



Fall 2020 ISSUE

NNPSN.com NEWSLETTER

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September is Suicide Prevention Month

September is **National Suicide Prevention Month** and **National Suicide Prevention Week** is September 6 – 12, 2020.

What are you doing individually and organizationally to start the conversations? Do you have programs in place to support those struggling. Do you know how **"be there"** for those struggling or are in crisis? Looking for a great resource? <https://suicidology.org>

Read more on this months focus with Dr. Steve Nicholas page 2.



Leading in Crisis

How many of you are tired of hearing about this is our new normal? This is verbiage is getting old. How can we lead our teams/units/department so that we do not burn out or experience PTS or compassion fatigue?

Lessons Learned by our BOD's

Read more about how our board of directors learned some tough lessons during the nations crisis? What to hear some personal insights on what they didn't see coming? What helped them prepare, and what fears did they have? What are some of the positives that came out of state of affairs? Read their column pieces in the next pages to come.

Latest Peer Support Trainings

Recently Truckee Meadows fire, Charley Gross and local hospital affiliate were able to set up proper social distancing basic peer class. This one day class able new local peer team to elevate their skills to be able to continue on to their own internal continuing peer training. What kind of creative learning platforms have you come up with to meet the needs of your teams? Are hybrid trainings working for you all?



Staying Safe with Living Ideations

Dr. Steve Nicholas



Most people don't want to touch the **metaphorical hot stove of pain**. Nonetheless, **it is real**. If we don't find a way to understand ourselves; the pain will lie and wait and be ready to pounce when it is not expected. More often than not, a **person in great emotional pain does not wish to die**; they simply want the pain to stop. When we can describe details of the future and a life without dominating pain, then **we unveil life directions not death directions**. **Suicidal mindsets can be transitioned into living ideations**.

This is rather easy to do. Give yourself credit for successfully navigating all of your days up to this point. All of your feelings and thoughts are a culmination of those days and events. Now realize that **you have options to move your life** in new directions, and there are very few reasons that your current mindset needs to determine your future.

Below is the **Living Ideation Quick Check**. This personal size-up is intended to rekindle the interests and strengths within. The answers to the questions can become compass headings toward resiliency and emotional balance. We all deserve that! Perhaps the answers can offer comfort and guidance. **If you are having trouble answering the questions**, please **allow someone to help you** move through the difficult times in your life. Helpful professionals are ready and willing to walk with you.



Living Ideation Quick Check

Check box to demonstrate life-oriented answer. Add details of response if desired. Non answers might signal areas of concern.

Interests and Activities

- ☐ What is interesting to you?
- ☐ What are you proud of?

Confidence and Ability

- ☐ What are you good at?
- ☐ What could you teach someone to do?

Work and Play

- ☐ How is work/school going?
- ☐ What do you do for fun?

Clarity and Focus

- ☐ What are your plans for today?
- ☐ What will you be doing this weekend?



AHHH The Good Ole' Days

By Cameron Wagner, WCSDA President
NNPSN Board Member

It seems like just yesterday that **ALL First Responders were being revered for their essential response to the COVID-19 pandemic**. This ground swell of support continues today for most essential workers...**except law enforcement**. While it seems that **the silent majority still support the Police**, their **voice is being drowned out** by a small segment of society who are yelling the loudest.

On May 29th one law enforcement officer over 1700 miles from our region **made egregious and inexcusable errors** that **contributed to the death of an individual**. Not knowing the officer or citizen personally I will not pass judgment on their lifelong morals or convictions.

Within one week of May 29th the **pendulum of Peace Officer support swiftly and violently swung to rage filled hate** towards the profession. **This change in support has taken a toll on the mental health of law enforcement officers**. Many **have elected to retire or leave** the profession out of **fear of their safety**.

