
AFTER THE CALL



WHAT FAMILIES SHOULD KNOW!

Someone in your family has become a First Responder. They are about to embark on one of the most fulfilling careers available! But, with such large responsibility can come immense consequences. With nearly 49 percent of all the Fire Services in Ontario fully paid on call (volunteer) (OFM, 2015), the family is usually the first to notice any difference.

Stress disorders are among the most debilitating not only to the person but to the family.

This is a well-known fact, however, that there are few programs for families that present the information so that they are prepared.

Your partner or family member WILL experience stress on the job. They will lose sleep on some nights. But, you should not be consumed with worry. Not all of these experiences will lead to a debilitating disorder. Not all bad calls will lead to PTSD. And, when caught early and acted on pro-actively, most return to a productive, fulfilling life.

If you notice:

- An increase in alcohol/substance use (see Substance use Continuum)
- A reduction in satisfaction in activities formerly found pleasurable
- A distancing of themselves from everyone
- An increase in recurring nightmares
- Any other abnormal (i.e. not characteristic) behavior (As listed in DSM-5, 2013)

Many of the above factors will be present for a short period of time throughout their career. They are normal stress reaction to an abnormal event! Remember, that normal stress reactions that can last days and weeks. You know this member well and are best suited to identify these.

Helping to recognize problem behaviors is important not only for the First Responder, research shows that children of first responders with PTSD can also display symptoms (Daurte et al, 2006).

You or your family member will embark on a lifelong career of extraordinary work. However, this is a career where work can come home. Knowledge will help you to prepare. And knowing this will keep you more vigilant, to spot any issue that may arise from their experiences.