





# Stan Partlow

*Post Retreat Planning  
Living Relentlessly*



# Living Relentlessly

*A Self Care Plan*

## Building Your Bridge for Your Future

First Responders Bridge

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**What do these marine creatures have in common?**



# They Live Relentlessly

- They can not pump water across their gills (Buccal Pumping)
- They use ram ventilation- they must continually swim to breathe
- They do not have swim bladders- if they stop moving they sink
- They continually move forward from the day they are born to the day they die

# First Responders Understand Living Relentlessly



## AT WORK

- Taught this from Day One
- Practice this mindset throughout career
- Keep moving
- Accomplish the mission
- Survive

# Why Can't We Live Relentlessly In Our Personal Lives?

- No one ever taught us how to do that
- Dr Jack- the effort might need to be the same but the mode/method needs to be different
- We have no plan
- We are not prepared to change • We are exhausted
- We do not believe that we deserve to focus that much effort on ourselves
- The trauma we have experienced blocks our way forward

# Objectives for Today's Presentation

- Help you on your journey to Living Relentlessly
- Discussing what your Self Care Plan is for the next 30 days-for both First Responders and Second Responders ("significant others")
- Figuring out where you are in the Process of Change
- Helping you to understand the value of balance in avoiding the exhaustion trap
- Recognizing the difficulties in trying to live your public persona in your personal life
- Understanding the impact of Perfectionism

# What is a Self-Care Plan?

- It's an agreement to begin your healing from trauma.
- It's a 'bridge' between where you are now and where you would like to be in the future with your mental, behavior and spiritual health.
- It uses what you have learned at the retreat to reduce the effects of trauma.
- It's a contract between you and your higher power, your partner, your children, your coworkers, and/or The Bridge.
- It is a plan to help you Live Relentlessly

# Why is a Self-Care Plan Necessary?

- The Impact of Adverse Responder Experiences
  - Critical Incidents
  - Death of a thousand cuts
- A journey turns into a Wandering without a plan
- Wandering is not sustainable
- Living Relentlessly Requires a Plan!!!

# Adverse Responder Experiences

- **A coworker's death or disfigurement**
- **The death, rape, severe neglect or serious injury of a child or teenager**
- **Multiple fatalities or grossly harmed survivors**
- **Attempted or completed suicides**
- **Acts of terrorism**
- **Sexual assault**
- **A responder-involved shooting, serious accident, or abuse**
- **Grotesque injuries such as burned or dismembered bodies**
- **Acts of violence resulting in someone's death**
- **Natural or man-made disasters**
- **Administrative problems in your department that worsened your mental health**
- **Others**

# AREs Can Cause First Responders To...

- Have nightmares
- Feel tired, exhausted much of the time
- Get headaches
- Have difficulty breathing
- Feel anxiety, guilt, panic, anger
- Feel depressed most days
- Become hyper vigilant to your surroundings
- Develop sexual addictions
- Experience flashbacks of a traumatic event
- Become inattentive, distracted
- Withdraw from others
- Abuse drugs, alcohol
- Overeat, undereat
- Become irritable or very angry
- Have recurrent memories of traumatic events
- Hurt those around them

# Second Responders See the Pain and Are Also Impacted by the Trauma

- What behaviors do you observe?
- How has your first responder changed?
- "He's different...he's angry at the time. He stays in the basement and tells me everything is fine.
- I've changed too.
- This is not the person I fell in love with and I don't know how to help him, or myself."

# Impact of AREs on First Responders

The rate of **PTSD** among the general population is 6%

- It is **25-30% among first responders**
- First responders are **10 times more likely to attempt suicide**
- **85% of first responders have experienced symptoms related to mental health issues** such as heightened anxiety and depression
- Past month heavy or **binge drinking** was reported by about half of male firefighters; 9% reported driving under the influence. Over 39% of female firefighters binge drink
- In **2020, 113** police officers died in the line of duty while **116** died by **suicide**. **4** law enforcement officers who responded to the January 6th attack at the Capital have **committed suicide**
- In **2020, 127** Firefighters **committed suicide**

# Impact of AREs on First Responders

The rate of **PTSD** among the general population is 6%. It is 25-30% among first responders. That does not tell the whole story.

