# Chapter 7
# Introducing Mindfulness Training and Research Into Policing:
## Strategies for Successful Implementation

**Daniel W. Grupe**
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4927-7572
*University of Wisconsin, Madison, USA*

**Chris Smith**
*Academy for Mindfulness, LLC, USA*

**Chad McGehee**
*University of Wisconsin, Madison, USA*

## ABSTRACT

*The introduction of mindfulness practices into law enforcement has the potential for broad benefits for police officers and community members alike, but the impact of this work depends on careful consideration of contextual factors specific to conducting research and training in this population and environment. This chapter provides an overview of the authors' experiences over the past five years adapting, delivering, and studying the impact of mindfulness training in a Midwestern U.S. police agency. The authors detail strategies and practices that have proved beneficial in the implementation and uptake of this training. Themes that are addressed include developing diverse and meaningful partnerships, preparing outside researchers and trainers to work in a police context, adapting mindfulness for policing, and logistical issues. Key considerations for the future of mindfulness in policing include the challenge of widespread implementation and expanding the focus of research and training to encompass community well-being.*

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## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

American policing in the year 2021 is in a crisis situation, although the nature of this crisis looks quite different depending on one's standpoint[1]. For those outside of policing committed to racial justice and equity, the crisis is defined (in part) by a toxic and dysfunctional police culture that predictably and repeatedly results in acts of aggression, violence, and discrimination against Black individuals and other people of color or marginalized groups. Rejecting the "few bad apples" argument, these critics instead suggest that the barrel itself is rotten and needs to be replaced for policing to serve its stated role of protecting humanity, justice, and democracy. Individuals within the institution have been increasingly drawing attention to a different crisis, that of police mental health. Daily exposure to direct and vicarious trauma, which occurs against a backdrop of chronic organizational stress and increasing levels of community distrust and criticism (Morin, Parker, Stepler, & Mercer, 2017), contributes to elevated rates of posttraumatic stress, depression, alcoholism, and suicide in police officers relative to the general public (Ballenger et al., 2011; "Blue H.E.L.P.," 2020; Carleton et al., 2017; Chopko, Palmieri, & Adams, 2018; Violanti et al., 2017). Current public discourse allows little space to endorse both crises as legitimate concerns that both need immediate and drastic action.

What appear to be completely separate crises, however, are intimately and in some ways inextricably linked. Among the core police cultural changes that are needed are alternatives to the maladaptive and toxic emotion regulation strategies that are endemic to the profession. Values of masculinity, stoicism, self-sufficiency, and emotional control spread through cultural transmission and become internalized as officers increasingly identify with the profession (Karaffa & Tochkov, 2013; Pogrebin & Poole, 1995). Police training emphasizes maintaining control above all else, but attempts to control or suppress emotions and other internal experiences lead to negative psychological outcomes (Gross & John, 2003). Officers who attempt to deal with inner turmoil and crisis on their own deny themselves both effective mental health care and the social support that is critical for staving off PTSD, depression, and suicide (Ozbay et al., 2007; Pietrzak et al., 2010; Yuan et al., 2011). The fatigue, burnout, and hypervigilance that emerge in the absence of effective coping strategies all contribute to aggressive and discriminatory policing practices (Goff & Rau, 2020; Kop, Euwema, & Schaufeli, 1999; Ma et al., 2013; Rajaratnam et al., 2011). These practices exacerbate distrust and anger toward the police institution and individual officers who wear the uniform – especially among communities of color who have been traumatized and oppressed by police officers throughout the history of the American institution (Earl & Reynolds-Stenson, 2020) – which in turn further calcifies officers' "us vs. them" mentality, and so on and so forth.

The introduction and widespread adoption of mindfulness and related contemplative practices may help disrupt this seemingly endless cycle for the benefit of all individuals – police officers and community members alike – who experience suffering as participants in this unjust and traumatizing system. As cultural awareness and acceptance of mindfulness practices have grown, there has been increasing interest from the police institution surrounding these practices, but there may also be an incomplete understanding of what is meant by the word "mindfulness". Mindfulness can be described as the act of paying attention to sensations, emotions, and thoughts in a particular way: 1) as they unfold in the present moment, 2) on purpose, and 3) with acceptance rather than judgment (or, at least, with awareness of the judgments that are arising) (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Mindfulness is not a technique to clear one's mind of thoughts or feelings that cause distress or discomfort. Rather, this quality of awareness provides moments of relating to internal and external experiences (whether positive, negative, or neutral) from a non-judgmental perspective. Mindfulness allows one to see more clearly one's entrenched and often

unexamined perspectives of these experiences and, over time and with much practice, to change these long-held beliefs[2].

While mindfulness can be viewed as a naturally occurring state that we all have the capacity to experience, mindfulness as a trait can be intentionally fostered and cultivated through specific practices and techniques that have been developed by different peoples and cultures over thousands of years. In modern Western culture one of the most popular methods for training mindfulness is Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), an 8-week class offered in a group setting that involves a variety of mindfulness practices, didactics, and small-and large-group dialogue (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Originally developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn for the treatment of chronic pain, MBSR and related interventions have since been shown to effectively treat a variety of physical and mental health conditions. Meta-analyses of research from the past 30 years have shown benefits of mindfulness training for anxiety, depression, chronic pain, addictive disorders, and smoking cessation (Goldberg et al., 2018; Goyal et al., 2014; Khoury et al., 2013), and emerging evidence has demonstrated benefits of MBSR for the treatment of PTSD in combat veterans (Niles et al., 2012; Polusny et al., 2015). Recent research in military, police, and other first responders suggests adapted mindfulness trainings may offer attentional and memory benefits in these populations (Denkova, Zanesco, Rogers, & Jha, 2020; Jha, Morrison, Parker, & Stanley, 2016; Jha, Witkin, Morrison, Rostrup, & Stanley, 2017), allow individuals to recover more quickly from stressful scenarios (Johnson et al., 2014), and reduce perceived stress and stress-related mental health symptoms (Christopher et al., 2016, 2018; Grupe et al., 2019; Krick & Felfe, 2019).

Importantly, mindfulness training is not merely a means of symptom or stress reduction. Rather, the adoption and integration of these practices can facilitate positive growth and change for the practitioner and those in the practitioner's sphere of influence. Through the cultivation of a new kind of relationship to one's internal and external experiences, mindfulness provides a stable foundation for other contemplative practices that promote connection with other living beings and the larger world, provide insight into one's mind, body, and spirit, and allow one to become more aware of a deeper sense of purpose or meaning (Dahl, Wilson-Mendenhall, & Davidson, 2020).

