



LAW ENFORCEMENT SUICIDE CASE STUDY GUIDE

Instructors:

DR. OLIVIA JOHNSON
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POST - MORTEM PSYCHOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS



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Instructors



Dr. Olivia Johnson is a suicidology researcher and is a leading subject expert in law enforcement suicide. Dr. Olivia Johnson holds a master's in Criminology and Criminal Justice from the University of Missouri, St. Louis and a doctorate in Organizational Leadership Management from the University of Phoenix, School of Advanced Studies. She formerly worked as a Senior Research Associate for the Institute for Intergovernmental Research as a Lead Instructor for the VALOR Officer Safety Program and was the Program Advisor and Lead Instructor law for the SAFLEO (National Suicide Awareness for Law Enforcement Officers) Program. Dr. Johnson is an Air Force veteran, former police officer, law enforcement trainer, and published author.

Dr. Johnson collects data on police and correction officer suicide and developed the National Law Enforcement Suicide Mortality Database™. This database will allow researchers and others in the field to access the data for research purposes to assist in reducing suicide deaths among first responder populations. She also developed the Law Enforcement Psychological Autopsy protocol and training course. She served a 3-year term as a Suicidology Researcher with the State of Illinois Suicide Prevention Alliance. She has participated in numerous working groups, is a member of numerous professional organizations, and sits on several professional boards. Dr. Johnson holds a certification from the American Association of Suicidology for conducting Law Enforcement Psychological Autopsies.



Dr. Jorey L. Krawczyn has an extensive career extending over 45 years in law enforcement, forensic psychology, and teaching. His law enforcement experience ranges from undercover narcotics investigations to the administrative duties of Chief of Police (Ret.). He served his two- year psychological internship with the Correctional Corporation of America, Bay Facility providing evaluation and treatment to violent offenders and sexual predators.

He served three years as a Senior Police Psychologist for the US Department of Justice: International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) assigned to Kyrgyzstan, Kosovo, and Tanzania. He served an additional three years as the Academic Director for the U.S. Department of State's International Law Enforcement Academy and two years with their Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs as a Psychological Advisor to foreign judges, prosecutors, and senior law enforcement officials on matters of Transnational Organized Criminals and Radicalized Violent Extremists.

Dr. Krawczyn is an adjunct faculty member at Saint Leo University, Department of Criminal Justice Graduate Studies where he teaches Forensic Interviews and Methodologies of Violence. He has testified as an Expert Witness in twenty-two State and Federal Court cases on police behaviors, police testing methodologies, and violent offenders. He holds a Bachelor's in Criminal Justice Administration, one Master's in Human Development, a second Masters in Instructional Design and a Doctorate in Counseling Psychology.



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Congratulations and Welcome!

You have been officially accepted in the Blue Wall Institute's course **Case Studies in Law Enforcement Suicide: Post-Mortem Psychological Examination**. This course consists of 2 half days of training (4-hours online) and (4-hours of independent study) each day. This course will provide information to help learners complete a simulated psychological autopsy based on case studies and additional course content.

This course will provide a general understanding about a death by suicide, more specifically, suicide among law enforcement personnel. This course is designed to guide learners through a step-by-step process of developing a psychological autopsy. This will include developing a final written product that outlines in-depth, the life and circumstances that ultimately resulted in death. We will never fully know everything about a death by suicide, as anyone involved usually only has pieces of this dynamic puzzle. Some will have more pieces than others, which is why understanding a suicide death in its entirety can be time-consuming and difficult. However, this process will provide a clearer picture of the final months, weeks, days, and hours in the individuals life. It will also provide insight into areas needing further examination and investigation.

Suicide among our first responder populations is a leading cause of death and the time is now to do something different. This silent killer is getting more attention but much more needs to be done regarding what can be gathered and collected. To better understand "why" this is happening, we must do something with the information and data being collected from such deaths. This course will help learners to make sense of the information collected in a meaningful way, such as future prevention, intervention, and awareness efforts.

We look forward to working with each of you.