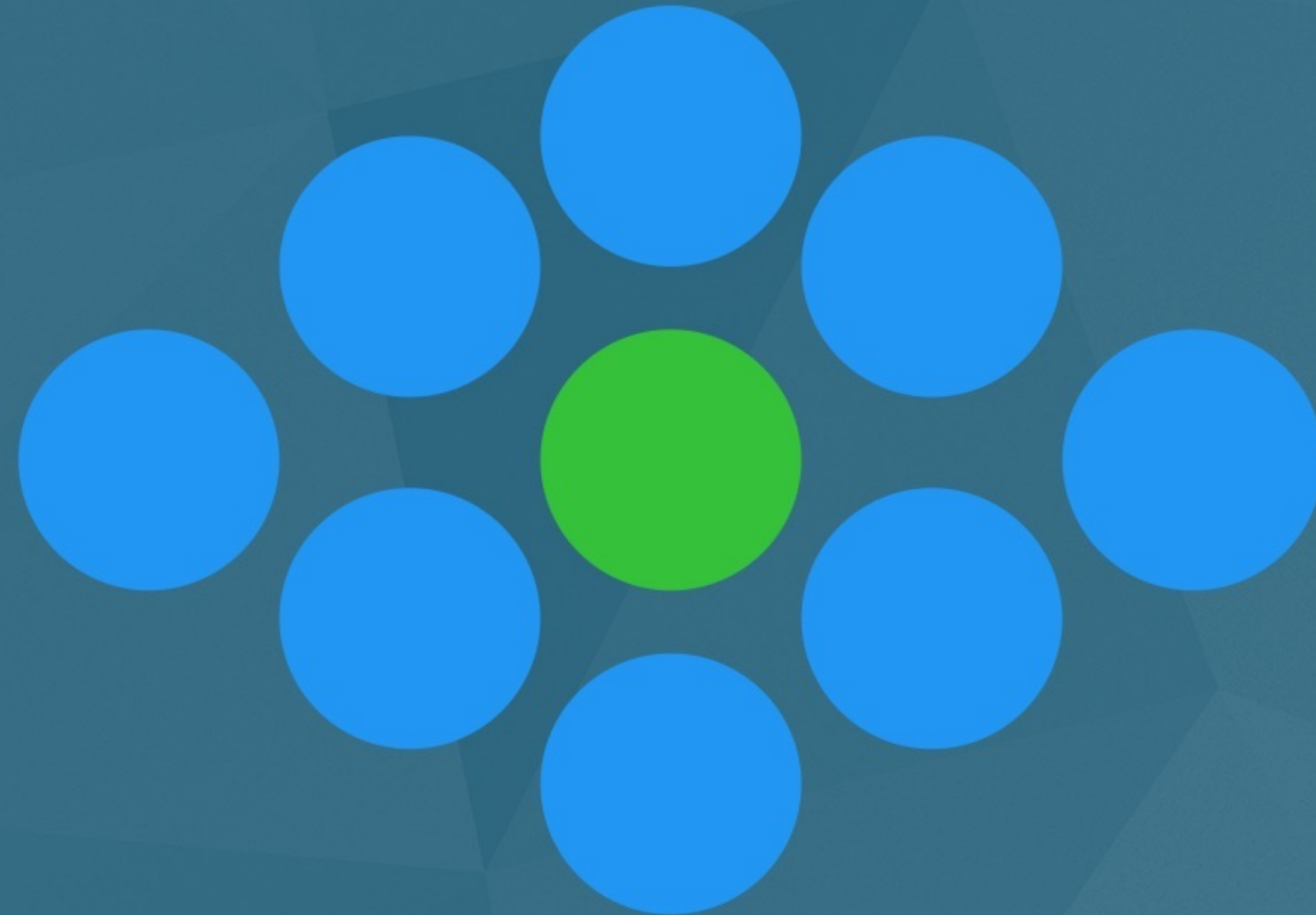
- PTSD Requires a Medical Diagnosis
  - Under reporting
- The other 70% of First Responders suffer from PTS
  - No formal program to address Critical Incidents
  - Death by one thousand cuts

# AREs are the Problem NOT the Frist Responder

- Externalize the Problem:
  - "For the longest time I was angry at him. I was blaming him for how his job changed him. **It is the horrible things he has seen that are the problem.**"
- We do not blame, alienate, or turn away from others when they need help
- We work to strengthen them

# Why is Self Care So Important?

How Many People Rely On You?



