



# Fighting Monsters: Cumulative PTSD in First Responders

Through the course of their careers, first responders accumulate experiences that cause long term stress and trauma. This trauma can lead to depression and self-destructive thoughts, however, there are methods and wellness strategies to proactively promote better mental health!

## First Responders and Mental Health

- Seeking help can be difficult due to the stigma of maintaining a certain image as a first responder.
- In first responders:
  - Suicide rates are higher
  - 1 in 20 have an untreated mental illness
  - There is a 5x higher rate of suffering PTSD than any other profession



## Cumulative PTSD

- Cumulative Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is a type of PTSD that builds up over time from witnessing many stressors and traumatic events.
- **Signs to look for:**
  - Withdrawal from people, places, and things
  - Behaving out of character (e.g. emotional outbursts)
  - Making bad choices
  - Poor eating and hygienic habits

## Combatting Cumulative PTSD

- Reach out to coworkers for help because they know you best and understand the job. Have accountability for each other such as mental health check-ups. The more people involved increases the likelihood of success.
- **Routine maintenance** to have time for friends/family, eating healthy, working out, etc.
  - Schedule rest or break times as diligently as you schedule your work times
- **Changing perspective**
  - How you view your work matters! Instead of "dreading work" and being put in a predisposition that it is not enjoyable, say "*I get to go to work and help people*"
- **Make your phone work for you**
  - Limit usage for social media (utilizing phone settings)
  - Organize apps and notes to surround your goals
  - Download motivational quote apps
- Have hobbies unrelated to your job
- Surround yourself with people that inspire and motivate you
- Have a morning routine – Don't hit snooze, 5 min. stretches/exercises, eat within the first 30 min., avoid news and social media usage

Data adapted from "Fighting Monsters: Cumulative PTSD in First Responders", a webinar originally held on 4/5/2021. Presented by Sgt. Shane Blalock. Sgt. Shane Blalock is available by email directly at [sblalock@florenceal.org](mailto:sblalock@florenceal.org) or [funkypork@live.com](mailto:funkypork@live.com).



NAMI Maryland can help.  
Visit [www.namimd.org](http://www.namimd.org) or  
call 410-884-8691 for  
more information



NAMIMaryland



NAMIMaryland



NAMIMaryland