

How police officers learn to fight rigors of job

(Continued from Page 1A)
 need to control one's emotions, and inactivity.
 "You spend most of your time in training learning how to catch criminals, but you won't spend 20 per cent of your time doing that in the job. Starsky and Hutch do that—you don't. We see ourselves as crimefighters and we're really not."
 The reward of being a good street cop is non-existent. In New York, to make detective an officer has to catch a felon in the act, but the average cop

spends his time helping accident victims, coping with drunks, settling family disputes and riding in a patrol car.
 Stress isn't always the result of unrealistic expectations. Sometimes it's an unavoidable aspect of the police officer's job.
 With a drunk, the officer has to assume the role of disciplinarian or authoritarian, although he may have played Good Samaritan with a stranded motorist ten minutes earlier. When the officer is confronted with removing a dead child from an auto

crash, he must suppress his emotions and assume another role, both for the child's parents and because of peer pressure.
 "When you suppress emotions for 20 years, what happens?" Santomoro asked, and the answer is that no one knows.
LACK OF ACTIVITY is another factor behind stress, he says.
 "Especially in small towns or rural areas, you see yourselves as crime-fighters, but you don't have any crime to fight."

Administrative causes of stress produce further anxiety, Santomoro says. Those include: court rulings that frustrate police; strict policies and procedures ("Where else in the country does someone tell you how to cut your hair?"); poor equipment; public apathy and negativism; changing shifts; non-police work like enforcing building codes; incompatible fellow officers; bad assignments (like "stray dogs"); isolation and boredom; and pay.
 When police officers rate job frustra-

tions, pay is usually at the bottom, he says, because pay has become better in recent times and because salary isn't the motivator for police work.
TO OVERCOME the problem of stress, Santomoro would like to see reforms instituted along the lines suggested in a recent study done in Miami. He would:
 •Reduce the number of radio cars and give police officers more things to do.
 •Increase public contact by having officers walk a beat.
 •Institute an incentive and reward system such as team policing in which a group of officers is responsible for one section of a city.

•Define the police role early in training: "If you're not out there to help people, don't waste your time here."
 •Require administrators to encourage better communication with police unions and develop fair methods of promotion and discipline.
 •Encourage physical fitness.
 "The majority of police officers are overweight," Santomoro says. The effects of junk food-style on-the-job meals and the lack of exercise in riding around in a patrol car take their toll, he says. A study of California prison inmates indicated they were in better physical shape than most police officers, he added.

Every police officer in the state of Michigan is required to receive 256 hours of training. The majority of police departments in Oakland County send their recruits to Oakland Police Academy, where the officers receive 280 hours of training in seven weeks. The Michigan Law Enforcement Officers Training Council reimburses police departments for recruits' salaries, while the state reimburses the recruit for up to \$250 for lodging and meals if they reside outside a 45 mile radius of the academy, located in Royal Oak. Normand Gomolak, coordinator of the academy, is a doctoral student at Michigan State University, former faculty member of Wayne State University, and a retired police officer from the Dearborn police force where he was a sergeant in the juvenile division.

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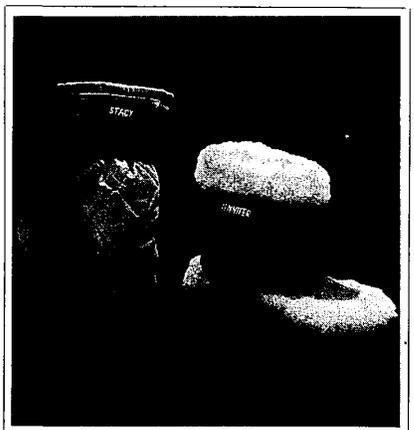
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Stress warning signs

While police work is accepted as a high stress job, recognition of the warning signs of stress on any job can be important, both to individual employees and supervisors. While no one symptom mentioned below can be directly related to job stress, often a combination of these symptoms is a strong indication that an individual is failing to cope adequately with whatever stress comes with the job.
 If job stress is recognized, seeking outside help or applying remedies to reduce stress is the advice of experts.
 •Drastic behavior change: withdrawal, irritability and emotional outbursts.
 •Chronic marriage or family problems.
 •Conversation indicating severe depression: talk of suicide or frequent talk of quitting without aspiring to other employment.
 •Excessive drinking.
 •Sleep disturbances.
 •Excessive altercations with co-workers or others.
 •A tendency to be accident-prone.
 •Excessive physical complaints.
 •Exhibition of a persecution complex: feeling picked on and misunderstood.
 •Deterioration of work performance.
 •Loss of self-confidence and job interest.
 •Frequent or short-term absences.
 •Inability to get along with others.
 •Constant complaints to supervisors concerning financial problems.



Lt. John Santomoro of the Farmington Public Safety Department opened a statistical nightmare about the side effects of police work—divorce, alcoholism, and suicide—to a group of recruits at the Oakland Police Academy last week. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)



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