Sincerely,

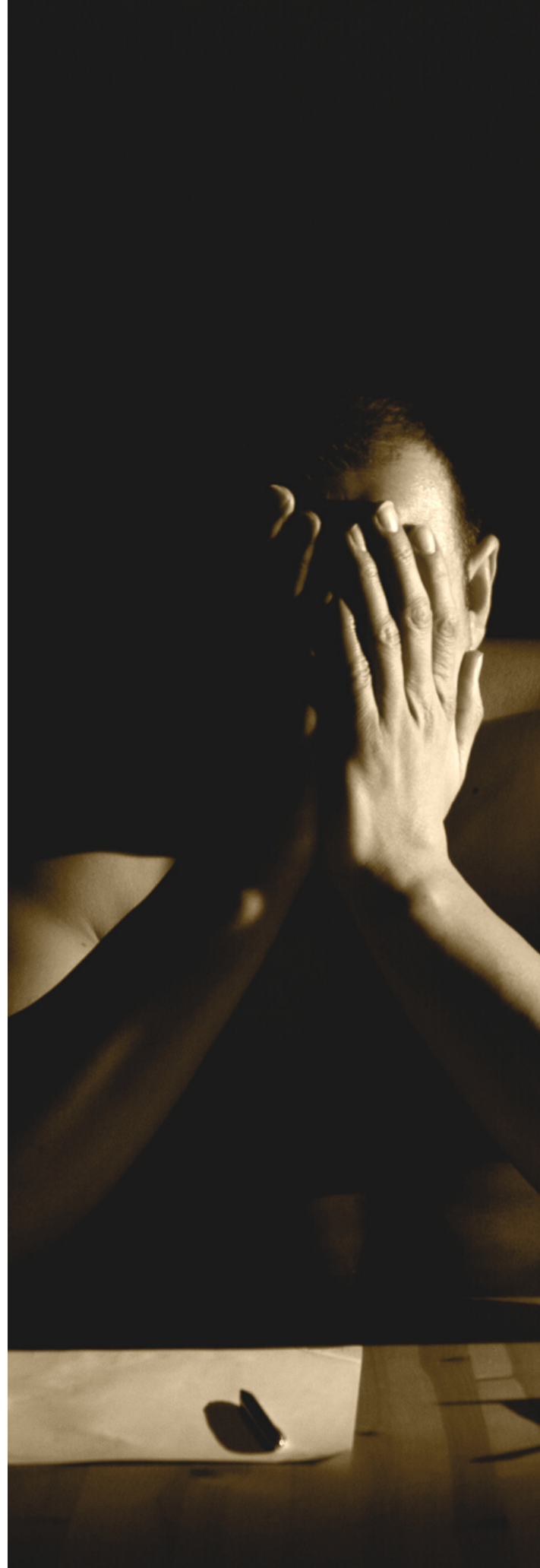
Dr. Olivia Johnson & Dr. Jorey Krawczyn

This 8-hour course **Law Enforcement Suicide Case Studies: Post-Mortem Psychological Examination**

provides a basic understanding of suicide, more specifically, suicide among law enforcement and corrections personnel. Suicide is not a new phenomenon among these populations. However, it has failed to be examined in-depth and at an adequate level, to better understand the issues facing these first responder populations and help reduce the number of yearly suicide deaths. This course aims to provide an in-depth understanding of events and circumstances surrounding deaths by suicide. This will include known and emerging themes noted in the data collected by Dr. Olivia Johnson.

A simulated case study will provide a personal background and demographic information about an officer who has died by suicide, to include circumstances and events preceding death, known major life-events, and a list of individuals (personal and professional) that were known to and had contact with the decedent on a regular basis. Procedures for developing a semi-structured psychological autopsy will be devised. In addition, an overall risk assessment protocol is designed to better understand the reasons behind such a death and to work towards protocols and prevention efforts to help reduce future suicides.

A step-by-step process will assist in data collection and practical skill sets will be developed to research cases, to include basic protocol for requesting records, conducting interviews, and facilitating the development of a timeline prior to death. Participants will be required to examine several case studies and will work through a simulated case. This case study will include examination of documentation collected for a death by suicide and information obtained post-incident (e.g., autopsy reports, toxicology, death certificate, police reports, family interviews/statements, social media accounts, etc.). Upon completion of the full (8- hours) participant's will put together their own Case Project. The project will be discussed further in-detail.





Purpose:

Death by suicide is a leading cause of death for first responder populations. Understanding the circumstances and events preceding death can help others better understand some of the unknowns that follow a death by suicide. Of course, no one will have all the answers as to why someone died by suicide but putting together the pieces discovered will assist in better understanding why someone may have made the decision to take his or her life. This course will also assist agency personnel in identifying risk factors and warning signs, as well as implementation of future prevention, intervention, and awareness efforts.

Learning Goals and Objectives

- Demonstrate knowledge of the Psychological Autopsy (PA)
- Identify pros and cons to the PA
- Recognize use of International Classification of Diseases (ICD) Codes
- Develop a timeline (1-year preceding death)
- Identify who should be interviewed and questions to be asked
- Demonstrate skills to search and find documentation on the decedent
- Implement State's Sunshine Laws, FOIA/FOIL
- Develop a system of information collection and online presence
- Apply for and track all document requests
- Build a simulated PA and producing final report

I. PRE-COURSE READING/VIDEO/MATERIALS

II. INTRODUCTION – COURSE ROADMAP

III. CODE 9 VIDEO

IV. BACKGROUND OF PROGRAM

- A. Data regarding police suicide
- B. Major and minor themes
- C. Understanding the usefulness of a psychological autopsy (PA)
- D. Pros and Cons of the PA
- E. Methodologies and protocol

V. OFFICER DEATH BY SUICIDE

VI. STANDARD OCCUPATIONAL CODES (SOC)

VII. NOTIFICATION OF DEATH (SUICIDE)

- A. International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-10)
- B. Questionable Cause of Death
- C. Verification of Cause of Death
 - 1. Family
 - 2. Agency
 - 3. Media
 - 4. Obituary
 - 5. Death Certificate

VIII. APPLYING FOR DOCUMENTATION

- A. Open versus Closed States
- B. Understanding State Sunshine Laws
- C. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)
 - 1. Sample FOIA Request
 - a. Making a Request
 - b. Writing a Request
 - c. Tracking Requests

D. Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) NY State

E. Essential Reports

1. *Autopsy*
2. *Medical Examiner/Coroner Report*
3. *Toxicology*
4. *Medical Records*
5. *Police*
6. *Supplemental*
7. *Suicide Note(s)*
8. *Death Certificate*

IX. SCENARIOS

A. Case Study I

B. Demographics/Background

1. *Known Risk Factors*
2. *Prior Attempts*
3. *Risky and Risk-Taking Behavior*

C. Case Study 2

D. Demographics/Background

1. *Known Risk Factors*
2. *Prior Attempts*
3. *Risky and Risk-Taking Behavior*

X. INTERVIEWS AND INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

- A. Family
- B. Friends
- C. Co-workers
- D. Acquaintances

XI. NOTED MAJOR LIFE EVENTS

- A. Personal
- B. Professional

XII. BEHAVIORAL CHANGES

- A. Personal History
- B. Personality
- C. Substance Use and Abuse
- D. Hobbies and Daily Activities
- E. Sleep Patterns