Mindfulness and these other contemplative practices can provide and hone tools that contribute to a different kind of ethos for the police profession: one of self-awareness and self-regulation (Vago & Silbersweig, 2012), one of interconnection and compassion for shared human suffering (Hutcherson, Seppala, & Gross, 2008; Kang, Gray, & Dovidio, 2014), and one that fosters exploration and acceptance of challenging emotions instead of avoidance and emotional control (Lindsay & Creswell, 2017; Thompson & Waltz, 2010). The widespread delivery and adoption of these practices in a culturally competent manner – along with other supports for officers and needed structural reforms – may allow a different cycle to emerge. Officers who are less stressed and more self-aware, self-regulated, and compassionate will be more fair and impartial police officers acting with greater discretion (Gershon, Barocas, Canton, Li, & Vlahov, 2009; Rahr & Rice, 2015; Swencionis & Goff, 2017; Trinkner, Tyler, & Goff, 2016; Zaki, 2015). Communities of color who are treated by the police with fairness, equity, and dignity will be more supportive of their local police, which will further improve the well-being of those officers and motivate them to continue fair and just treatment of community members (Burke, 2020), and so on and so forth. This is the true potential of mindfulness for policing in the 21st century: not only that it can potentially lower stress and make individual police officers more resilient to trauma, but that it can contribute to widespread cultural changes in the police institution that are needed to reimagine the profession, save lives, and bring greater justice to communities that have historically been marginalized by the criminal justice system.

To realize this ambitious and transformative vision, it is critical to think deeply and carefully about how these practices are adapted, introduced, and delivered to police officers. Retired police lieutenant Rich Goerling, who has been a pioneer in bringing awareness and compassion practices into policing, has argued against training mindfulness in a similar manner as other new police practices (i.e., a 40-hour, train-the-trainer program operating from within the police institution). One reason that this standard training model may be inappropriate is that these are embodied practices. The impact and integrity of this training is compromised by training novices in a compressed, standardized, and manualized fashion and then setting them loose to disseminate these practices to other novices. Furthermore, if the intent is to not just enhance police well-being but also to leverage these practices to drive culture change, the police institution must be willing to partner with experts *outside* of the institution – even as this effort is supported and sustained by internal champions.

For the past 5 years, our research and training team at the Center for Healthy Minds at the University of Wisconsin-Madison has partnered with Dane County (WI) law enforcement agencies as we have adapted, delivered, and studied the impact of an adapted 8-week mindfulness training program with nearly 150 police officers. We have also provided in-service trainings and one-day workshops that have reached hundreds of additional law enforcement personnel throughout the state and the region. We entered this work naive to the world of policing, but we leveraged institutional knowledge from similar research projects that our center has conducted, the collective and diverse teaching experiences of our training team, and the support of colleagues who trod before us and generously shared their experiences and wisdom with our team – in particular, Lt. Goerling, Dr. Mike Christopher at Pacific University, and Brant Rogers of Yoga Hillsboro. We also acknowledge the work of the trailblazing Cheri Maples, a former police Captain with the Madison, WI Police Department (MPD) who bravely introduced mindfulness practices to her colleagues at MPD years before mindfulness was a commonplace term in Western culture, let alone within policing. An ordained dharma teacher and fierce advocate for social justice, her life was cut tragically short just as we were beginning our work with MPD. She nonetheless continues to inspire our work through her writings and teachings (Maples, 2017), and we have tremendous gratitude for the seeds she planted and for the countless lives she has influenced.

Our initial research on mindfulness in policing was a feasibility and preliminary efficacy study in 30 sworn MPD personnel (Grupe et al., 2019). We demonstrated excellent feasibility, acceptability, and adherence for this intervention and established preliminary evidence of reduced post-training perceived stress, sleep disturbances, anxiety, burnout, and PTSD symptoms. We subsequently received funding from the National Institute of Justice to conduct a randomized controlled trial of this intervention in 120 officers from 3 different Dane County law enforcement agencies. This research, which is ongoing, seeks to validate these preliminary findings with a matched waitlist control group while investigating additional impacts on stress-related biomarkers and objective measures of sleep and physiology collected from police officers in the field (https://osf.io/g73fa/). Rather than delving into the detailed methods and results of this research, we aim here to provide a history of our experiences to date bringing mindfulness to policing, highlighting the strategies and approaches that we have found most effective in embarking on this novel program of training and research.

This chapter is organized around four broad themes: 1) Establishing trusting partnerships between individuals in law enforcement, academia, and the broader community; 2) Preparing external trainers and researchers to work in a law enforcement environment; 3) Adapting mindfulness training for police officers; and 4) Nuts-and-bolts logistics. While our specific focus is the adaptation and delivery of mindfulness and related practices, we note that each of these themes (save #3) is broadly relevant to

police practitioners, academic researchers, and external trainers entering into new research and training collaborations regardless of the specific topic. As many of these strategies and recommendations are directed at researchers, trainers, and mindfulness practitioners outside of law enforcement, we next provide specific recommendations for law enforcement practitioners, decision-makers, and policymakers interested in bringing mindfulness training into law enforcement. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion of two areas where we have realized considerably less success and where there is still significant work to be done. First, we will discuss the challenges of broad implementation and adoption, both within a police agency and across the larger police institution. Second, we will discuss the critical importance of expanding the focus of this training and research to more directly address the priorities and well-being of communities of color, and not merely the priorities and well-being of those within the police institution.

## ESTABLISHING TRUSTING PARTNERSHIPS

### Establishing Partnerships With Law Enforcement

For scientists or practitioners outside of policing, there are two key questions to consider at the outset of collaborative work. First, *how* does one go about establishing a partnership with a police agency? And second, *why* would one go about establishing a partnership with a police agency? Regarding the "how", existing relationships are critical to breaking in with a group that can be skeptical of outsiders and their motivations. Our research center was fortunate to be connected with a local community member who also had ties within MPD. This person reached out to both parties to suggest that mindfulness training for MPD officers may provide benefits from the perspective both of the department and of the broader community. After several exploratory phone calls, we met with the captains of training and community outreach and an officer from the training team.

We did our homework prior to this initial meeting and prepared a concise and data-driven presentation on our understanding of police officer stress, its impact on physical and mental health, and some ideas on potential solutions to these challenges, based on our previous research and effective interventions in similar populations. Just as importantly, we entered into this meeting and into this work with a "beginner's mind" (Suzuki, 2006) – an open acknowledgement that we were newcomers to this work, that we knew little about the reality of police work and the challenges faced by the department, and that we wanted to learn more in order to conduct this work with the greatest integrity. We listened to these individuals speak about their lived experiences of stress, trauma, and mental health challenges, what was lacking in their department's response to these challenges, and what they were looking for in a partnership. In this initial meeting and throughout the course of our relationship with MPD, we have sought to maintain transparency and honesty about the limitations of our knowledge and lived experiences. Maintaining humility about these limitations and seeking input and guidance from within policing to shape the trajectory of our research and training has been crucial for developing a trusting relationship.