Officers now have to second guess and consider **“how will this look”** when **their action is required to save a citizen's life or their own life**. These split-second decisions and actions offer no time to contemplate how a talking head in the **media will scrutinize a snapshot of an incident**. This stress is compounded **Peace Officers are fighting an unseen enemy in COVID-19**. They are **forced to have contact with individuals who are COVID positive or quarantined**. They are **fearful of bringing the virus home** to their families. Officers have to **stand in riot lines with hate filled insults, rocks, bottles and bricks hurled at them**. Police have their **municipalities and state legislators stripping their profession's protections** and changing time proven practices to make the **“optics”** appear better to the lawless rioters. The Media is adding jet fuel to the fire of radical hate by scrounging for any news bite that fits the narrative that all cops are bad.



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AHHH The Good Ole' Days Continued...

What can we as law enforcement officers do for our mental health during this pandemic of hate?

Talk

- Lean on your peers both within your shift and be open to agency peer support suggestions and resources
- Communicate with your family explain your frustrations
- Open up to your significant other, kids, family, or friends
- Explain why there is a sentiment of hate towards Police (age appropriate)
- If you have trusted mental health clinician discuss your apprehensions and feelings
- If you need a referral to a vetted mental health clinician visit www.NNPSN.com ask your peer support team, or ask around your shift or department for trusted referrals.

Turn off

- Disconnect and disassociate from News outlets, Social Media, and individuals who support the anti-police rhetoric.
- Go home each day knowing you made a difference.
- Acknowledge those thoughts while you commute home
- Once you are home leave your thoughts of work behind and focus on yourself

Take Time

- Acknowledge and love your family/cats/dogs or whatever you are coming home to, the screams of kids, barks of dogs, and hugs from family is a celebration of your arrival, appreciate that love.
- Set time to focus on yourself
- Workout, camp, hike, clean your garage, read a book, etc.
- Any activity that is separate from work or the thoughts of the profession

Be mindful

- Be civil to one another
- Be empathetic to those around you in your workplace and at home





Lesson Learned When Leading in Crisis

By Natasha Lukasiewicz, DNP, MSN, RN

Vice President NNPSN



If we **could have predicted 2020**, then we all could have been more prepared. **Hindsight is twenty twenty**. Who knew this saying would have such irony. Did I mention how **2020 was designated as the year of the nurse** by the world health organization? Yes, we were supposed to be celebrated and appreciated as profession, we didn't expect to be the soldiers in the trenches of one of the biggest world wide pandemics known in most of our lifetimes.

We are tired, we are **burnt out, exhausted, and frustrated** with the political environment. Not to mention the **stigma of being a health care provider**, and how others don't invite us out or let our kids play with non health care providers kids, because **'we are contaminated with Covid 19 in their eyes'**. **YES, THAT IS ACTUALLY HAPPENING.**

Please (insert sarcasm here), in regards to the general public, the exact people we are serving. Health care personnel are like 'please tell us how hard your day was **"isolating" at home** and how wearing a mask **infringes on your rights**'. Those of us in the trenches, want nothing more but some peace and quiet and respite from all this, and some human accountability and responsibility in our communities. Not to mention, **we are concerned of what flu season** is going to do with this on going COVID 19 pandemic. Better yet the next pandemic wave is the mental health crisis that is flourishing behind the brick and mortar walls of hospitals across the nation. This is another story for another day.

With that background of why some of us may seem jaded, some of the positive themes that have come up with leading during crisis are of resilience, perseverance, team cohesions, mental health readiness, staff safety and security. There definitely is uncertainty, fear, apprehension, distrust, frustration and anger. As a reminder, **these are all normal reactions to such extraordinary events.**

So how as leaders or teams were we to **know how to navigate all of this**? I really think those that those teams that were **able to rise to the occasion** were the ones that have the mindset of **'adapting and overcoming'**. Those that got stunned by the overwhelming grandiosity of the covid crisis at times experienced debilitation of their teams. As a leader you really needed to stay grounded and literally take one day, and an hour at a time. **How do you eat an elephant?** One bite at time of course. Although, **I do not support or recommend eating elephants in real life.**

As a leader, it was important **to stay grounded, dig in deep in the trenches, lead from the front and leading from behind**. Taking a **holistic approach** daily, **inventorying the needs** of the team, and **trying to anticipate worst case scenarios** really set those teams up for success and greater resilience and **post pandemic growth**. It also helped having supportive stakeholders in this time.