XIII. SOCIAL MEDIA

- A. Facebook
- B. LinkedIn
- C. Twitter
- D. Snapchat

XIV. ONLINE INVESTIGATION

- A. Search Engines
- B. Helpful Websites
- C. How To Search
- D. What To Search For

XV. BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

- A. Making Sense of What You Find
- B. Developing a Timeline
- C. Designing a Semi-Structured PA
- D. Case Project
- E. Course/Instructor Evaluations
- E. Question and Answer Session

DAY 1

MODULE 1: COURSE ROADMAP

Introduction will include the background of the problem of suicide among first responders, more specifically among law enforcement officers. Data collected by the instructor will be discussed in-depth to include major and minor emerging themes, commonalities, and understanding how data can help with future prevention and intervention efforts among these populations.

MODULE 2: CASE STUDIES IN LAW ENFORCEMENT SUICIDE

This Module consists of five individual case studies. Each case study is based on a fictitious scenario of a police officer or corrections officer who has died by suicide. The case study is provided and is to be used to assist in developing a case history and to assist in completing the Psychological Autopsy Template (PAT) and final course project. Information found in the scenarios and other areas of the course will help to bring together a better understanding of the decedent's life (personal and professional), and a timeline of events and circumstances preceding death.

MODULE 3: DECEDENT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Learn to apply for essential documentation, recognize open versus closed states when dealing with records and other pertinent documentation, understand Sunshine Laws and FOIA. Learn to apply for, write, and track FOIA/FOIL requests. Sample paperwork provided and discussed in-depth. Decedent background information may include (but is not limited to): financial, criminal/investigations, military/service records, marriage/divorce, educational transcripts, former addresses, current and past employment records, next of kin, noted disciplinary actions, autopsy and toxicology reports, etc.



MODULE 4: DEVELOPING A TIMELINE OF EVENTS

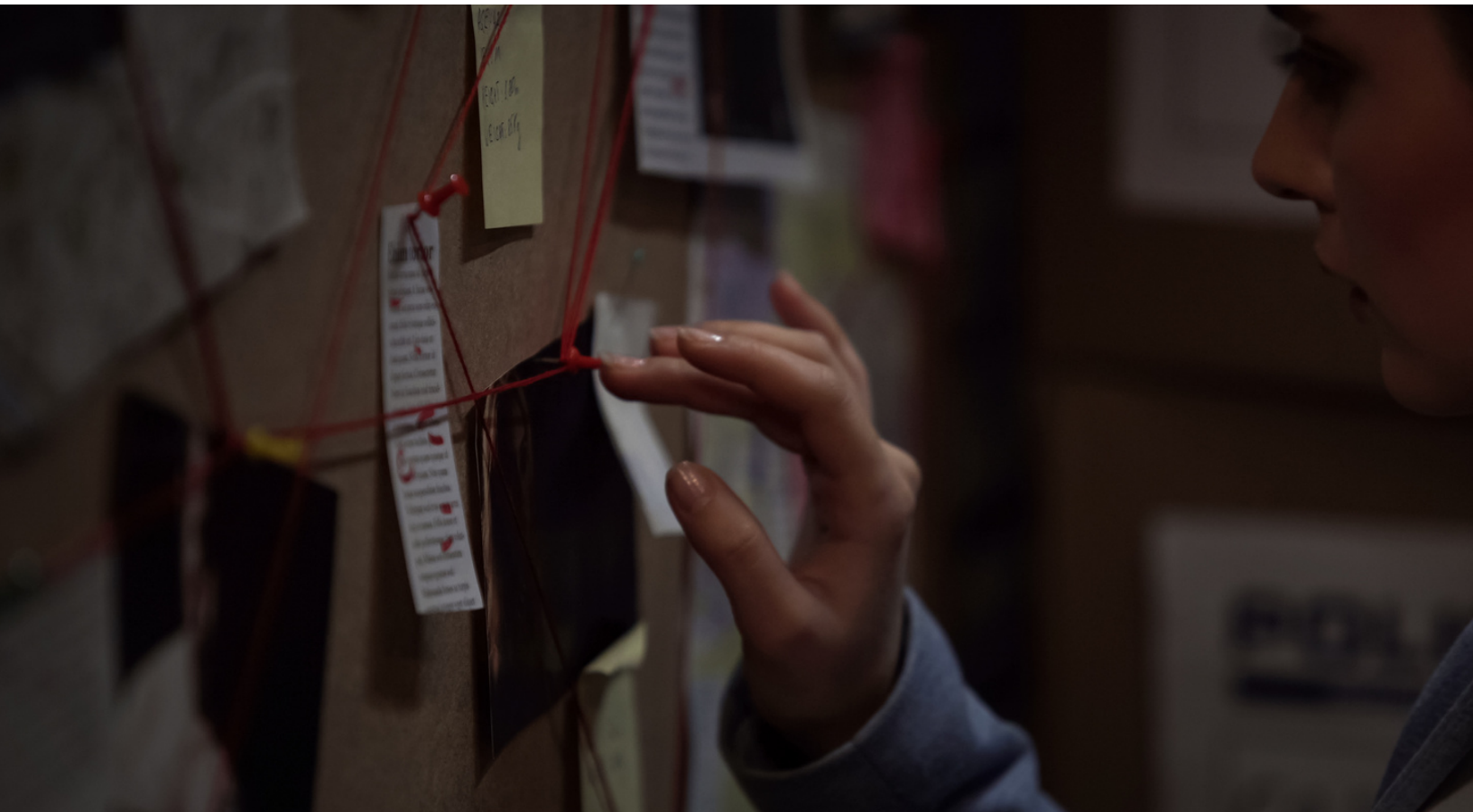
Identify major life events and develop a timeline from data collected, documentation, searches, and interviews. Note behavioral changes preceding death. Develop a personal and familial history of life, mental health issues, prior suicide attempts, and other suicide deaths. Note personality changes in the year preceding death, to include a change in participation in hobbies, daily activities, sleep patterns/insomnia, and substance use and abuse patterns and changes.