Regarding the "why" question, it is important to identify from the outset what a police agency is looking for in a training and/or research relationship. Is the agency looking for a quick fix to what may be a complex and long-term problem, or are they willing to engage in a sustained partnership to bring about more meaningful change? Regarding the specific topic of mindfulness training, does the agency see this training as a means of engineering more efficient and resilient crime-fighting machines? Do

they recognize, or are they willing to consider, the potential for this training to have a transformational impact at the level of individual officers, the police organization, and the broader community? It is critical to understand the commitment of police leadership early on, and to identify whether their motivation to partner with an outside entity runs deeper than good public relations or checking off a box to meet public demands. Participating officers want to see concrete demonstrations of this commitment from their leadership, that the organization is not just saying "we care about wellness" because this is a trendy topic but rather because they are genuinely committed to supporting their employees in a meaningful way. We speak more to what this commitment might look like in the "Nuts and bolts" section, below.

It was equally important that we ask ourselves why *we* were engaging in this work. Now more than ever, outside individuals or entities looking to collaborate with police agencies need to reflect deeply on personal and professional motivations for engaging in research, training, or other work with law enforcement. Is this a merely transactional relationship, one that is motivated by a perceived opportunity to take advantage of a timely topic? Or are you willing to commit to the long-term investment of time, energy, and resources needed to develop the knowledge and trust necessary to bring about more substantive change? If your work is related to police officer well-being and mental health, is the focus on police officer well-being an end in itself? Or do you see this training as a means to bring about indirect changes in the work police officers do, or in a broader organizational or societal context? There are not necessarily right or wrong answers to these questions, but it is important that these questions be explicitly considered, and that you are able to be honest and vulnerable not just with yourself but with the partnering agency about these underlying motivations.

We entered into this work as an academic research center that does not provide training or interventions outside of a research context. As such, the primary motivating factors for us included the potential of answering novel scientific questions, advancing knowledge, and ultimately publishing results and securing grant funding to sustain and expand this area of research. The larger motivation behind this work is captured in our Center's mission statement: to reduce suffering and improve well-being through a scientific understanding of the mind. At least in a theoretical sense, this meant not just reduced suffering and improved well-being for police officers but also for those affected by police violence and discriminatory behavior. Concretely, however, decisions about how to conduct the work were based largely on what would allow our research to advance as smoothly as possible. This often meant setting aside inconvenient or challenging questions that might impede our progress or cause friction in our relationship with our police partners, who have served as the de facto primary stakeholders over the first 5 years of this work.

## Establishing Community Partnerships

As a result of early and sustained attention to relationship-building with MPD, we have been able to develop, sustain, and grow a trusting partnership that has led to publications, grant funding, and connections with other local and state police agencies that provide new opportunities for research and training. At the same time, five years into this endeavor we have little concrete evidence for the indirect impact of this training in the community, particularly for communities of color who stand to gain the most from a more compassionate, self-aware, and self-regulated police force. As we reorient our research to incorporate community voice and priorities, we are faced with legitimate questions from local communities of color about why we are just now adopting this perspective after focusing exclusively on reducing stress and improving quality of life for police officers.

Based on our own missteps, we strongly advocate for early and meaningful engagement of community partners, particularly if this work has the explicit goal of supporting and lifting up the broader community. There are a variety of partners one might engage in conversations around research and training with police: for example, local foundations, faith organizations, advocacy groups, or service providers who focus their efforts on communities of color. These conversations will inform whether the work you are considering is consistent with the priorities and goals of these various groups, and can inform how the training is delivered, how its impact is measured, what defines "success", and opportunities for dissemination and community outreach. We entered into conversations with representatives of Black communities in Madison with some hesitancy, and only after significant engagement and work had been done with local law enforcement. This lack of early input and engagement from the community has constrained the potential reach and impact of the work. We are actively learning how to develop and sustain mutually beneficial community partnerships, and while we are by no means experts in this area, excellent resources are available (Strand, Cutforth, Stoecker, Marullo, & Donohue, 2003). Community-engaged scholarship is an increasingly mature and robust academic specialty, and one would be wise to seek out collaboration with academic partners working in this area.

## Establishing Academic Partnerships

The success that we have realized in providing mindfulness training in law enforcement can be attributed largely to a robust partnership between academic researchers and mindfulness teachers. Whether one is a teacher, service provider, or law enforcement agency, we see several clear benefits to partnering with academic collaborators when planning and implementing new training programs within law enforcement. First, we have found that embedding mindfulness training in the larger context of academic research increases participants' motivation to become engaged and remain engaged in the training. They see their involvement as not only providing personal benefits, but as contributing to scientific knowledge and long-term benefits for the police profession. Training provided in the context of academic research, rather than by a for-profit purveyor, may also reduce skepticism about underlying motives. Second, this partnership has provided our teachers with opportunities to integrate scientific research into the training in a manner that helps legitimize what may otherwise be perceived by this skeptical, objective, data-driven population as "soft", "woo-woo", or "out there". We know that our teachers' affiliation with a reputable, established scientific center – in our case, one that is studying the impact of meditation training on brain function and structure, biomarkers, and psychophysiological measures in addition to surveys and interviews – has increased the perceived legitimacy of what happens within the classroom. Beyond this benefit by mere association, the ongoing dialogue among scientists and teachers on our team members affords our teachers a deeper understanding of the relevant scientific literature and how to present the science with integrity and clarity. Third, involving academic partners opens up new opportunities to fund this work in the short- and long-term. Academic research on mindfulness and other contemplative practices in law enforcement is in its infancy, and a partnership between researchers, mindfulness trainers, and police agencies may be attractive to funders interested both in criminal justice reform and police officer mental health.

## PREPARING TO CONDUCT RESEARCH OR TRAINING IN A LAW ENFORCEMENT SETTING

Before entering into any work with police, it is imperative that external trainers or researchers engage in personal learning as well as practical lived experiences to develop some fundamental knowledge of the history, context, and culture of policing. While this can and should be an individualized process informed by one's own lived experiences and the local context in which one is working, we found the following preparatory activities to be particularly supportive of the training and research we went on to conduct. These activities overlap with recommendations for clinicians preparing to work with police officers (Papazoglou & Tuttle, 2018), and this paper is highly recommended reading for clinicians and researchers alike.