# Why is Self Care So Important

- Believe it or not, you and your family deserve a life filled with:
  - Joy
  - Happiness
  - Love
  - Fun
  - Passion
  - Fulfillment
  - ...
- Life is TOO short to be MISERABLE!

# So Why Don't You Believe That?

- Trauma
- Survivor Guilt
- I could have done more
- Imposter syndrome
  - We strive to match our public and private persona
- Perfectionism (56)
  - Perfectionism is not the same thing as doing your best
  - Perfectionism is not self improvement
  - We need to live as our authentic self
  - The Gifts of Imperfection - Let go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are - Your Guide to a Wholehearted Life
  - Brene' Brown, Ph.D., L.M.S.W.

**How many things do these majestic animals focus on at one time?**



# What happens in the absence of living relentlessly?



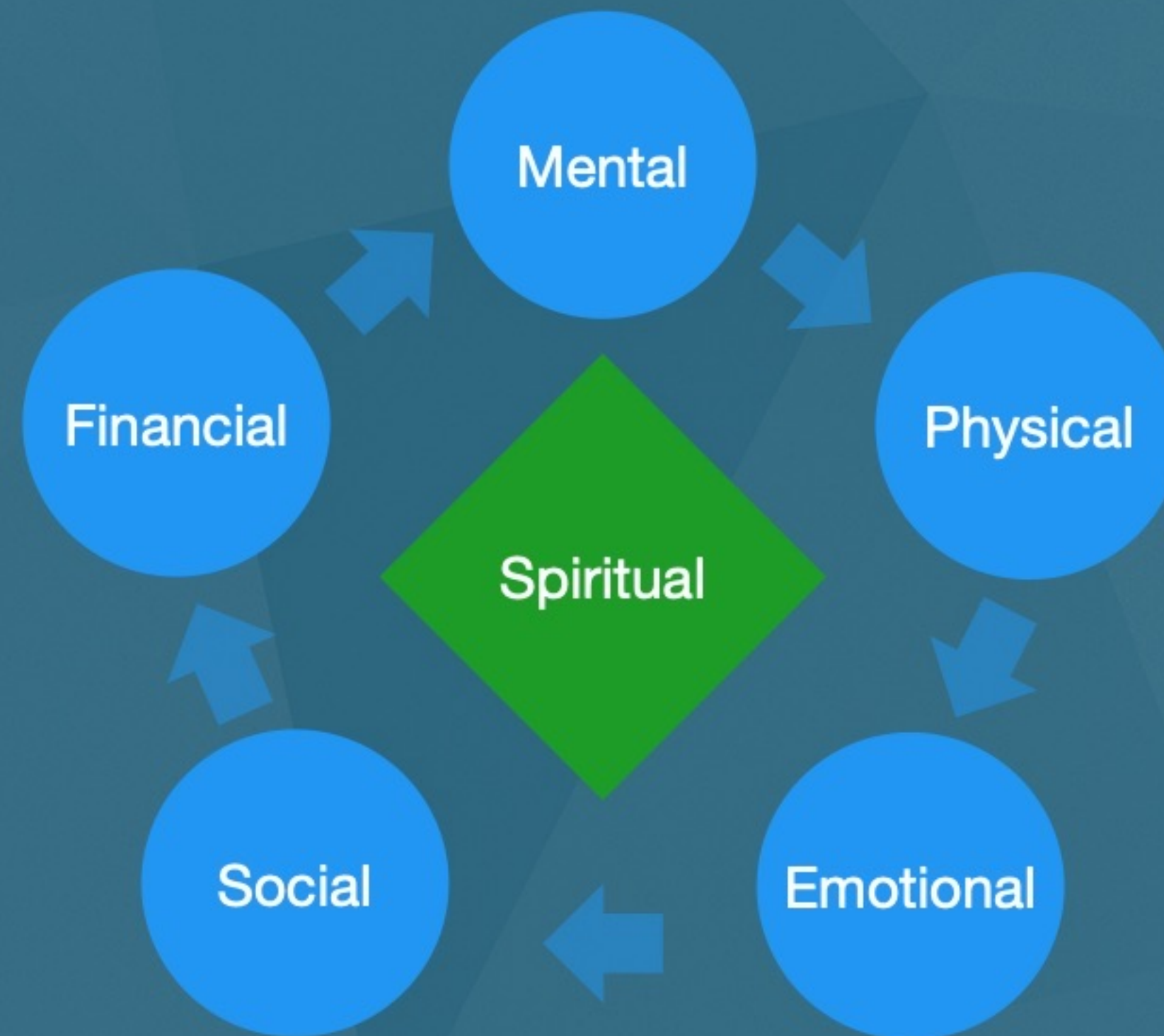
## Our Marine Friends

- They stop breathing
- They die
- They sink to the bottom of the ocean

## Us

- No joy in our lives
- fractured relationships
- Destructive behavior
- Fail to thrive in the job that you love
- Health issues
- You fill in the blank \_\_\_\_\_

# Six Areas of Wellness



# Evaluate yourself and Have your significant other evaluate you

	MENTAL	EMOTIONAL	PHYSICAL	SPIRITUAL	SOCIAL	FINANCIAL
10						
9						
8						
7						
6						
5						
4						
3						
2						
1						

**6 AREAS OF WELLNESS**



# Sample Evaluation

## Where do you put your efforts?



# Sample Evaluation

## Where do you put your efforts?



### Reality

- Pick 2-3
- Likely can't be successful with more
- All are related but some more than others
- Select the areas where you create the most impact
- Re-Evaluate your scores on a routine basis

# What might your goals for your self care plan look like?

- Not to be so isolated, angry
- Learn about resources available and access them
- Being more supportive of my partner
- Increase awareness of the stress that First Responders experience
- Become a better care giver for myself
- “Get out of the hole”
- Help my First Responder by being there for him/her

**Do you see challenges?**

# Stages of Change

- Precontemplation: I'm just not going to do it
- Contemplation: I may just do it
- Preparation: I'm getting ready to just doing it
- Action: I'm just doing it

When people change, they do so by moving through these stages. Change is a process. There are six stages, but we will only focus on these four