MODULE 5: SOCIAL MEDIA & ONLINE PRESENCE

A deep-dive into social media accounts will be addressed (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Snapchat, email, etc.). This will also include family and friend's social media. Search engines, helpful websites, how and what to search for will be discussed in-depth.

CONCLUSION

Individual/Self-Paced Research and Case Preparation [4-hours]





DAY 2

MODULE 6: CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS & INTERVIEWING PROTOCOLS

Develop a list of individuals to be interviewed and their relationship to the decedent. This list should include family, friends, co-workers, acquaintances, etc. A list of questions to be asked will be discussed, as well as interview protocol and techniques.

MODULE 7: REQUESTING REPORTS AND DOCUMENTATION

Conduct online inquiries to include credit reporting, social media accounts, online media, television reports, agency notifications, etc. Develop a log of requested, processed, and received reports and documentation and associated fees. Develop protocol for verification of death (e.g., family, agency, media, obituary). Understanding open versus closed states, affiliated laws, and requirements (e.g., FOIA, FOIL, Sunshine Laws, etc.). Learn how to request appropriate documentation from police departments, governmental agencies, and Medical Examiner/Coroners Offices.

MODULE 8: POLICE, AUTOPSY, AND TOXICOLOGY REPORTS

Each individual report provides different kinds of information and can help verify manner and means of death and circumstances, and contributing events.

MODULE 9: PSYCHOLOGICAL AUTOPSY TEMPLATE

A discussion of what the Psychological Autopsy is, how it can be used, and the pros and cons will be discussed. A sample template will be provided, and all sections will be discussed as they pertain to the information needed.


MODULE 10: CASE PROJECT

Bringing it all together into the semi-structured Psychological Autopsy. The final project is due within 3 months of completing the online portion of the class. To get credit for this course, all modules must be attended, final project turned in, and approved by course instructors. A detailed write-up of results and a report on what information could not be uncovered, what interviewees were not willing to discuss, what needs more investigation, and any other recommendations should be in the final report. Complete course and instructor evaluation.

MODULE II - WRAP UP

CONCLUSION

Individual/Self-Paced Research and Case Preparation [4-hours]



To better understand why suicide is happening, we must do something with the information and data being collected from such deaths.

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PRE-COURSE REQUIRED READING

CLICK links below to go to the article online.

Carlson-Johnson, O., Grant, H., & Lavery, C. F. (2020). Caring for the Guardians- Exploring Needed Directions and Best Practices for Police Resilience Practice and Research. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 1874. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01874>

IACP (International Association of Chiefs of Police). 2014. *IACP National Symposium on Law Enforcement Officer Suicide and Mental Health: Breaking the Silence on Law Enforcement Suicides*. Washington, DC: [Office of Community Oriented Policing Services](#).

Jacobs, D., & Klein-Benheim, M. (1995). The psychological autopsy: A useful tool for determining proximal causation in suicide cases. *Bull Am Acad Psychiatry Law*, 23(2), pp. 165-82.

Knoll, J. L. IV. (2008). The psychological autopsy part 1: Applications and methods. *Journal of Psychiatric Practice*, 14(6), pp. 393-97.

Vasudevan, A. K., Hanumantha, & Eccleston, L. (2020). Psychological autopsy: the psychological assessment of the dead individual's role in the death. *Medico-Legal Update*, Jul-Sep. 20(3), pp. 13-18.

Violanti, J. M., Robinson, C. F., & Shen, R. (2013). Law enforcement suicide: A national analysis. *International Journal of Emergency Mental Health and Human Resilience* 15(4), pp. 289-298.

Pre-Course Suggested Videos:

Code 9 Project: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCb7l8oLHB8>

Sister of Officer who Died by Suicide says NYPD is 'Broken'
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B5epBjt_JA4

Phoenix Police Chief Discusses Firing and Suicide of Officer Craig Tiger:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JixgB8V_dZI

CASE 1: SGT. ROBERT D. JONES

Demographic

42-year-old White Male, Non-Hispanic, 70" tall, 215 pounds at the time of death. Body Mass Index (BMI) 30.8 (Obese). Decedent died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head (See Simulated Autopsy Report). The weapon located at the scene and near the victim was and determined to be used was Robert's service-issued firearm, a .40 caliber Glock.

When Robert failed to report for work, another officer was sent by the house to conduct a welfare check. The officer was unable to make entry into the residence. He was able to contact Robert's wife Mary, who said that he should have left for work already. Mary just assumed that he went to get a coffee or something and was just running late. Mary did note that Robert was just never late. In fact, she explained that he was often early everywhere he went. When Mary returned home, she took a basket of laundry upstairs to put it away, and discovered Robert deceased in bed in full uniform and she called 911. A note was discovered in Robert's shirt pocket. (The content of the note can be seen below).