### Learn About the History of Policing in the United States

The history of American policing is rooted in the control of Black bodies, from slave patrols in Southern states to the enforcement of formal and informal Jim Crow laws to the violent suppression of civil rights protests across the United States (Earl & Reynolds-Stenson, 2020). There is a clear connection between this history and the police violence and discrimination against Black individuals and other people of color that continues today. A basic understanding of this history provides critical context for understanding the trauma and deep distrust of police in communities of color and is necessary to work skillfully with these topics in a training setting. One recommended starting point is an episode of the NPR podcast *Throughline* on American police featuring Harvard professor Khalil Gibran Muhammad (Abdelfatah & Arablouei, 2020). Michelle Alexander's "The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness" (2010) is a gripping history of the American criminal justice system and how it has allowed for continuous state control of Black bodies from slavery to the present day. The Washington Post and the Zinn Education Project recently compiled a helpful list of additional educational resources on the history of policing in the United States (Strauss, 2020).

### Become Familiar With the Local Context in Which This Work Is Happening

Seek out the vast amount of publicly available information on the history, leadership, structure, and budget of the police department in which this work will take place. What is the relationship between this police department and the community it serves, particularly with local Black communities and other communities of color? What historical and recent events have shaped this relationship? What kinds of critiques and proposed reforms are being put forth by community groups, activists, or local politicians? Make a point of reading the local news, set Google news alerts with relevant search terms, and follow social media channels for local police agencies as well as critical voices in the community. Either before or after establishing a direct relationship with a police agency, one can seek out community events where police officers are engaged with members of the public such as "coffee with a cop", neighborhood meetings, or block parties.

## Spend Time Embedding Within a Police Agency

The single most valuable preparatory activity our teachers engaged in was participating in ride-alongs with different officers, in different parts of town, and on different work shifts. Just as mindfulness is an embodied experience that is much more easily understood through practice than written description, experiencing first-hand the daily routine of a patrol officer is a deeply informative activity likely to dispel one's preconceived notions of what police work *actually* looks like. In addition to ride-alongs with patrol officers, meet with police employees whose assignment is relevant to the work you are doing (e.g., officers in training or community outreach). For our work, we found it especially valuable to engage sergeants, who serve as first-line supervisors of the officers that made up the majority of our study participants, and who act as intermediaries between these officers and management. A researcher and teacher from our team were able to attend an in-service training with all sergeants to introduce our project to this group, which allowed us greater buy-in from this group and which also gave us insight into the unique challenges and role that these individuals play within the police organization.

As we transitioned from preparatory activities to implementation, the principal investigator attended briefings at shift changes over the course of a week to advertise the study and answer questions. By attending all shift changes from 5:45 AM to 10:45 PM over a one-week period, we were able to make a stronger impression and establish more personal connections with potential participants than we would have via an impersonal email. This also allowed the PI time to speak with the OIC (Officer in Charge) on duty at the time, and the spontaneous interactions that took place during this time provided a felt sense of what was happening in the agency at that moment in time. Throughout these activities, pay attention (deeply), take notes (sparingly), and don't be afraid to ask questions. While this is "strategic" work that allows one to develop relationships and learn about the daily activities, culture, and language of policing, it must also be carried out with a genuine sense of interest and curiosity about police personnel and the context in which they operate. If this interest is lacking, police officers (who have very finely tuned B.S. detectors) will quickly sniff out this inauthenticity and lack of engagement.

## Ask Yourself: Are You the Right Person to Do This Work?

While engaging in these various preparatory activities, you may discover that you are not the right person to be carrying out this work. You may find that working with this population does not spark a sense of interest and curiosity, or you may identify an irresolvable ethical or moral conflict in partnering with a particular police agency or police more generally. Moreover, well-qualified and highly skilled teachers who have done all the necessary preparatory work – and who are deeply interested in working with police officers – may nevertheless lack key dispositional factors that are needed to connect with police officers successfully and authentically.

This work also benefits from previous training experiences that not all mindfulness teachers possess. While none of our teachers had previously worked with law enforcement, each of these individuals brought diverse experiences developing and teaching adapted mindfulness trainings for other professions or populations, including athletes, veterans, incarcerated individuals, health care workers, and teachers. From working with athletes and veterans, our instructors knew something about teaching individuals who have a "performance-based" mindset, and who are accustomed to individual sacrifice for the sake of the larger team or unit. Like police officers, teachers and health care professionals work in service professions where one's dedication to serving others often comes at the expense of self-care and contributes

to high levels of burnout. Working with incarcerated individuals gave our teachers experience teaching mindfulness in the context of the justice system and provided insight into structural barriers to practicing mindfulness and how to address these barriers. Most of these populations are all too familiar with trauma, and awareness of how trauma manifests in the classroom and how to work with it is a valuable skill for teachers to bring to this work (see next section). Our teachers' prior experiences working with these various populations afforded them some perceived cultural competency in the eyes of participants. More broadly, their prior experiences adapting "off-the-shelf" mindfulness interventions allowed our teachers to be more nimble in teaching police officers and flexibly adapting or modifying the training on-the-fly as needed. While there is no prescription for what "qualifies" a mindfulness instructor to teach with this population, it is helpful to reflect deeply on one's lived experiences, teaching history, and personal disposition and to lean into those experiences or qualities that will translate into successful work with police officers.

## ADAPTING MINDFULNESS TRAINING FOR POLICE OFFICERS

### Developing a Curriculum

After conducting the above preparatory activities, the two experienced mindfulness meditation instructors on our team initiated the process of adapting mindfulness training for police officers. We benefited tremendously from the generosity and experiences of the team at Pacific University (Lt. Goerling, Dr. Christopher, and Mr. Rogers) who had been conducting similar work for years. While continuing to spend time embedded in the police agency our team consumed research, books, and articles relevant to the intersection of mindfulness and policing. A few particularly helpful resources were the book "In Search of the Warrior Spirit" (Strozzi-Heckler, 2007), which provides an illuminating account of how the author trained U.S. Special Forces soldiers in awareness practices, and published research with police officers from the Pacific group (Christopher et al., 2016, 2018) and on similar adapted mindfulness training for other first responders or military populations (Denkova et al., 2020; Jha et al., 2016, 2017; Johnson et al., 2014).

Through the process of studying curricula for existing mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) including MBSR (Kabat-Zinn, 1990) and Mindfulness-Based Resilience Training (Christopher et al., 2016), drawing from our experiences teaching other MBIs in relevant populations (e.g., teachers, health care professionals), and filtering these curricula and experiences through our developing knowledge of the context and culture of policing, we created a novel MBI for our pilot research study with MPD (Grupe et al., 2019). The curriculum creation process involved regular meetings over a series of months between teachers and researchers, as well as conversations with a key internal champion within MPD with substantial experience both in law enforcement training and with mindfulness practice. The impact of this internal champion cannot be understated. She provided critical insight surrounding the culture and language of policing that shaped the training and practices in subtle but significant ways. She also acted as a class assistant in the first two classes, often providing "translation" as our instructors continued to learn how to communicate most effectively with police officers and after each class for a debriefing with these instructors. While it may not be possible to find an individual with this particular combination of experiences in any given police agency, identifying an internal champion within the partner agency

who can provide consultation based on their own experience and areas of expertise is invaluable for successful implementation.