It's important for you to identify which stage you're at so that you can make a self care plan that works. The most effective self-care plans address where you are in this stage of change.

# Precontemplation

- First responders in this stage have **no intent to take any action on self-care. They don't see a need to change, at least yet. You are not ready for a change because you haven't acknowledged there is a problem**
- "I am only here because she told me I had to go."
- People in this stage will typically rebel if they feel forced to change
- They may want to self-care, but do not intend to change
- I'm just not going to do it

# Contemplation

- The first responder is considering both the pros and cons of self-care
- "Do I get help or not?"
- The pros of adopting self-care strategies are outweighing the cons
- The first responder however, often remains ambivalent and continues to question the need to change his/her behavior.
- It may only take one more 'pro' to tip the scales and help the first responder move to the next stage.
- I may just do it

# Preparation

- The first responder in this stage has **made a commitment to begin self-care and will do so in the next 30 days**
- "Changing my behavior has more positives than negatives."
- He/she is taking real steps to begin acting on healing
- The first responder is **identifying what resources are needed to get help and make a change**
- I'm getting ready to just doing it

# Action

- In this stage, **self-care has started**
- The first responder is beginning to take **real steps towards better psychological, physical and spiritual health**
- You are working on being less self-destructive
- **Maintenance of self-care is key** so first responders need encouragement and support
- **Anticipate relapse - it will happen**, so plan for it
- I'm Living Relentlessly!!!!

# Sample Evaluation

## Where do you put your Efforts?



# Root Cause Analysis

- You can not successfully change your behavior if you don't understand what thinking causes the behavior
- Put another way- You need to identify the problem that you are trying to solve
- I want to stop yelling at my kids
  - Why do you yell at your kids?
  - What thinking drives that behavior?
- Use the 7 Why technique
  - Keep asking why until you get to the thinking that causes the behavior
- Root Cause Analysis for PTSD or Depression requires Clinical Assistance
  - Don't self diagnose with an internet survey!