Suicide Note

Mary, please forgive me. I never wanted to do this to you, but I didn't see any other way. I love you more than you will ever know, but I just couldn't handle the stress of leaving a job I loved and feeling like I was nothing anymore. I haven't been sleeping well and I have been in pain for months. I didn't want to burden you. My body is not young, and my mind is not sharp.

I hope you can someday forgive me. Please tell the kids I love them and hug Chloe and Katie for me. Grandpa is sure going to miss them. [Signed] Robert



BACKGROUND

Robert was the eldest of five. He grew up in a lower/middle-class household. His father worked long hours at a local factory and his mother worked in the home until the children were out of grade school. She then went to work for a local grocery store in the deli department.

Robert's father was extremely strict and held Robert accountable for things often out of his control. His father was demanding and too often not present. Robert was often expected to watch and care for his brothers and sisters while his parents worked. This meant that he had little time for himself or extra-curricular activities or sports. Robert grew resentful of his parents and even his siblings. He felt as though he never mattered.

At 18 Robert started working at a local car dealership, by 20 he saved enough to move out on his own. He spent the next three years working at the dealership but wanted something more. A friend mentioned that he was going to apply at a local police agency, as they were hiring. Robert was intrigued and decided to apply as well. Within a year Robert was hired and in the full-time police academy. Robert graduated in the top 10 percent of his academy class and did extremely well in Field Training.

Robert met Mary at work, she was a fellow officer. They married within a year of meeting and have been married for over 18 years. Once Mary got pregnant with the third child, she decided to leave the force to care for her children. Robert and Mary had three children who at the time of Robert's passing were grown. They also had two grandchildren. All three children lived within an hour drive and visited often.

At the time of his death, Robert was working as a day shift Patrol Sergeant. He had been with the same medium-sized agency for nearly two decades, located on the West Coast. Robert was well-respected, well-liked, and seemed to be a relatively laid-back guy. He was described by many as firm but fair. As of late, Robert seemed anxious and stressed. He was normally a fun-loving guy with a great sense of humor. However, in month preceding his death, he became uptight and had even been reprimanded for an unprofessional outburst during a meeting.

Mary noted [***He just wasn't himself. He would come home from work late with a huge chip on his shoulder. I would try to talk with him, but that seemed to just upset him more. I began feeling like I was walking on eggshells when he was around. Robert was never a big drinker, but I noticed he had started drinking every night. Sometimes, he drank so much that he would pass out in the chair in the living room. I hated to try to move him because he would become combative. We really started to grow apart and our relationship was suffering.***]

Mary said Robert recently began talking about retirement and what he might do in the future. She said he expressed concern about his ability to do anything other than police work.

Mary stated: [***I explained to him that he could do anything he wanted. He was so intelligent and caught on to things very easily. I just wanted him to be happy and able to spend more quality time with our children and grandchildren. I mean he had given his life to this job. He was very good at it, but it was his time to enjoy the fruits of his labor.***]

END OF SCENARIO



CASE 2: OFFICER ANTONIO “TONY” HERNANDEZ JR.

Demographic

52-year-old, White Male, Hispanic, 67" tall, 150 pounds at the time of death. Body Mass Index (BMI) 23.5 (Normal). Tony was divorced with no children and lived alone. He had been divorced from his wife for about a month. This was his only marriage. After the final paperwork was complete on the divorce, Tony seemed to go into a deep depression and became nearly despondent. Tony had no history of depression or alcohol abuse. However, his mother had died by suicide. The underlying reason is unknown.

Tony was a veteran police officer with a large municipality. He had received several awards for heroism and bravery. Tony served approximately 15 years with his agency prior to his passing. He was a highly decorated Army veteran who served two tours overseas. Tony was never diagnosed with PTSD, but he told friends and co-workers that he believed he suffered from it.

Tony was noted as being a casual drinker, but friends and relatives said his use of alcohol in the past months had become concerning and problematic. Several of Tony's coworkers noted him calling in more often and that he even left early the day he was discovered deceased. Tony died as a result asphyxia due to ligature strangulation (See Simulated Autopsy Report). A relative went to check on him after noticing some disturbing posts on his social media page and being unable to reach him by phone.

[Facebook post: ***"I'm sorry but I just couldn't go on without her."***]

[Facebook post: ***"Angela, I love you."***]

Suicide Note

No note was discovered, but two separate social media posts were noted. Several text messages were also sent to Tony's ex-wife [Angela] though she did not respond to any of them. Angela said that after seeing the third text, she became concerned and called 911.

Text 1: *Please call me, we need to talk.*

Text 2: *I love you, why can't you love me.*

Text 3: *Goodbye.*



BACKGROUND

Tony was the youngest of two children. He was extremely close to his older brother Juan, until Juan's unexpected passing about five years ago. Juan was tragically killed in an automobile accident. Tony took his death extremely hard. Tony lost his mother to suicide when he was in high school. That was a loss he never fully seemed to recover from. His father is still alive but suffers from many physical issues. Tony and his father are also very close. Tony is his father's sole caregiver. As a young man, Tony was exceptionally bright and gifted. He had book smarts and the ability to speak with anyone. This seemed to pave the way for his career in law enforcement.

A few years after high school Tony joined the Army. He wanted to get away and to see the world. After two enlistments, Tony wanted to come back home to be closer to his father and extended family. Upon moving back, a friend told him about several openings at the local police department. Tony seemed like an excellent fit. He applied at the local police department and was soon going through the hiring process, background, and eventually the academy and field training. He excelled at nearly everything. Tony loved his new job and that was his focus in life. Tony did not have much of a social life. He wanted to devote all his time and energy into his new career.