## Key Considerations for Framing and Teaching

While the 8-week mindfulness training that we delivered was similar in many respects to MBIs in non-police populations, there were several unique considerations in the framing around this training. First of all, this training was provided through the lens of trauma-sensitive practices and trauma-informed teaching (Treleaven, 2018). Participants in our pilot study reported exposure to an average of 95 potentially traumatic events on the Critical Incidents History Questionnaire (Weiss et al., 2010). As such, our teachers made an assumption that trauma was present in each class and potentially in each body (van der Kolk, 2014). In the first class we spoke with officers about the possibility of trauma being released through mindfulness practices. One might experience intense body sensations, emotions or thoughts when intentionally bringing present-moment awareness to experiences that may otherwise be strategically avoided. In addition to the first class, we again talked about the possibility of trauma being triggered before and after the extended day of practice in session 7, as our instructors have experiences of trauma being triggered by novel contexts or during extended periods of practice. We were explicit in talking about trauma in this manner in order to normalize the experience, to assure participants that their trauma was something that could be worked with, and to convey that we as instructors had experience working with trauma through mindfulness.

Working from a trauma-informed perspective, we encouraged participants to care for themselves in the classroom and through the practices (as Jon Kabat-Zinn often says) "as if your life depends on it." Some officers preferred to sit with their backs to the wall to see the entire room. Many officers preferred that all the shades be drawn. Some officers left their eyes open during meditation rather than closed, and some decided not to lie down in a supine position for yoga practices or body scans due to the vulnerability of this position. As instructors, we lent a careful eye in each class for how trauma might show up. Was there a participant who was always late to class without explanation? Were there participants who were resistant or distant or who never spoke up in the classroom? When we became aware of possible signs of trauma, our instructors discussed observations in weekly check-ins and decided whether skillful outreach was warranted in response. To our surprise and delight, officers were welcoming and grateful when we called or emailed to check-in.

We made additional conscious decisions in classroom management for working with trauma. For example, each session offered opportunities to debrief from mindfulness practices. We experimented with participants talking in dyads, in groups of 3 and 4, and in a large group, with the hope that the diversity of groupings would appeal to different individuals' comfort levels in sharing personal or sensitive information. We suggested different seating arrangements during these debriefs, again to allow participants to comfortably share with one another in an individualized manner. We collected feedback forms at the end of each class that provided information about officers' experience of the practices, the class, and the instructors. The feedback forms gave officers an opportunity to express challenges and ask questions in a private and confidential manner.

In addition to these considerations around working with trauma, we offered this training from a place of cultural humility. Our teachers recognized that we can only teach from our lived experiences, and these experiences are inherently limited as we are not law enforcement officers (despite other relevant experiences that we may bring to bear). These limitations notwithstanding, the preparatory activities we

engaged in within law enforcement contexts suggested subtle but important modifications in the language and framing we used in the classroom. These included changes intended to increase participant engagement and acceptability of the class content in light of stigma around help-seeking in law enforcement populations. To contextualize this work in terms of skill-building (rather than employing a deficit-based narrative), we always talk about providing "training" rather than delivering an "intervention." Similarly, we have placed much emphasis on the word "resilience", unpacking what this word means and why it is important to strengthen this capacity. On the other hand, we de-emphasized terms frequently associated with mindfulness-based interventions such as "stress reduction" (recognizing the challenge or impossibility of removing stress from this inherently stressful occupation) and "well-being" (a term that some participants found foreign, and one that was less resonant with law enforcement culture). The location of this training, at the MPD training center, embodied the notion that training the mind in this manner is just as essential to quality police work as is training the body or training in tactical skills.

Very powerful learning came around the role of class assistants. Class assistants were police officers who had taken the training in previous sessions and were in the classroom to help in a variety of ways: their presence and sharing helped establish the credibility of the training with their peers, they bridged the teachers and the training to police culture, they helped "translate" as needed, and they provided additional, unfiltered feedback for the instructors. They also helped with classroom setup and logistics, along with our on-the-ground building liaison (unlocking doors, communicating with participants on the day of the class, etc.). This growing group began to form a core team of officers inside the agency that can help sustain mindfulness training beyond the end of a research study (see "Persistent Challenges and Future Directions", below).

## Finer Points Around Teaching Mindfulness in Policing

In no particular order, here are some specific adaptations, areas of particular emphasis, or other lessons our instructors have learned from offering our 8-week training to nearly 150 sworn police personnel.

- We have found it important to incorporate a variety of mindful movement practices in working with a law enforcement population. Mindfulness training (and, perhaps more so, the way mindfulness is popularly conceived) can place a heavy emphasis on "stillness" practices, but many of our participants benefited from the physicality of gentle yoga, Qigong, Tai Chi, other martial arts, and other physical movement practices. Chronic back pain and other injuries are very frequent in law enforcement, and while movement practices may cause less pain than sitting still for long periods, instructors should be mindful of the omnipresence of pain and introduce accommodations for both movement and stillness practices.
- Direct language that embodies authenticity is essential. Teachers' experiences on ride-alongs allowed them to integrate police lingo into practices in an authentic way, but if forced, this practice will backfire.
- An entire area of practice that was constantly evolving was how to skillfully debrief from practice. We explored dyads, triads, small groups, and large groups while acknowledging the cultural shift needed to share one's personal experiences with peers.
- In each class we asked for anonymous feedback via written feedback forms. Such feedback was critical both for on-the-fly, minor modifications as well as larger structural or theoretical shifts that took place over time.

- We intentionally and regularly integrated scientific research into the teaching of class content. Our teachers' affiliation with a research institution allowed them to more confidently offer this scientific content and gave it more credence to participants.
- We included a compassion practice, but not until week 5 of the training. We waited until later in the class to introduce this practice, knowing it was important to establish trust in the instructors and acceptability of other practices before bringing in a practice that some elements of traditional police culture may bristle at. The practices we had previously introduced around mindfulness and meta-awareness allowed participants to observe, name, and talk about whatever mental and emotional reactivity this practice elicited.
- We created online guided meditation practices specifically for this population with different voices and varying lengths and styles of practice (e.g., mindfulness of breath, walking meditation, compassion practice, etc.). In response to participant feedback we included additional recordings from individuals inside and outside of law enforcement and of different genders. Variety and choice are as important to engagement with these recordings as is the content itself. Production value is also critical!
- The lengths of the guided practices tended to be shorter than in many other MBIs, ranging from 5-20 minutes. We believe that participants benefit more from regularly engaging in even very brief practices, as opposed to having unrealistically high expectations and becoming discouraged and disengaged by not meeting these expectations.

