

CALIFORNIA Sheriff

CALIFORNIA STATE SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION

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The South Placer Adult Correctional Facility

... public safety.
Foundation Mission Statement: ...
... and training services to the 58 Elected She...
... their departmental employees and other me...
... California State Sheriffs' Association.

Mindfulness???

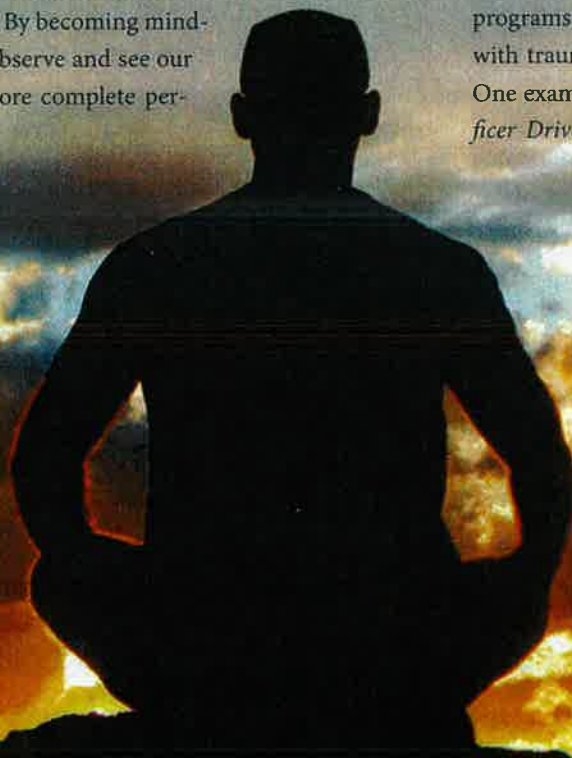
It is estimated that only 17% of U.S. adults are considered to be in a state of optimal mental health. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the cost of stress to American businesses is as high as \$300 billion. Over the last 30 years, self-reported levels of stress have increased 18% for women and 25% for men. This has huge consequences because of the role stress plays in a wide array of illnesses, such as high blood pressure, which afflicts nearly 70 million individuals and costs \$130 billion a year to treat. The WHO's recommendation to businesses/companies was to "mount an aggressive approach to wellness, prevention, screening and active management of chronic conditions." One of the most productive (and cheapest) ways to become healthier and happier is through mindfulness exercises like meditation.

Mindfulness is the ability to be fully aware of one's moment-to-moment thoughts and feelings, while observing them from a place of detachment. By becoming mindfully aware, we are able to observe and see our situation in a larger and more complete per-

spective, which then begins to help us see different possibilities for responding to our situations rather than falling into old reactive patterns. Incorporating mindfulness into our daily routine can be life changing. One can expect improvements from problems such as stress, anxiety, depression, insomnia, high blood pressure, acute and chronic pain, obesity, addictions, and many others.

Studies in recent years suggest mindfulness, especially meditation, produces mental and physical benefits. An 8-week training program/study at UCLA showed participants with a significantly enhanced sense of well-being and an increased capacity to focus attention and resist impulses, as well as having a better response to stressful and upsetting conditions and situations, like chronic pain, or upsetting thoughts. Because of these findings, universities and hospitals across the United States are offering mindfulness training to staff members as well as to patients, and they are finding that individuals who have gone through mindfulness training gain benefits in a wide variety of areas: improved stress management, enhanced spirituality and well-being; increased capacity for empathy; and reductions in anxiety and symptoms of burnout.

Similarly, an increasing number of law enforcement agencies around the United States have begun to implement mindfulness-based programs to assist officers in managing their increased stress levels, deal with traumatic experiences, and improve overall focus when on-duty. One example of a mindfully-based program being implemented is *Officer Driver Training*. Policedriving.com discusses mindful guidelines



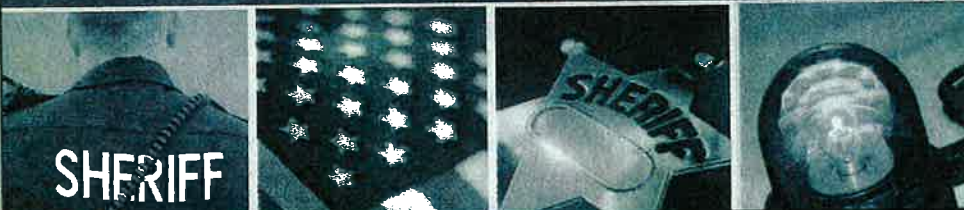
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that may be helpful to improve the safety and awareness for not only officers but also the general public when operating their vehicles; the following is an abridged version of those guidelines:

1. Start by approaching your car/truck with the intention of being mindful.
2. Notice each of the actions involved in starting the car: opening the door, sitting down, putting on your seatbelt, putting the keys in the ignition, turning the keys, etc.
3. Expand your awareness so that you are really aware of all of the things in your field of vision.
4. If you notice that thoughts have pulled you away from the experience, just gently shift your attention back to the experience of driving.
5. Each time you stop at a red light or stop sign, use that as a cue to come back to the experience of driving.
6. Remember that each time you practice mindfulness, you should expect that your mind will wander. That is just a normal thing that human minds do. The goal of mindfulness is to come back to being aware of the experience over and over, not to be able to focus perfectly!

So how does someone begin implementing mindfulness into their everyday life besides when driving? The basic mindful activity focuses on breathing meditation exercises, but if you find meditating difficult, you can practice mindfulness by doing other activities like listening to music, gardening/yardwork, physical activity/working out, car maintenance, or even cleaning- any activity that demands full attention can be mindful. You can take small moments during the day to do mindfulness exercises by focusing on your posture, your breath, and/or by being aware of what is going on around you without involving yourself in it. Simply pulling yourself back into the present moment will give you a break and relief from the constant running thoughts and opinions we all have going on in our heads. The goal of mindfulness is to live completely in the present moment. ✨ >>

LCW LIEBERT CASSIDY WHITMORE



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“Those who are happiest are those who do the most for others.”

- Booker T. Washington

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