About a year prior to his death, Tony met Angela. She was a records clerk at the courthouse. The two really seemed to hit it off. Tony was in his first real relationship. He dated casually in the military, but he had more one-night stands and never wanted to settle down. Tony and Angela were inseparable. Several of Tony's co-workers noted the change in his personality as being more positive, but that his work seemed to suffer a bit. They noted that he seemed to be more tired and burning the candle at both ends. Many of them wrote it off to being in love.

Several months into the relationship Tony proposed and the two eloped. Tony's family and friends were shocked but were happy for him to be settling down. Shortly after marrying, Tony noticed Angela began acting distant and secretive.

Angela seemed to avoid Tony's affection and he had caught her in several lies. Tony suspected she was being unfaithful and began monitoring her social media pages, her cell phone, and who she was hanging around. The two were constantly arguing and Angela on more than one occasion threatened divorce if Tony would not stop being so jealous and possessive. Tony agreed to her conditions initially, until Angela began receiving text messages from her old boyfriend. Tony confronted Angela and she confessed that the two had never stopped seeing each other even after they were married. Tony was devastated and heartbroken. He wanted Angela to stop seeing this other man and to go to marriage counseling. Angela refused to do either.

Nine months after the two eloped, Tony was served with divorce papers at work the day he was found deceased. Tony was on patrol when his shift sergeant called him back to the station. The Sergeant notified Tony of the process server in the lobby. Tony was utterly humiliated. He signed for the papers and went back out on patrol. After about 3 minutes, Tony became emotionally upset and called his Sergeant back and asked to leave early.

END OF SCENARIO

CASE 3: DETECTIVE REBECCA “BECKY” SMITH

DEMOGRAPHIC

41-year-old, White Female, Non-Hispanic, 63" tall, 180 pounds at the time of death. Body Mass Index (BMI) 31.9 (Obese).

Becky was found deceased in the bathroom of her residence after failing to show for work. Several bottles of diphenhydramine were found in the bathroom near the decedent along with two suicide notes (See Suicide Note Section). Toxicology reports indicated heart blood levels of diphenhydramine were 7500 ng/mL and noted ethanol level of 15 mg/dL (See Simulated Autopsy Report). Due to the circumstances and findings, the Medical Examiner determined the manner of death to be suicide due to diphenhydramine intoxication.

Becky was in a long-term relationship with Joanne, a female officer from a neighboring agency. She had never been married and had no children. As of late, Becky seemed a bit paranoid and believed her girlfriend was having an affair. Becky confided in a close friend that she would not know what to do and was unsure if she could handle a breakup.

Becky was a Navy veteran, who served two enlistments. Her military occupational specialty (MOS) was Security Forces. Becky received numerous awards and was very self-motivated. Her parents noted that she had been sexually assaulted by a male co-worker within a month of arriving at her first duty station. They said she struggled with the incident and had become depressed for about a year following the assault. They also noted that she drank excessively in the year following the assault. However, they said she received psychiatric care and seemed to have really made progress. She quit using alcohol and began seeing a counselor. She continued seeing a counselor up until her suicide.

After separating from the military Becky joined the ranks of a large municipal police agency. She absolutely loved her job and excelled. She worked hard and was eventually promoted to investigations. She worked mainly in sex crimes. She had not shared anything about her sexual assault, but she told her girlfriend that she believed the experience would help make her a better detective.



Suicide Note

Note 1:

Jo, I want you to know first and foremost, I LOVE YOU WITH ALL MY BEING. I have never loved anyone this much.

I know things aren't good. I know something is going on and I believe you are cheating on me. It is killing me inside. I cannot think of going on without you.

Please forgive me. Please think of me often. Love, Bec

Note 2:

Mom & Dad, I tried the best I could. I just don't have any more to give. I guess it's just not in the cards for me to be loved.

I'm sorry.

I love you both. [Signed] Becky

BACKGROUND

Becky was an only child and was very close with her parents and extended family. She spent much of her free time with her family. She had a few close friends growing up, but as with life, many fizzled out as she grew up. Becky had issues fitting in when she got to high school. She knew at an early age she was attracted to females, but she feared sharing this with her family or friends. She was terrified that if they found out they would disown her. She did date in high school, but mainly close male friends. She didn't want any suspicion about her sexuality to be revealed.

After high school Becky decided to join the Navy. She wanted to see the world, but she feared leaving behind her family. The good thing, she was stationed two hours from home, so she was able to visit frequently but still have her privacy. She feared being stationed overseas, so after her second enlistment she decided to separate.

END OF SCENARIO

CASE 4: CORRECTIONS OFFICER PATRICIA ROBERTS

DEMOGRAPHIC

28-year-old white female, 67" tall, 135 pounds and excellent physical health at the time of death. Body Mass Index was 21.1 (Normal). Decedent died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound (12-gaugeshotgun) to the head, (see simulated Autopsy report 2). The weapon and body were located inside her personal vehicle parked at her residence in the driveway.

One of her neighbors, a physician, returning home around 3 am from a call out to the Emergency Room was in his kitchen eating breakfast when he heard a loud single shot that he immediately recognized as a shotgun blast. He called 911, reporting the gunshot as having possibility originating from Patricia's home across the street. The responding officers arrived and located Patricia in the passenger front seat with a 12-gauge shotgun resting on her torso and extending down between her legs. Her right-thumb was inserted and resting on the trigger ring.