## NUTS AND BOLTS LOGISTICS

There is no "one-size-fits-all" strategy for bringing mindfulness training (or similar training initiatives) into policing, but common logistical questions will need to be addressed regardless of the specific implementation context. It is essential to have a dedicated liaison within the partnering agency with whom to work out such logistics well in advance, and to respond to unanticipated challenges certain to come up. Here are three key questions that we grappled with, and the solutions that emerged through conversations with our internal liaison and other department stakeholders.

### Who Are the Training Participants?

Will the training focus on patrol officers or will it involve personnel in non-patrol roles? Will supervisors or members of leadership be involved? Is this training specifically targeted at commissioned personnel, or will civilian staff also be involved? Will this be a voluntary opportunity or is participation mandated for some/all participants? Is it *truly* voluntary or will people be "voluntold" to take part? How will it be determined who the participants are if demand outstrips supply?

Our initial 8-week training had room for 30 participants across 2 classes, and in a department of ~450 sworn personnel we had interest from about twice that many individuals. At the request of MPD, we initially prioritized participation by officers, particularly those in a patrol role, but we were also able to include a few detectives in initial classes. In subsequent classes we expanded the participant base, due both to demand from other groups and a need to meet enrollment targets for our research. Throughout these classes, participation has always been fully (and truly) voluntary, which is both important for creating a receptive class climate and ethically necessary for training taking place in a research context.

As we moved beyond officers and detectives we initially included first-line supervisors (sergeants) and later introduced individuals in leadership positions (captains and lieutenants), always with input from former participants and our department liaison about the benefits and potential negative consequences. Our classes have not yet included civilian staff, but these individuals have taken part in in-service and other single-day trainings. We strongly recommend providing training opportunities for this group if feasible. Many of these individuals face significant indirect exposure to the trauma of police work in addition to the same organizational stressors as sworn personnel. A recent study found even higher rates of mental health disorders in civilian employees compared to sworn police personnel (Lentz, Silverstone, & Krameddine, 2020), yet this group is often overlooked when new wellness programming is being implemented (as was the case with our training).

We urge others to pay careful attention to diversity in the classroom, both in terms of the participants and the trainers. For our initial cohort of 15 officers, our research team (a white, male principal investigator and a white, male research assistant) designed and implemented the recruitment process for the first class (taught by two white, male meditation teachers) without paying much attention to the identities of those who were signing up. Unsurprisingly – based on the makeup of our team, the dominant white culture of the police department and institution, and the dominant white culture of the Western mindfulness movement – this class consisted of 15 white police officers. After this class we made a point of reaching out to officers of color through our growing network, talking to them about whether and how this training was perceived as being of benefit to them, and finding ways to reach more officers so that future classes would be more representative of the entire agency. It is unquestionable how much richer and meaningful classroom discussions and interactions are as a result of greater diversity in different dimensions – a mix of men and women, of younger and older officers, and (as our research and training progressed) of officers from multiple agencies, in addition to officers of color and white officers. The value of this diversity extends to who is teaching the class, how their values and identities manifest in the practices that are offered, and in what is and isn't included in the curriculum as a consequence. In addition to other benefits of developing early community partnerships, these relationships may allow for the incorporation of more diverse and representative voices in the classroom, which in turn will result in deeper and broader benefits of this training.

## When Will the Training Take Place?

Police staffing schedules are, to say the least, complicated. For example, MPD has no fewer than 9 work shifts with start times ranging from 5:45 AM to 10:45 PM; patrol officers work a rotating 6 days on/3 days off schedule, while others work fixed Monday-Friday schedules. In collaboration with the department we identified two different 2-hour blocks at the beginning and/or end of common shift changes, and the majority of employees were able to take part during one of these blocks with minimal disruptions to staffing or family/personal obligations. The notable exception was third-shift workers, whose preferred times for classes were prohibitively early or late for most other workers, and who signed up in small numbers and dropped out of classes at a higher rate than all others. If the agency is large enough to allow for this accommodation, we strongly recommend holding a separate training at a time chosen specifically for this group (e.g., 8:00-10:00 PM).

For each of the classes we have offered to date, participants either took part while working or earned "comp time" for taking part outside of work hours (depending on their schedule and responsibilities). These classes have all taken part within a research context and this affordance was critical in allow-

ing us to meet recruitment targets and keep participants engaged with low levels of drop-out (for the 10 classes we have held, drop-out rates across the 8-week class were typically around 10-15%). For participants, the ability to attend classes during work hours has been a concrete demonstration of the agency's commitment to their well-being, as this comes with a not-insignificant price tag to the agency. For our training and research team, this arrangement serves as an implicit endorsement by department leadership of the relevance and importance of mindfulness training for the work that officers do. We recommend advocating for a similar arrangement in early conversations with police leadership, as we heard repeatedly from participants that they would be unable to commit this much time to an 8-week training outside of work hours.

## Where Should the Training be Held?

This is a complicated question with important implications for how the training is received, and one without an absolute "right" answer. Our colleagues in Oregon regularly provide mindfulness training in an off-site, non-police location, due to the conditioning and trauma associated with police facilities. In conversation with MPD, it made the most sense for us to initially hold classes at a police facility. The main reason we chose this location was the sense of comfort, security, and familiarity that this location provided officers. We did not want uncertainty about physical safety and associated hypervigilance to interfere with participants' ability to let down their guard and fully engage in practices. From talking to a variety of individuals within the department, we felt confident this location would be well-received and would be sufficiently removed from the distractions and intensity of district stations. The second reason for this location was a hope that holding this training in a work context – specifically, one in which officers receive other job-relevant training – would encourage participants to more readily transfer and apply class practices in professional contexts and interactions. This is a theoretical benefit that we have not empirically tested, but research in other domains suggests transfer of knowledge is more likely if the knowledge is obtained and applied in similar contexts (Gick & Holyoak, 1987).