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Lesson Learned When Leading in Crisis Continued....



We cannot forget the importance of **implementing mental readiness tactics early and proactively**. NNPSN Vice President was brain thinking beyond COVID 19 on how we could **offer peer support in a very non traditional way**. After all, the face to face model was slowly disintegrating.

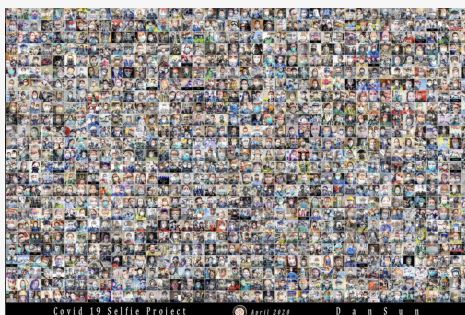
Along came Resilience Rounds via zoom. Here, we were able **to reach in** with one another, offer support, feel **connected to those in our community**. We even offered **a closed private leadership Resilience Rounds** for those that were leading. Those leading teams or organizations had different stresses and worry. **Being vulnerable in front of those that they lead is not always supported** and understood by those being led. We wanted to create a safe and conducive environment for our leaders as well as those on the front lines. Although, I can speak to **sharing transparency and little vulnerability with my team benefited**, and reassuring them I would be there every step of the way and following through really helped. **Actions speak louder than words** during pandemic season. This is my personal warrior servant leadership style, using transformational leadership tools. Every leader had to figure out their best tactics to provide for their team.

Virtual Resilience Rounds was also **offered in one of our local hospital affiliates**, which later evolved to **Courageous Conversations**. Strong work to this local hospital **leading the way on mental readiness and resilience building** for their staff.

Once staff became a little more **adapted to the new normal**, and the **crisis was stabilized**, this organization decided to **reserve "Resilience Rounds"** for the more **critical moments**. Courageous conversations still keeps the peer support focus, that allows those to **feel connected with whom they work with discussing more lighthearted topics**. Anecdotally it is working.

The biggest take away I learned is that **isolation is the killer to effective high performance teams**. Making sure teams are supported professionally and personally and making sure they are in the know as information came out was key. Practices were changing daily and still are.

Making sure teams had the **resources they needed to protect themselves and patients** allowed them to be able to continue serving their roles appropriately. If anything, COVID 19 crisis truly demonstrated and challenged teams to embrace the mission statement that NNPSN holds on to and that is... **Within Unity, We find Strength....**





Want to Know How to Support the Network?