# The New Years Eve Problem

"Why do many attempts to change behavior fail?"

- Plans will fail if you don't take into account your **readiness to change**
- Human beings have a bias against change because they **believe that they can not change**
  - The reality is that **change is constant**
  - You began changing in the precontemplation stage
  - You changed when you registered for this retreat
  - You changed when you walked through the door on Friday night
  - You did not use a **Root Cause Analysis approach**
- You **did not create SMART Goals**
- **Change is HARD**
- Change requires **Relentless Effort**

# 26.2 Miles

- How do you run a **Marathon**?
  - **One Mile at a time**
  - Track your **Splits**
  - Give your self some grace
- How do you Lose Weight?
  - **One Pound at a time**
  - Track your **progress**
  - Give your self some **grace**
- Each **new day is an opportunity** to succeed
- Each new day is an opportunity to **learn from yesterday** but give yourself **grace** if you did not succeed
  - Brene' Brown - Perfectionism is not doing your best
  - Brene' Brown - Perfectionism is not self improvement

# Plant a Tree to Form a New Habit



- Habits are agnostic
  - Neither Good or Bad
  - They signal consistent behavior
- Replace habits that negatively affect your life with something positive
- If you fail to find a replacement the negative behavior will return to fill the void
- Life is Like the Martial Arts
  - Find the Balance!

# Precontemplation Phase: What can you do?

- **Second Responders: don't try to force someone to take care of himself/herself**
- **First Responder, get as much information as you can so you can make an informed decision to change PTS, PTSD, depression, stress, what AREs do to you over time**
- **Understand how your Trauma is affecting people in your world**
- **Compare how you were when you started your career, with what you've become**
- **Seek input from others you trust, such as your significant other, children, a coworker**
- **Write about what could be different if you took steps to take care of yourself**
- **Think about other First Responders who were hurting... what happened to them?**

# Contemplation Phase: What can you do?

- The first responder should consider all of the benefits and risks, the pros and cons, that are associated with self-care.
- **Make a list of the pros and cons of changing**
  - **Get help creating that list** from someone you trust. Ask your partner to add to the list from their point of view.
  - **Talk to a professional** about what you think would have to happen to lead to change.
- **Challenge the 'cons' on the list...one by one**

# List of Pros and Cons for Starting Self-Care

## Pros

- I would learn more about what is bothering me and why I am so angry
- If I got self-care, I could help other first responders someday.
- I could stop having nightmares
- My drinking could decrease or stop
- My marriage could improve
- My kids wouldn't fear me
- I wouldn't hate myself and feel guilty so much

## Cons

- I would be embarrassed to go and talk to someone about what I've experienced
- I could get known as "Crazy Chris"
- A therapist probably wouldn't understand even if I shared
- I would be afraid of failing if I started to make a change in myself
- I don't know of any help where I live

# Preparation Phase: What can you do?

- **View past attempts to self-care as not failures but you are a "work in progress"**
- **Use your inner strengths** that are inherent in all first responders to your advantage: problem solver, being patient, being solution focused, being a hard worker, etc.
- Make your commitment to take care of yourself 'public' to your **Accountability Partners**
- **Second Responders can help** by helping remove barriers (excuses)
- Get contact information for **professionals, support groups or peers**
- **Root Cause Analysis**
- **WOOP**
- **SMART Goals**

# WOOOP

WISH

OPPORTUNITY

OBSTACLES

PLAN

# WOOP

## WISH

What do you  
Want Very High Level

## OPPORTUNITY

Most Important Step  
Be as specific as possible

## OBSTACLES

Use your Root Cause Analysis  
Think of other things that get in your way

## PLAN

SMART Goals  
Plan-Do-Check-Act

# SMART Goal

- Specific - I want to determine if I have PTSD
- Measurable - I will ensure that a licensed clinician determines that diagnosis
- Attainable - I will attend the required sessions to allow for the diagnostic process
- Relevant - Understanding if I have PTSD will inform treatment options to change undesirable behavior
- Time-Based - I will work with my licensed clinician to determine the appropriate time frame for a diagnosis
  
