

One Officer's Story: Accelerated Resolution Therapy

1. What led you to seek mental health care?

A few years ago, I was involved in a deadly officer-involved shooting. I was put on a standard leave, as per department policy, and then right into a paternity leave. My daughter was born shortly after the shooting. Being home with her and away from the job, I noticed that I wasn't having any feelings good or bad. I was indifferent to the world around me, including her. If she was crying, whatever...if she was happy...whatever...if she was sad...whatever. I thought that this behavior was normal and "moved on."

When I came back to work, my first call was a male with a gun call. After the call was over, I was driving around and at times didn't know how I got to the area that I was in. Every shift had to start the same way otherwise my entire day was "destroyed". I HAD to drive by the shooting location, stop, look at it, and then go about my day. I also had a negligent discharge of my swat rifle during training (this had never happened before.) I started to feel bad for not feeling bad about the shooting...but just kept going.

The final straw was my oldest daughter drawing a picture of me. The picture showed me smiling but my head was "on fire." When I asked her about it, she said: "you look happy but your brain is on fire dad".

2. How has seeing a mental health therapist helped you?

After a first meeting with the therapist, I learned that I had anxiety and mild case of depression; which I was told was normal after an OIS. I also learned that I was a candidate for Accelerated Resolution Therapy. Per our city policy at the time we were only allowed a certain number of sessions per year and after that had to use our personal health insurance to cover the rest of treatment. I was lucky in the fact that I used two sessions in one year and a few more in the following year. Now we are allowed to have a couple more sessions a year which might not be enough for some. Plus, that might cover one event and now an officer is left with no more care or an out-of-pocket expense depending on his/her health insurance plan for the rest of the year.

Accelerated Resolution Therapy helped me with letting things go. Things came up during the treatments that I didn't realize were still bugging me from years prior. I was able to put things to rest, have no emotional reaction to them, and able to go about my day without driving by the scene. Five months after starting treatment, I was able to "feel the sun" on my skin and face for the first time in a long time.

Previously, I hadn't been able to play with her without thinking about the shooting and/or seeing the scene while I am with her (my brain fused these two events into one). Thanks to ART I was able to separate the OIS and my daughter's birth!!!

3. How skeptical were you that mental health treatment would work?

I wasn't sure what to expect. My coworker told me to give it a try and be "open-minded." After a few visits, I felt better and I felt like I had less and less things in my head. Eventually all of the "bad stuff" went away.

4. Why do cops avoid seeking help?

- Fear of being labeled - ex: PTSD=loss of carrier or advancement
- Fear of partners thinking that "you are weak"

- We are tasked to solve problems NOT be the “problem”
- Fear of records of treatment being discovered during a lawsuit
- Fear of admin finding out about treatment plan

5. What is your advice for police officers who are in your same situation?

Develop healthy habits prior to a critical incident. Keep up on the “When, Then” rehearsals and always think of the W.I.N. concept (What’s Important Now.) Keep up with friends and hobbies outside Law Enforcement. Listen to the people that know you the best...if they say you need help or you are acting like an A\$%%\$^ you probably are, so seek help. Keep an eye on your mood, diet, and work-life balance. Listen to your gut... and seek help sooner than later!!!! For all of the “I’m fine” and “I am good”, I wish I went in earlier.