SUICIDE NOTICE

Responding to the scene was Patricia's boyfriend, patrol officer Rich Caldwell. He had just left her asleep about 45 minutes earlier. She had returned home from dinner and drinks with several of her girlfriends and Rich stopped by while on duty to see that she arrived home safely. Rich reported that she was in a melancholy mood since the anniversary of her parent's death had just past this week. She once again told Rich that she wanted to be with her mom and dad and that she was tired of living this life. Although she had consumed a considerable amount of alcohol and previously demonstrated this line of rhetoric before several times to Rich, he felt a more empathetic level with her expressive mood this time. Rich made sure she was asleep in bed before he removed her personal weapon from the bedside. He had planned on returning it in the morning at breakfast.



BACKGROUND

Patricia and her younger sister grew up and attended school and church in this neighborhood with their parents. Her father was a local physician, and her mother was a stay-at-home mom. This allowed her mother time to volunteer at the school and other civic organizations and be at home when Patricia and her sister arrived home from school. All of that changed when Patricia was 12 years old. She came home and found both of her parents' dead from gunshot wounds. Police would later determine two-armed individuals, a man and woman entered the home around 11am to rob her father of his prescription pad and signature stamp and then executed both of them.

The investigation and court case took over four years to resolve in some form of justice for Patricia and her younger sister. The male perpetrator was sentenced to death while his female accomplice received life without parole. This life event sparked a career interest in law enforcement for Patricia. Her local police agency had grown close to her during their investigation and sponsored her to their police academy when she turned 19 years old. She was ultimately hired and began working in the patrol division.

Patricia met Rich Caldwell while attending the academy. He was two years older and was also attending college. He encouraged and motivated Patricia to attend college, where she received a bachelor's in criminal justice at the age of 23. Patricia and Rich's relationship continued to develop, and they talked about getting married.

Rich reported that Patricia had insisted that they not live together until they were married. They each maintained a separate home even though they would spend nights together alternating homes. Rich also reported that Patricia avoided talking about eventually starting a family and having children. She feared that something would happen to her as a police officer, and she did not want to leave behind any orphans. Although Patricia attended mental health therapy after the murder of her parents, she still had a difficult time with the anniversary date every year. She told Rich that she looked forward to joining her parents in heaven and being at peace with herself and the two perpetrators. Adding to her difficulty in understanding of the life event was the fact that the female perpetrator was only four years older than Patricia and the male perpetrator was six years older. Both were teenagers at the time of the robbery and homicides

END OF SCENARIO



CASE 5: LT. PAUL KNOWLES – SPECIAL INVESTIGATION UNIT SUPERVISOR

DEMOGRAPHIC

38-year-old White Male, Non-Hispanic, 74" tall, 215 pounds at the time of death. Body Mass Index was 27.6 (Overweight) at the time of death. Decedent died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. (See Simulated Autopsy Report). The weapon was located at the scene and next to the victim along with his police badge and identification. The weapon was a .45 caliber Colt Commander. Records revealed this was Paul's off-duty firearm. Another victim, Karen Knowles (Paul's wife) was located deceased in the master bedroom of the residence. Karen was a 35-year-old White Female, 68" tall, 115 pounds at the time of death. She died from a single gunshot wound to the right side of her head. A .45 caliber shell casing was located near her body.

Paul had just completed his administrative duties supervising an early morning drug search warrant resulting in the seizure of four kilos of cocaine, \$325,000.00 cash, 15 firearms and the arrest of 21 individuals. He was stopped briefly in the hallway by his Captain and graciously received the congratulations on a job well-done. Paul told his Captain thank you and that he was looking forward to having the next four days off-duty. Paul left the office, drove home arriving at 10:10 am and signed out with dispatch.



THE 911 CENTER REPORT

At 10:54 am the city's 911 center received a call from 1624 Desoto Drive. The caller identified himself as Lt. Paul Knowles and requested a patrol unit be sent to this address. He further stated that there had been a murder-suicide and there was no need to rush to the scene. When the dispatcher asked if he knew the victims, Paul replied, "Yes, my wife, Karen Knowles and myself." The dispatcher stated, "I don't understand," and Paul reported, "My wife is dead and just as soon as your unit arrives on scene I am also." Paul further told the dispatcher, "Advise your responding unit that the front door is unlocked and opened, there is no need to knock."

At 11:01 am, dispatch recorded the arrival the Patrol Unit #317. Paul had remained on the line with the 911 and when he heard the responding unit acknowledge "10-96 (on scene)," a single gunshot was heard over the phone line and outside by the responding officer. At 11:03 am the responding unit contacted dispatch and requested the Patrol Supervisor and the Medical Examiner.



BACKGROUND

Paul was the youngest of three sons born into a military family. His father and two older brothers all served in the U.S. Marine Corp and at the age of seventeen, he enlisted and served five years with two tours in Afghanistan. Upon Paul's Honorable discharge from the Marine Corp, he joined his local Sheriff's office and quickly ascended the ranks and assignments. During this time, he also earned a bachelor's degree in Criminology and a Master's in Criminal Justice Administration.

At the age of twenty-five he met and married Karen. She was three years younger and had just gained employment with the Sheriff's office as a Patrol Deputy. Karen was promoted to Sergeant and assigned to the Robbery-Homicide Unit. Although they considered having children and raising a family, the daily grind of career development, new assignments and professional advancement placed that consideration on hold. As a married couple they enjoyed traveling in their RV and taking cruises throughout the Caribbean region. Co-workers described them as a loving and caring couple that easily shared themselves with others.

At the time of their deaths, Karen was being promoted to Lieutenant while remaining with the Robbery-Homicide Unit and Paul was being promoted to Captain of Patrol. They were to take their new promotions in five days, when they returned to work from their four-day off rotation.