- You may need to create multiple SMART Goals for one Issue
  - You want to stop drinking
    - Attend AA
    - Partner Support
    - Social Settings

# SMART Goal

- **Specific** - I want to more effectively communicate with my significant other
- **Measurable** - My significant other and I will enroll in couples counseling to determine our current communication approach and our desired end state
- **Attainable** - I will attend the required sessions and do the homework to achieve the desired results
- **Relevant** - Improving communication with my significant other will reduce stress in our relationship and offer us the ability to further support each other during difficulties experienced on the job or in our personal lives
- **Time-Based** - My significant other and I will work with the couples therapist to determine the timeline to achieve our desired end results

# SMART Goal

- **Specific** - I want to stop drinking
- **Measurable** - I will base my success on whether or not I consumed alcohol on a given day
- **Attainable** - I will attend AA and follow the recommend 12 step program
- **Relevant** - I recognize that my drinking puts a great deal of stress on my marriage and children. I have engaged in risky behavior that could cost me my job.
- **Time-Based** - I will refrain from drinking one day or one hour at a time. I recognize that this is a life long commitment

# SMART Goal

- **Specific** - I want to pay off my credit card debt
- **Measurable** - I will base my success on whether I can realize an overall reduction of credit card debt of \$100 per month
- **Attainable** - My spouse and I will commit to refrain from further credit card charges unless there is an emergency that involves the health or safety of our family. We will commit to use the funds that we save from no new charges to pay down each credit card beyond the minimum required payment. We will explore consolidating debt and may decide to consult a debt relief professional.
- **Relevant** - I recognize that our financial situation creates a great deal of stress that results in angry outbursts. The current financial situation causes me to work extensive overtime and special duty leaving me little time for self care, physical fitness and time with my family.
- **Time-Based** - We will this approach until we have reduced our debt by 90%

# **Action Phase: What can you do**

- **Celebrate Success!!!!**
- **Expect relapse to happen. Discuss how you will get back on track**
- **Give yourself some Grace**
  - **Remember the Perfectionism Trap**
- **Encourage significant others to attend sessions with you**
- **Work with your significant other to make a record of your progress**