By Erin Yeung

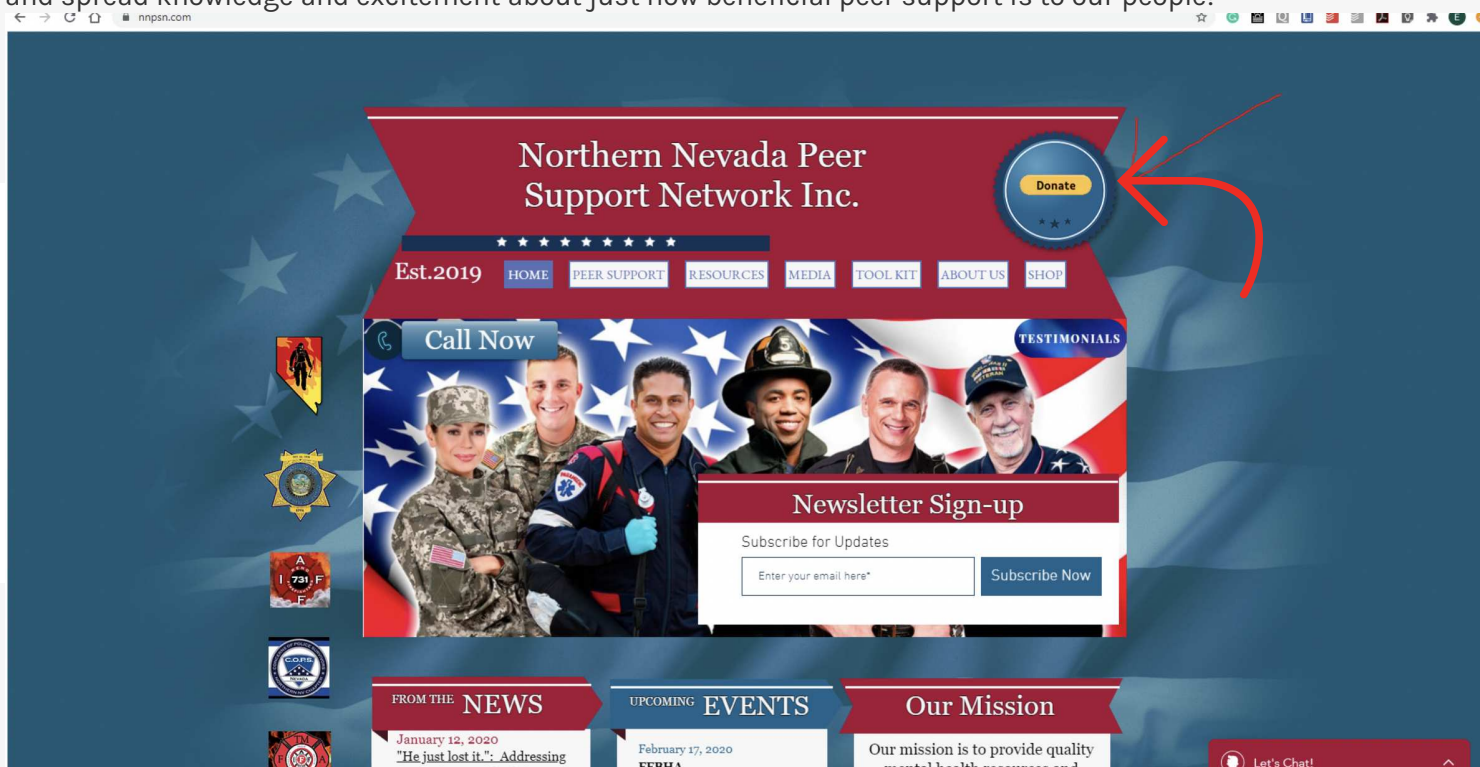
NNPSN Treasurer

Did you know you can help support Northern Nevada Peer Support Network by donating online?

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we live and work in so many different ways. The Northern Nevada Peer Support Network Board of Directors had quite a few fun and very exciting fundraisers planned for this spring and summer that we never got to see to fruition. While we are disappointed that those plans did not work out, we are grateful for our faithful supporters who have donated to the Network during this time!

All the money we receive for NNPSN goes back into our communities of first responders, healthcare workers, and military in the **form of free or lower-cost mental health and peer support training, clinics, and events**. We also have some big future plans and our reach is quickly expanding, so we can use a little more help! **You can donate easily and germ-free via PayPal** by clicking on the **blue and yellow "DONATE"** button on the upper-right hand corner of our webpage at NNPSN.com. If you are not comfortable with donating online, please reach out to one of our board of directors to help facilitate the process.

Thank you to everyone for your continued support. **Together, we can change the narrative about mental health** and spread knowledge and excitement about just how beneficial peer support is to our people!





Clinician Corner

By Erin Chapel, NCC, CPC, LCADC, CPGC
Clinical Advisor

As a clinician who **works primarily with first responders**, 2020 has been a series of **gut punches with no reprieve between blows**. If it's not the **ongoing battle with COVID** and the **seemingly never-ending procedural changes surrounding it**, it's an **unprecedented fire season that is months from being over**, or the **cultural shift in feelings toward and about law enforcement**.