END OF SCENARIO

COURSE EXERCISE 1: DEVELOPING INTERVIEWER EMPATHY

Facilitator's Instructions:

Allow the participants to read the Scenario Background and then have them view the short video of Brittany's verbal statement. Tell the participants they can take notes on what she confidentially relays and her request to her supervisor. Brittany asks a question at the end of her statement that they will discuss and provide an answer for her.

Facilitators are to watch and take notes of how supervisors perceive and react to Brittany's situation, discuss their thought sand if they exhibit any empathy to Brittany. Facilitators can track the participant's suggestions through online discussion or as a separate assignment and then draw upon correlations and commonalities.

Facilitator's Guidance:

This is an actual case that has been designed to generate active listening skills and supervisory empathy in a facilitative discussion. There are no right or wrong answers or solutions. The purpose is to identify the various issues, options, and process them in an empathetic manner.

Empathy is the action of understanding, being aware of or sensitive to and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another without having the feelings, thoughts and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner. Empathy is not just something that happens to us—it is also a choice we make: to pay attention in the present moment, to extend our “non- judgmental” selves with curiosity and compassion while appropriately giving life to that concern and making it evident in the heart of the other person. It is made of exertion and focus.

Supervisors need to remember that empathy implies a feeling of recognition of other people's sufferings, while sympathy is sharing another's feelings. To remain healthy, we want to practice empathy not sympathy.

Participants should identify and consider several factors in the situation including:

- ***All the survivors, family, friends, co-workers, and the department***
- ***Brittany's statements, thoughts, and feelings***
- ***Future ramifications of everyone's decisions***
- ***Your role as a mentor and supervisor***

SCENARIO BACKGROUND

As the Supervisor of the Patrol Squad, you have observed and interacted with Brittany and Todd over the past eighteen months. Respond to this case study in that capacity and relationship. Brittany and Todd met while attending Florida State University (FSU). They are both 24 years old and have dated since their junior year in college. Upon graduation, both joined the police department and work in patrol. Brittany is highly productive in making strong cases and conscientious on her assignments. Brittany's father is a physician and her mother a nurse practitioner. Todd has the potential to be a productive officer but lacks attention to details in his assignments.

Todd's father is the local prosecuting attorney, and his mother is a professor with FSU. Todd and Brittany had broken up and reunited three times in the past year; however, as a supervisor you were aware that while on duty Todd kept close surveillance on Brittany during their separation periods, through cyber-stalking tactics. He was aggressive and jealous towards members of Brittany's family as well as her friends and male co-workers. During this last separation period, Todd called Brittany asking her to accompany him down the coast to go shopping and have lunch. Todd has a private pilot's license and later that day they departed the local airport heading down the coast in Todd's family's private plane. Six minutes into the flight the plane crashed in the bay killing Todd. Brittany was taken to the local hospital where she stayed for several days.

Two weeks later Todd's funeral was well attended, and the National Transportation Board of Safety (NTBS) ruled the crash as pilot error, while encountering altitude winds heard during the climb. Brittany told the NTBS investigators she could not recall anything about the crash, just that she was looking forward to spending the day shopping and having lunch with Todd. Brittany has been medically cleared and scheduled to return to work. She has stopped by to talk with you.



BRITTANY'S STATEMENT

"Hey boss, I'm cleared to return to work, and I will be back in two days on the night shift. I have a lot to sort out and I have always had a good working relationship with you, and I value your opinion. You gave me sound advice when I was dealing with Todd and our breakups. So, I'm positive I can share this with you in a confidential manner. No one knows what I'm about to tell you.

Todd killed himself and he tried to kill me in that plane crash. As we climbed out over the bay Todd took my hand, looked directly in my eyes, and said we will always be together and then placed the plane into a nose dive towards the water. He removed his seat belt and shoulder harness and when we hit the water, he went through the windshield headfirst.

Everyone thinks this was a tragic accident a pilot error. His parents are planning a memorial to celebrate his life...And while I was in the hospital, I learned I am pregnant, about five weeks along. That's about the time Todd and I were separated, and I was romantically involved with another patrol officer on my shift. After the funeral, Todd's father told me that four months ago when Todd and I were making our wedding plans, Todd made me his beneficiary on his grandfather's trust, the worth is substantial at over \$5 million. I am really confused and don't know what to do or who to talk to. What would you suggest I do?"

END OF EXERCISE



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Congratulations!

You have successfully completed the Blue Wall Institute's 8-hour course **Case Studies in Law Enforcement Suicide: Post-Mortem Psychological Examination.**

This course highlighted the issue of law enforcement suicide and provided a step-by-step guide for understanding a death by suicide through a post-mortem examination. The 8-hour course was broken down into 11 individual modules and 8-hours independent study. Each module consisted of pertinent and relevant information needed to complete the psychological autopsy template. Course modules were used to assist learners through data collection, document requests, interpreting information, and developing a better understanding of the Decedent's life in the months, weeks, and days preceding death.

Suicide among our first responder populations is a leading cause of death. However, the lack of appropriate and timely attention is often absent in order to address issues before suicide is the outcome.

To honor those who have died by suicide, we will not allow their deaths to be in vain. Rather, we will use what we know and can uncover to better understand the "why" behind such a death. In doing so, we can assist in future prevention and intervention efforts in a more meaningful way.

A final case study project is required to officially complete the course. The course project is due within 3 months of finishing the two days Online. Once the project is turned in and accepted by course instructors, a certificate of completion will be issued.

Sincerely,

Dr. Olivia Johnson & Dr. Jorey Krawczyn

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