Regardless of the location, one should take adequate time to thoroughly work out logistical questions ahead of time. Conduct an on-the-ground visit with a dedicated on-site liaison to tour the space and identify the most effective classroom set-up. Ensure there is a place for participants to change in/out of uniforms and securely store firearms and talk about ways of minimizing external disruptions and ensuring the security and privacy of the space so that participants can let their guard down physically and psychologically. Finally, flexibility is critical. The training center classrooms are in high demand, and we have rarely been able to reserve the same room across an entire 8-week period. Our instructors skillfully used the change of location as teaching lessons in impermanence, adaptability, and non-attachment; these changes also allowed us to expand into increasingly less familiar and secure locations and to collect valuable feedback on how participants responded. We began by sporadically holding classes at a different police location on an as-needed basis (the community room of a nearby district station). We later held an extended, 4-hour class in week 7 at a non-police location. This provided such a welcome change of context for this extended session that we incorporated this location change into all of our subsequent classes. Our two most recent classes were held away from the training center, one in a police district community room and one in a dedicated meditation space at a community site. The upshot of these adaptations is that many different locations *can* serve as effective learning and training spaces, so long as certain logistical requirements and features of the environment are carefully attended to with this particular group in mind.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT PRACTITIONERS, DECISION-MAKERS, AND POLICYMAKERS

Although we have the most authority to offer recommendations to other researchers and teachers planning to conduct research and training within law enforcement, given the broad audience for this book we also have a few recommendations for individuals within law enforcement or in decision-making or policy roles surrounding mindfulness in policing.

For those within law enforcement who want to bring this training into their agencies, a natural starting point is to get firsthand experience practicing mindfulness yourself. If feasible, one might practice with a reputable teacher, perhaps identified through a nearby MBSR program, but the internet resources and apps detailed early in this chapter offer possibilities for a more self-guided exploration of mindfulness practice. Either way, a natural and supportive next step may be to establish a "community of practice" – a small and informal group of other law enforcement officers with a shared interest in mindfulness who meet regularly to practice and discuss the application of mindfulness for policing. These activities will help establish a "felt" sense of whether and how this training might be introduced to others in your agency.

When ready to think about implementation, reach out to other police agencies, researchers, or teachers who have done this work before to learn from them and extend your community of practice. Section 1 on "Establishing Trusting Partnerships" speaks to the value of partnering with academic researchers in this pursuit. Section 2 speaks to important characteristics and experiences for external trainers preparing to work with law enforcement and may help your agency identify trainers who are a good fit for this work. Section 4 ("Nuts and Bolts") offers several specific implementation recommendations that are relevant for those within law enforcement, which we briefly reiterate here:

- Identify a dedicated liaison within the agency who will coordinate logistics with whatever entity is providing training, and respond to challenges that arise
- Think carefully about who this training will be offered to and in what context. We believe in the importance of voluntary participation for this kind of training, but there may be a way to provide introductory training to all members of an agency with more in-depth training opportunities on a voluntary basis. We strongly recommend providing opportunities for civilian staff to participate, as research has shown higher rates of mental health disorders in civilian employees relative to sworn personnel (Lentz et al., 2020).
- For our research studies, the ability to participate in classes during work time has been a huge boon to participation and has underscored the commitment of agency leadership to the well-being of their employees.
- Be thoughtful about where this training will be offered. We have found that different locations (including both police facilities and external sites) can serve as effective learning and training spaces, but there are some important logistical and contextual considerations to consider when choosing a location (as detailed above).

Finally, the initial and sustained success of this work depends critically on the engagement of multiple "internal champions" in a variety of roles throughout the department, a point that we discuss in detail in the concluding "Future Directions" section. We are somewhat hesitant to speak to the policy implications of training mindfulness in policing at this early stage, or to offer prescriptive recommendations to those in decision-making roles around funding and implementation decisions. There are good reasons

to believe that an investment in this training *might* offer benefits for officer well-being and community well-being alike, as we describe in the introduction. While evidence for the former is beginning to accumulate, evidence for the latter is sparse or non-existent. Whether this training should be publicly supported, particularly if this comes at the exclusion of other programs or services, is a question that necessitates both empirical study and the input of community stakeholders.

An overarching recommendation to individuals who set policies and make decisions is to support and invest in research around training in mindfulness – as well as other promising but unproven practices that aim to address both police and community well-being – with the requirement that this research includes outcomes that address potential benefits for both groups. All too often, decisions about what programs or policies to invest in are based on nebulous and undefined "best practices". Policymakers, decision-makers, and the public at large should demand decision-making that is instead grounded in rigorous scientific evidence, and that this evidence weighs the benefits and costs for *all* stakeholders.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

While we have learned much over the past 5 years about training mindfulness and other contemplative practices in a police setting, we are regularly reminded of how much we still have to learn. We have emphasized here some of the more successful aspects of this work in the hope that others can replicate these successes, but we have also encountered significant challenges that we are actively struggling to resolve. There are two especially sticky areas we believe the next stage of this work must address in order to have a significant impact not just for the police profession but for the broader community.

### How Can Mindfulness Training Be Implemented in a Widespread, Sustainable Manner?

The first question we are actively grappling with is that of long-term sustainability. At some point, whatever initial training is decided upon will come to its natural end and the allocated funds for the pilot project or the research grant will run out. What happens next? What steps can be taken early on – before the initiation of this work, even – to allow mindfulness and other contemplative training to take hold within an organization, so that this training might not just benefit a few participating officers but contribute to deep organizational and structural change?

Within the police organization, it is critical to identify internal champions in a variety of roles, whose support and enthusiasm for this training is necessary for long-term success. These individuals must have the right combination of passion for the work and influence within the organization. Our internal champions have included a few individuals who already had a long-standing meditation practice, "sleeper agents" within the organization who may have previously kept that aspect of their identity separate from their work identity but who were ready to help when we put out a call. These champions have also included officers who had no previous meditation experience before this 8-week class, but for whom the practices and content deeply resonated in a way that they wanted to support the continuation of this work within the department. We have tried to engage a group whose identities and experiences are broadly representative of the department, including officers of different genders, ages, and races and with different job responsibilities. We have been fortunate to identify several champions for this work in department leadership whose authority and decision-making ability is needed to support future

training opportunities and integrate this training into the fabric of the department. Once identified, these champions can be engaged in a variety of ways and levels of involvement. For example, they have acted as classroom assistants, as facilitators or planners for ongoing drop-in sessions, as a sounding board or informal focus group to provide feedback on the training and research, and as partners in identifying funding opportunities and preparing grant proposals.

The sustainability and spread of this work within a police agency depend both on continued engagement/support of previous training participants, and on identifying opportunities to engage new individuals in mindfulness training in creative and low-impact ways. One way in which we have supported past participants is through annual or biannual newsletters. These newsletters serve a stewardship purpose by updating past participants on publications and other research milestones, and provide support and encouragement to maintain a regular meditation practice in the absence of regular classes and a community of support. To develop and sustain this community of support outside of formal classes, and to introduce mindfulness practices to those who haven't been involved in these classes, our teachers have supported MPD as the department has offered drop-in mindfulness sessions open to all individuals across the agency. These 30-minute sessions typically include a brief check-in, 10-15 minutes of practice, and an opportunity to discuss and debrief, and have been conducted both in-person and virtually. Drop-ins have been extremely well-received and supportive for those who attend, but attendance has been spotty at best. Broader participation in regular drop-in mindfulness sessions (or any other restorative practices) must be supported by department leadership – not just by *allowing* individuals to take time during work hours to practice self-care, but by actively *encouraging* this practice, participating in these sessions themselves, and offering accommodations to make participation realistic considering all the other demands of police work.