Not only are first responders **affected by the extraordinary challenges that 2020** continues to unleash professionally, they are **affected within their personal lives** in the same way(s) that so many of the rest of us are. Their spouses are **losing jobs** or businesses, their **children are profoundly effected** by an educational system that is floundering at all grade levels as **administrations attempt to balance the need to keep students healthy** while also **providing meaningful learning opportunities**, they limit their exposure to older or at risk family members, recognizing that as a result of **the work they do they pose a very real threat to their loved ones**, and the list goes on.

Over the **last decade the subject of responder suicides and actions** that can be taken to reduce them has become an urgent and critical conversation for all agencies; long before the unprecedented trials of 2020. **Thousands of Peer Support Teams have been formed as organizations attempt to support the mental health** of their members from within. There are also **specialized trainings for mental health providers** aimed at teaching how best to work with a **demographic that is often untrusting and 'ok'...until they're not**. The **Northern Nevada Peer Support Network (NNPSN)** was created in an attempt to make **mental health resources** known and readily available to those who need them. Its membership includes dozens of responder agencies to include healthcare providers. **Services provided by the network are voluntary**, however the cost of trainings is not. It is imperative that those who respond to a peer's call for help have the proper tools and training to be able to help, or to provide an appropriate referral. Please consider a donation to the NNPSN as a way of helping the helpers. **We are stronger, together.**





9-1-1, What's YOUR Emergency

By Erin Yeung, Dispatcher
NNPSN Treasurer



It has been **about six months now since the COVID-19** pandemic took hold in our country. Business, schools, and restaurants shut down. People have been staying home to protect themselves and their families. Life has changed for everyone; and **although essential workers are still reporting for duty, their lives have changed as well.**

Operationally, there are **new policies and procedures to adjust to.** Temperature checks and screenings before work, and more robust PPE requirements in the field. The **fear of being exposed to the virus and contracting it.** In **dispatch centers across the country,** dispatchers are taking extra precautions in the form of masks, methodically disinfecting consoles and common areas, and **being cut off from the outside world with “no visitors” policies.** Just one infection can quickly spread among workers and result in critical staffing levels.

The stressors continue when working with the public to get them the help they need. **Callers can seem more hostile and agitated than normal. Some call to complain about the government or the current state of civil unrest** because they know 9-1-1 will always be there to take their call. **Call takers are working harder than ever** to show compassion and helpfulness during this time...but all these **valiant efforts can take its toll on our people.**

To some, **it can manifest in uncharacteristic irritability.** Others **may be exhausted all the time.** Family life may be a struggle, dealing with spouses who are working from home and kids trying to distance learning. **Some folks are so focused on just making it through the day,** that they go just **go through time like a zombie,** just waiting for this to all end and for life to be **“normal again.”**

But it won't be normal for some time. This is why **we need to prioritize our self-care and take an adult “time out.”** **It's not selfish. You CAN'T help others without helping yourself first!** And self-care looks different for everyone. It's not just pedicures and massages. **It's taking time out to do what YOU want.** Want to sit outside and read that book you have been meaning to finish for a year now? Do it! Always wanted to try a new craft or hobby but dishes need to be done? Bust out the paper plates for one night and try your hand at painting.

Taking the time out for you makes you a better first responder, healthcare worker, spouse, partner, and parent. And you will feel refreshed when you tackle those dishes...tomorrow. Just make sure you are giving others in your life the same opportunities to take a time out when they need it too.





Resilient Mindset

By Derek Reid, Fire Captain
NNPSN President

The **path to resiliency is cultivating emotional intelligence** about yourself and others, as well as knowing where you are on the stress meter to **prevent the proverbial burnout/blowout/blowup**.

As if performing the duties of a first responder wasn't enduring enough, the impact of recent events has definitely kicked up a notch the need for resilience. Our current environment has taken a turn down a road that requires **engaging the "all-wheel drive" to stay on course**.

