- Have you considered a non-traditional venue such as a church, community center or outdoors?
- Is the space quiet and without distractions?

Duration

- Are you prepared to hold at least three types of trainings?
 - Informational sessions where the science of the practice is shared and discussed
 - The trainings themselves where officers learn and practice the techniques
 - Follow-up conversations or debriefs to learn how things have changed since the initial trainings

Size

- Are you able to bring together a minimum sized group of 10 to 15 participants at a time?
- For that group, can you create a mix of leadership and officers?
- Is it important that the intended group is diverse in its makeup of race, ethnicity and gender?

PROGRAM PLANNING MATERIALS

Program Setup: 2-4 weeks before the program begins:

- Meet with key stakeholders to discuss the program
- Finalize program objectives
- Identify operations points of contact
- Determine timeline for program
- Consider the location where the meditation training could occur
- Consider the length of the training sessions, such as 60 minutes
- Consider the size and make-up of the participants which would be ideal
- Consider whether food could or should be served to create a welcoming environment

Notes:

PROGRAM PLANNING MATERIALS

Training Particulars

The setting for a training venue sets the tone for a successful program. Consider these questions as you develop your cognitive resilience training program:

Utilization of Space

How much space will be needed?

- Where will the training sessions be held?
- Will you need access to AV equipment?
- Is the floor appropriate for people to sit, lay and move around in comfort?
- Will exit and entry be awkward after a training session which requires participants to exit into a noisy environment?

Where will people sit or recline?

- Have you considered the comfort of seating arrangements, enabling sitting for an hour at a time?
- Are you able to have people transition easily from the chair to the floor?
- Would you like to assign seats in advance, or ask participants to fan out as they enter the room?
- Would you like to hold a session upfront to break the ice, such as personal stories, shared experiences or a video?

Setting the Tone

- Have you considered the formality of the program, and made choices about how formal or informal it should be?

- If using tables, are you planning to offer pens and notepads?
- Have you chosen a space large enough for the group to move around without interacting with one another if needed?
- Are you considering serving food, which can be an icebreaker?
- When would you serve the food so that it is not a distraction?
- Are people able to comfortably eat where they are seated or do they need to move somewhere to pick up or consume food easily?

Equipment

- Have you considered what supplies might bring about the best result?
- Do you have access to computers, projectors, smart boards, flip charts, paper and markers?
- Can there be a copy machine nearby, if needed?

Program Documentation

- Do you wish for the trainings to be memorialized?
- If you think that it may help lead to further action, how do you plan to document the training?
- Is there an observer who may be available to record the trainings and then have them transcribed?

PROGRAM PLANNING MATERIALS

Program Cleanup

- Are you selecting a space which can be quickly and easily cleaned up after the trainings?
- Does another group need to use the space immediately afterwards?

Facilitation

A professionally trained mindfulness meditation instructor is crucial to success. And identifying someone with experience interacting with officers is a skill you will want to have.

- Have you identified someone with experience engaging officers, or who themselves is an officer or former officer?
- Is this person familiar with the specific needs of the department?
- Can you locate a multi-lingual trainer in the event you have multiple languages spoken in your department?
- Is the person you are considering adept at working with shy, withdrawn or stressed out officers?
- Have you considered a co-training, where more than one trainer is involved?
- Consider using an officer or former officer, for the reasons of reluctance to share, power structures and need for shared experience of the type of work policing entails
- If you need help identifying a trainer, please reach out to us at Police2Peace and we can assist you in identifying the perfect trainer for your training program.

Engaging Police Participants

The following steps will help build engagement for your program:

Before beginning to reach out to any officers for potential participation, first consider the idea of just who you want to bring together. By reviewing the goals in this toolkit and comparing them with the workforce you wish to reach, you can come up with a plan to engage those who are consistent with your program goals.

Some considerations include the following:

- What level of you wishing to reach? Including command staff as well as officers is key to developing buy in and creating longevity for your program.
- Are you opening up the program to companions, family members, retired officers and other first responders?
- Diversity is key. The trainings should mirror the racial and ethnic makeup of the department. Engaging officers who are a healthy mix of ethnicity, race, sexual orientation and experience on the job is a good recipe for success.

THE TRAINING PROGRAM

Creating Buy-in

We crafted a set of emails and graphics you can use with your community to promote your Mindfulness Meditation Training Program.

- **The Program Awareness Email:** Make your organization aware of the upcoming trainings. It is just for awareness, and therefore, shouldn't contain a URL to your program's sign up page, if any.
- **The Department Participation Email:** Entice and excite engagement. This email should be sent to command staff, officers, and other stakeholders you identify as potential influencers.
- **The Program Participation Reminder Email 1 and Email 2:** Urge last minute participation to sign up for the trainings. When you are crafting your message, focus on what is most meaningful for each of the stakeholder groups to take away from the trainings.

How to inspire command staff:

- **Inspire!** Explain benefits of the trainings
- **Why?** Explain department and program objectives
- **Who?** Key leaders and department influencers
- **Goals?** Transparent & clear objectives

How to inspire department staff:

Inspire! Explain advantages of the trainings

Why? Explain organization objectives

How? Confirm the program doesn't diminish any of the work already being done to control crime

Goals? Transparent & clear objectives

The Toolkit

Across the country, departments are bringing mindfulness meditation training to their officers for better psychological health and wellness.

This toolkit is a resource for those departments interested in bringing mindfulness training to their workforce. The planning, questions and strategies contained in this toolkit provide an overview of innovations and other promising best practices.

This toolkit is a valuable first step in healing police officers toward de-escalating volatile situations, improve community relations and increase their well-being. While holding successful mindfulness meditation trainings can require time, energy and considerable commitment from a department, the effort is worthwhile. Officers and command staff alike report that these important trainings were valuable to changes necessary to better manage officers' responses to stress.

Note that the recommendations contained herein are intended as guidelines, and should be adapted as needed to suit the department.

CONCLUSION

The ‘Mindfulness Meditation Training Program’ does not end at the last session. To maintain a healthy psychological wellness environment, you will need to continue to use tools at your disposal to stimulate participation and continuing buy-in. In addition, think of ways you can energize department-wide excitement about the program and its benefits. Emails, newsletters, videos and testimonials are all good ways to maintain excitement.

You can even follow on the Mindfulness Meditation Training Program with these other programs to continually generate engagement, such as:

- Peace Officer Identity
- Police Community Youth Dialogues

And community programs including:

- Community Feedback Loop
- 7 Simple Steps for Positive Policing
- Walk With Us

These programs may come in handy when creating a Mindfulness Meditation Training Program for your department.

Begin developing yours today!

You now have the tools, tips and worksheets to consider developing your own Mindfulness Meditation Training Program.

If you have any questions about starting your own Mindfulness Meditation Training using Police2Peace, or enriching your existing program, feel free to visit police2peace.org or give us a call at 928.852.4240.

Engage your department today with Police2Peace.



POLICE —2— PEACE

Police2Peace is a national, nonpartisan nonprofit organization that is operationalizing a framework of community policing rooted in the idea of police officers becoming peace officers. Police2Peace's mission is to be a trusted source of ideas, strategies, programs and policies for positive change in policing for departments, municipalities, the federal government and civil society. As a solutions-driven organization, Police2Peace brings expertise to departments that are redefining, reimagining and advancing policing in America for the purposes of cultural, procedural and operational change and departmental alignment. Police2Peace is a U.S. domestic nonprofit corporation having a 501 (c)(3) status with the IRS.

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