Long-term sustainability of this training requires not just work within the organization, but the engagement of stakeholders outside of the police organization who have a vested interest in seeing this work thrive. Among the many benefits of forging a partnership between academia and law enforcement, academic research that establishes a robust and rigorous evidence base for the benefits of training mindfulness in policing – whether these benefits are considered from the perspective of individual participants, the agency, or the broader community – is central to constructing a value proposition for continued funding and support for this work. Buy-in from policymakers and local governments is essential for continued funding, but we have had relatively little experience in this domain to date. A formal cost-benefit analysis of this training can provide a purely financial argument to policymakers for why this work makes sense. Finally, by partnering early on with community organizations in developing and implementing mindfulness training – and identifying, with these partners, the potential benefits of this work for the communities they represent – these stakeholders will be more likely to advocate for and support the continuation of this training.

## Who Is Mindfulness Training "For", and How Is That Reflected in the Work?

We began this article by discussing a vision for how contemplative training with police officers may transform the culture of policing for the benefit of the broader community – in particular, for communities of color and marginalized communities who disproportionately bear the brunt of the toxic elements of this culture. To date, however, this vision is largely aspirational; we have done far too little to translate this vision into action. From a research perspective, the outcomes we have chosen to prioritize are those of greatest interest to our stakeholders within law enforcement. We have investigated the impact of this

training on police officer stress, health, and well-being, but we have stayed away from the more challenging but critically important questions of whether this training has any impact on police violence or bias, or on interpersonal interactions between police and community members. From a training perspective, we have not explicitly brought questions of race and bias into the classroom. We have focused on police officer resilience and the reduction of suffering at an individual level, but have not explicitly engaged participants in conversations about the potentially transformative impact of these practices in addressing systemic racism, "othering" (Powell & Menendian, 2016), and oppression.

For this work to live up to its full potential, we cannot continue to center the health and well-being of police officers while ignoring the health and well-being of those who are negatively affected by violent police policies, practices, and cultural factors. We need not (and must not!) ignore the suffering of individual police officers, but we do need to explicitly acknowledge and discuss the reality that this suffering both results from and contributes to ongoing cycles of police violence, oppression, and community mistrust. We are committed to deep and ongoing examination of our research and training practices, the makeup of our research and training team, and the biases and privileged perspectives that have influenced this work. We are also committed to deep, authentic, sustained involvement of local communities of color in this work, without which we cannot claim to be working for the benefit of these communities. We do not pretend to have expertise in this area, but we urge researchers, teachers, and law enforcement agencies who want to implement similar training programs to think deeply about who this work is for, who is and isn't at the table, and how this work can contribute to the deconstruction and not the perpetuation of systems of oppression and violence.

## CONCLUSION

There is mounting empirical evidence that training in mindfulness and related contemplative practices is a critical ingredient in addressing the crisis of police officer mental health, and in providing police personnel with concrete practices for developing more resilient responses to the stress of police work. These practices also have the potential to benefit communities of color by fostering greater self-awareness, self-regulation, and compassion in police officers, although not nearly enough attention has been devoted to understanding the benefits of this training from a community-centered perspective. We suggest that training in practices that strengthen awareness and social connection can have a transformative impact on police officers and the broader police culture – if they are introduced into policing with integrity, rigor, and with the participation of stakeholders both inside and outside of policing. While we are still developing our own awareness of how to realize this broad and transformative impact, we hope our experiences and insight may benefit researchers, teachers, and reform-oriented police agencies committed not just to improving the lives and relationships of their employees but to fostering an organizational culture that is kinder, wiser, and more compassionate, with the ultimate goal of greater justice and well-being for all who come into contact with this system.

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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Community-Engaged Scholarship:** A philosophy of research and teaching that engages community members and groups as equal partners with knowledge and wisdom to share with those in academia, one that emphasizes reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationships rather than the unilateral extraction of information or resources from these communities.

**Contemplative Practices:** A term that encompasses a broad array of mind-body practices with their roots in a variety of wisdom-based traditions, including but not limited to mindfulness, other meditation practices, yoga, prayer, and some martial arts (e.g., Tai Chi and Qigong).

**Cultural Humility:** A lifelong process of understanding the experiences of individuals from other cultural backgrounds that is grounded in deep reflection and examination of how one's beliefs and experiences are shaped by one's own cultural identities.

**Mindfulness:** Paying attention to sensations, emotions, and thoughts in a particular way: 1) as they unfold in the present moment, 2) on purpose, and 3) with acceptance rather than judgment (or, at least, with awareness of the judgments that are arising).

**Mindfulness-Based Interventions:** A family of related interventions that are grounded in similar didactics and practices to intentionally cultivate greater mindful awareness, but which can have a variety of formats, target populations, or intended outcomes.

**Resilience:** The ability to quickly recover or bounce back from adversity, considered to be a trait but one that can be intentionally cultivated with practice.

**Trauma-Sensitive Practices:** Structures, frameworks, and practices that involve understanding, recognizing, and responding to the presence of trauma with specific skills and strategies.

## ENDNOTES

[1] It is important to note that we are writing from the specific perspective of researchers and mindfulness practitioners carrying out research and training with police in the United States. We acknowledge that American policing by no means has a monopoly on discriminatory policing practices or issues of distrust with marginalized communities – and police officers in other countries are in no way immune from the occupational stress and trauma that contributes to suffering for these officers and others in their broader spheres of influence. Our thesis that police and community concerns are closely intertwined, and that these concerns may simultaneously benefit from the integration of mindfulness practices into policing, no doubt applies to other countries, but some of the specific recommendations and experiences we describe are informed by the history and context of policing in the United States.

[2] A more detailed explanation of mindfulness, what it is, and how it works is beyond the scope of this chapter, but we offer some recommendations for the interested reader who wishes to learn more. Introductory books on the topic written for non-specialists include "Full Catastrophe Living" (Kabat-Zinn, 1990) and "Altered Traits" (Goleman & Davidson, 2017). Research on the impact of mindfulness training for police, first responders, and military populations is cited in the following paragraph. For those interested in "learning by doing", some helpful meditation apps include "Insight Timer", "Headspace", "Liberate", "Healthy Minds Program", and the VA-developed "Mindfulness Coach" (all available on the App Store and Google Play). Two websites with additional information and resources include mindful.org and, for training and resources specific to police and other first responders, mindfulbadge.org.