Our nation's politics has produced a **micro-aggressive culture** and COVID-19 has prolonged our state of **hypervigilance** in an everchanging environment. To add insult to injury, many families are needing to reevaluate financial goals and go with the turbulent flow of frequent changes within the school system concerning our children. **How do we keep a Resilient Mindset** with all this going on? How do we maintain good internal and external customer service? How do we maintain our most important relationships outside of the workplace? These are necessary questions to ask yourself regularly during these times. **You can find yourself off balance in an instant due to a low capacity for unexpected stimulus.**

It is important to remember that **a micro-aggressive culture is built on emotion**. Emotions are important to pay close attention to but can lead you astray if acted upon without conscious thought. If you find yourself in situation that spurs you in an emotional direction, **stop and T.H.I.N.K.** Put some **space between stimulus** and response and give your emotionally taxed mind a monument to catch up. Is it **TRUE**? Emotion or feelings do not always deal with facts. Giving space between stimulus and response may give you the option to get a foot on the ground before you unravel. Will your given response be **HELPFUL** to the situation or problem at hand? If you respond with contempt, you may lose the chance to engage in constructive dialog therefore damage a collaborative relationship. Will your message be **INSPIRING**? Inspiring (Verb): Create a feeling, especially a positive one in a person. Is your response **NECESSARY**?

If the **"hold it together man/woman"** tank is running low, **perhaps saying nothing at all is the response**. If you do decide to respond verbally in a tense situation, will it be **KIND**? Kind comes from the word **Kin or Kinship**. A person's relatives collectively; a group of persons descended from a common ancestor or constituting a people, clan, tribe, or family.

We are experiencing different and new challenges with a polarized political environment coupled with a health pandemic, dynamic financial and school schedule challenges. The **chronic hypervigilant** state we are in makes it easy for us to **fall victim to sharp, unkind, and unnecessary responses**. To combat this **tendency of losing your sh*t**, be sure to **have an acute self-awareness, check-in with a trusted peer, allow for off-loading opportunities, and check in with the people standing to your left and to your right**. Our first responder community share a kinship, **we share a servanthood** that in these times are especially difficult. Just remember, **within unity we find strength**.





Self-Care Mindset

By Sarah Vonarx, Paramedic
NNPSN Secretary

The **role of a first responder, caretaker, guardian, helper**, or however you identify yourself with, is usually paired with **some level of empathy and caring**. These qualities **make it difficult for some to be able to process and “put away”** how we feel about our work and how we help the people we serve.

Self-care is kind of a catch all in a way, in that it means simply caring for one's self. **Resilience**, on the other hand, is a **practice in self-care paired with grit with the intention of perseverance and self-protection** so that we may be fully present for those in our care.

Proper resilience practices can consist of many different things, like healthy lifestyle (taking care of one's mental, physical, and spiritual health), continual education, self-assessments, and guidance from peers or professionals.

Being human puts us at risk for having our own difficult personal issues. Ideally, our personal troubles should not interfere with our care for others, but it happens, and we often do not notice when it does. It takes practice, honesty, and self-awareness to have the **emotional intelligence** to step back and say, **“I need to be fully present for myself right now so that I may continue to help others”**. This is easier said than done for a lot of care takers, as we often overlook our own issues to save face or avoid being **“like them”**. The **reality is that we are all “like them,”** because we are all humans with feelings and **dignity that gets challenged from time to time**.

Recognize what works for you and keep those tasks in your self-care arsenal. Take a bath, go for a hike, pet a puppy, cook a meal, be with friends, hug your mom--whatever big or little things we can do to **strengthen our own resilience** and be able to fully be there for others.





Thank you all for your support and dedication to serving our communities. You are not alone, and NNPSN is listening. If you want to know more, you can always follow us on Facebook, or visit us at www.nnpsn.com

We appreciate any support and donations you may share. We are a 501 (c)(3) not for profit organization. All proceeds go back to serving you and providing education for those that can benefit. Your Board of Directors volunteer their time 100% to the network, so we can support the Peer Support Mission.

Within Unity, We Find Strength...