# What to do **WHEN** You Relapse

## 4 Step Process to Emotional Clearing (The Greater You)

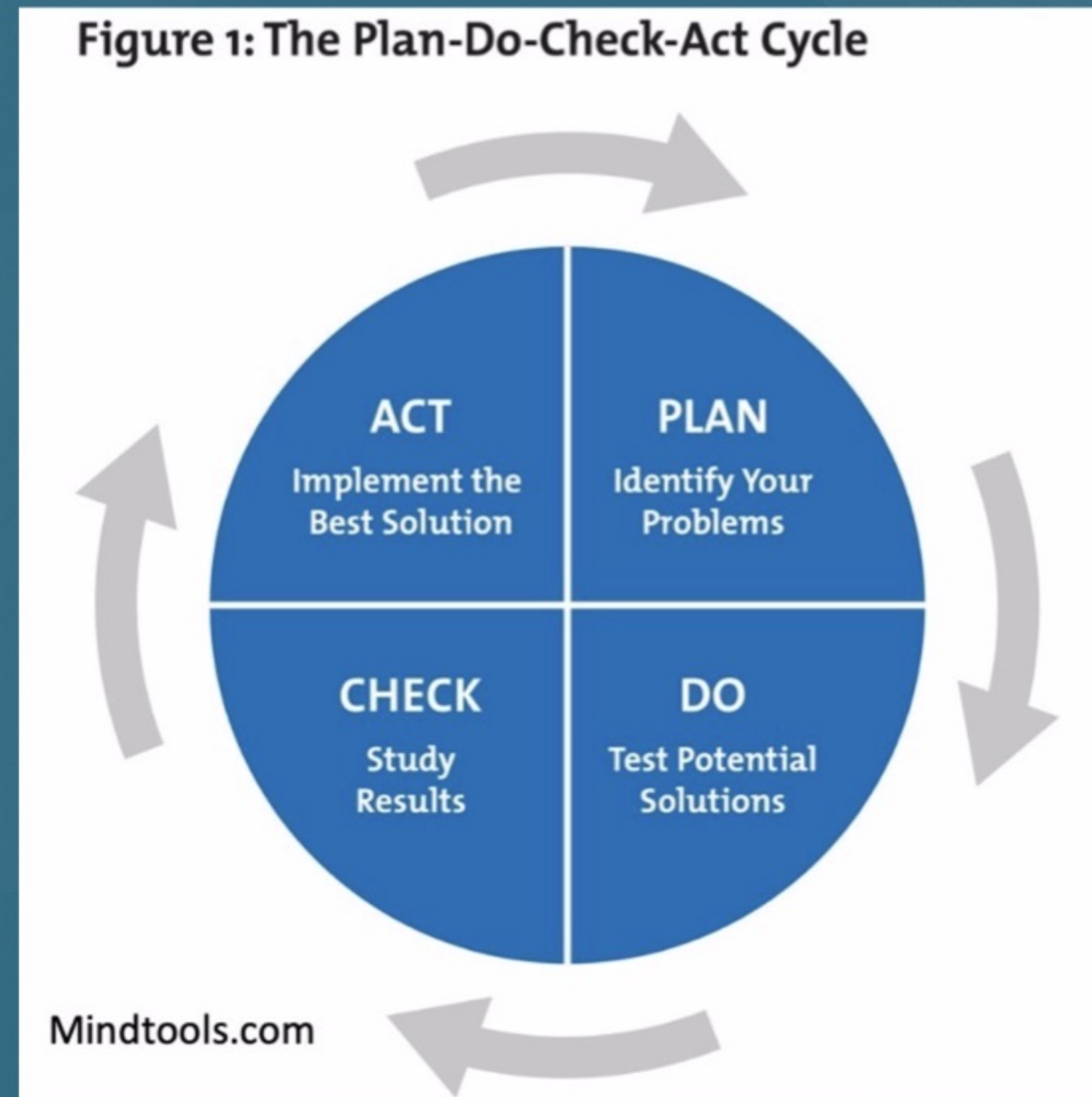
- Identify the Feeling
- Honor it and give yourself permission to feel
- Discern and Learn
- Let It Go

### Guiding Principles

- You must be accountable for your own feelings
- You must own your feelings
- Does your feeling come from Victim thinking?
- A bad decision does not mean you are a bad person
- Tomorrow is another opportunity for success!!!
- Give yourself GRACE

# PLAN - DO - CHECK - ACT

## Continuous Process Improvement



# The Vowel Check

- Intention Setting Reminder
  - Brene' Brown- The Gifts of Imperfection page 74
- A - Have I been Abstinent Today?
- E - Have I Exercised Today?
- I - What Have I Done for Myself Today?
- O - What Have I Done for Others Today?
- U - Am I Holding on to Unexpressed Emotions Today?
- Y - Yeah! What is Something Good That Happened Today?

- You have taken a huge step on your journey to Living Relentlessly
  - Attack the journey with Relentless Effort
  - Continue to ask for help and support
    - EMDR
    - Peer Support
    - Professional Support
    - Coaching
- You can offer Support to Others
  - You must put your oxygen mask on first
  - Training
  - Clinician clearance
- You have been given a gift this weekend
  - Would you offer this gift to a co-worker or another brother or sister First Responder?
  - This weekend costs about \$600 per person
  - The ultimate goal of the First Responders Bridge is to expand the Retreats and offer Follow up Sessions
- Would you be an Ambassador for the Program with fellow First Responders?
  - Don't allow your Brothers and Sisters to suffer in silence
  - Your recommendation about this program can change their lives

# Albert Einstein

- The Measure of Intelligence is the Ability to Change
- The True Measure of a Man is His Ability to Subjugate His Own Ego

# Living Relentlessly

- Keep moving forward
- Keep believing that you, your family and those that count on you are worth your Relentless Effort
- Find the areas you need to focus on
- Develop a plan
- Execute the plan
- Fight perfectionism
- Give yourself Grace
- As you begin to plant and grow those positive habits look for other areas to focus on
- Keep MOVING FORWARD

# The Man in the Arena

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.

Excerpt from the speech "Citizenship in a Republic" Given by Theodore Roosevelt  
Sorbonne, Paris, France April 23, 1910

