
AFTER THE CALL



FOR THE FAMILY

There is a large amount of research on First Responders and the various issues they face. Moreover, there is research showing the impact of the job where their role is to work closely with people, such as nurses (Duffy, Avalos & Dowling, 2015), correctional officers (Armstrong, Atkin-Plunk, & Wells, 2015), and social workers (Wagaman, Geiger, Shockley, & Segal, 2015).

Disappointingly, there is little research showing the impact on various family members. Instead, we hear anecdotal evidence like, “Cops have a high divorce rate, because of their jobs”. Of course this is not true. The research shows divorce in police (and first responders) ranked 30th (out of 39) (McCoy & Aamodt, 2010). Bakers have a higher divorce rate! (McCoy & Aamodt, 2010).

Secondary stress (stress that transfers from the client to helper) is a largely well-understood phenomenon in nurses and social workers. Considering the low amount of time engaged with the client (relative to the family), should we not worry about the stress transference in family to members of family?

If we were to examine only First Responder’s spouses or partners, it is easy to understand the role they play in the First Responder’s ability to cope. And, being so close and involved, we should assume that they could experience the secondary stress from their partners. This would obviously extend to any family member who is close and equally involved (including children! (Daurte et al, 2006)).

As family members, it is important for you to understand that you might be affected by the role that your family member has engaged in. Understanding is the first step towards overcoming those challenges. Keep in mind the effects of stress!

Check our *“Am I stressed?”* for more details on what that may look like.