



The Impact of Police Retirement: Transitional Considerations

The Family Therapist Role in Facilitating Constructive Change

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BADGE OF LIFE

POLICE RETIREMENT



PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

- *Concepts of Retirement*
- *Phases of Retirement*
- *Effects of Police Retirement*
- *Decision to Retire*
- *Inherent Dangers of Police Work*
- *Stress & Health Management in Retirement*
- *PTSD*
- *Family Intervention*



Concepts of Retirement

Retirement (What Most Think Of)

- *Old Age*
- *Withdrawal from Workforce*
- *Pensions*
- *Leisure Time*

***"You Mean Death with Benefits?"
(Movie: Righteous Kill.....Al Pacino)***

Police Officers (Primary Concerns):

- **Meeting financial obligations past retirement**

QUESTION:

"Are police officers actually retired when they leave the force, or are they simply in transitions from one occupation to another?"

Police Officers (Perception of Retirement):

- *Not to retire; but,*
- *To obtain a pension and find another job*

"True retirement is not economically feasible until at least the age of 55."

Atchley, 1976

Retirement as an Event (Focuses on):

- *Actual point of separation*

Retiring Police Officers (What Ends):

- *Strong sense of camaraderie*
- *Teamwork concept of survival*

Love-Hate Relationship (With Job):

- *Difficult to stay beyond retirement eligibility years, and even more difficult to leave.*

Retirement Rituals:

- ***Retirement Party (Marks Separation)***
- ***Includes:***
 - *"Roast"-Type Humor*
 - *Retiree berated in a friendly way*
 - *Past exploits reviewed w/peers*

The humor is indicative that the retirement ceremony is not as happy an occasion as it appears."

Symbolism of Organization:

- **PBA**
- **FOP**

Represents emotional support at time of separation (False sense of attachment with organization, guarantee central contact and affiliation with police acquaintances).

Retirement (Symbolism of Law Enforcement):

- ***Plaques
(Badge, Rank, Years of Service)***
- ***Firearm Presented***
- ***Hat***
- ***Certificates/Awards***
- ***Letter from Chief of Police***

Police Retirement Party (View of Retirement):

- *Similar in structure to a "wake."*
- *Gathering to "say goodbye."*

Importance of Retirement Ritual:

- *Avoidance of Psychological Vagueness*
- *Offers clear definition of "being retired."*

Difficult Aspect of Retirement:

- ***Turning in of:***
 - ***Badge/Shield***
 - ***Firearms***

Badge/Firearm (Represent):

- ***Symbolic essence of Police
Role/Function***

***Police retirement is filled with
symbols which represent the job and
its traditions***

Retirement (Why So Much Hype?):

- ***Primary Reason:***
 - ***Preparation to become a civilian***
 - ***Loss of Police Power***
 - ***Loss of Perceived Cohesiveness***
 - ***No Longer Part of a Fraternity***

Retired Officer (What is Wanted Most):

- *Family*
- *Close Knit Affiliation*

Police Retirement (What it Represents):

- ***The ending of a process that spans a career.***

Retirement marks the beginning of leaving the job and coming to terms with the fact that eventually all things must end.

Retirement Process: (Taught on the First Day of Hire):

- ***Retirement Criteria***
- ***Years of Service Necessary***
- ***Age of Retirement***

Retirement Role (Atcheley's Process Theory):

- *Formulation of new role with society ("Real World").*

Retirement (What Most Officers Cited):

- *Missing the job*
- *Interactions with people*

Retirement (Interaction Among Police):

- ***Sharing of "old times" in social settings (Formal and Non-Formal)***
- ***"War Stories"***

Despite this, there is a genuine need to keep contacts alive and well. Time may modify interactions with "old friends", but not loyalty to police work.



Phases of Retirement

Phases of Retirement (How Viewed):

- *Retirement seen more of as a process than a single life event (developing over the life span of a retired officer).*

Atchley's Process Theory (Phases of Retirement):

- *Pre-Retirement Phase*
- *Honeymoon Phase*
- *Disenchantment Phase*
- *Reorientation Phase*

Pre-Retirement Phase (What is Expected):

- *Reaction to the notion and eligibility of retirement*
- *Seen as a positive event
(i.e., Benefits)*
- *15+ years of service*
- *The sense of "self" in question*
- *"Old Timer" – New Label*

Pre-Retirement Phase (Practical Considerations):

- ***Finding a new career***
- ***Emphasis: Taking care of family***
- ***New Role: No longer a "Cop"***
- ***Relaxation notions – Unrealistic***
 - *i.e. Golfing, Fishing*
- ***Finances – Considerations***
 - *i.e., Inflation/Medical/Insurance*

Honeymoon Phase

- *The realities of retirement have not set in yet*
- *A sense of the "great reward" being here*
- *Relief from responsibilities of Police Work*
- *Short in duration*

NOTE:

"Police Officers tend to romanticized notions of retirement (not in the usual sense). Retirement is seen as a utopia, where there are no problems to be expected.

Disenchantment Phase:

- ***Re-Orientation – Critical Time***
- ***Reintegration of stability – “Reality Check”***
- ***Disappointments***
- ***Alcohol/Suicide Ideation***
- ***Psychological/Physical consequences***
- ***Support from Family/Friends needed***

Reorientation Phase:

- ***Acceptance***
- ***Adjustment to circumstances***
- ***Pulling "oneself" together***
- ***Realistic view of retirement***
- ***Reality – Its over – No Longer a "Cop"***

"A mans got to know his limitation"

Clint Eastwood

Violanti, 1992

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POLICE OFFICER

WARNING: A LIFESTYLE CHANGE





Effects of Police Retirement

Police Retirement (Effects):

- *Physical*
- *Psychological*
- *Social Status*

Pre-Retirement Predictors (Include):

- *Low self esteem*
- *Poor planning*
- *Practical insecurity*
- *Bad health*

Fritz, Kluge, Ossawa and Jones, 1989

Adaption to Retirement (Success / Failures):

- ***Childhood perceptions of self***
- ***Social skills***
- ***Sense of purpose***
- ***Retirement phase of development
(what stage one is in)***

Mattilla, Joukamaa and Salokangs, 1988

Stress and Retirement (What Increases):

- ***Poor health***
- ***Irrational beliefs about aging***
- ***Stressful life events***
- ***Poor occupational status***

Increase in psychological distress and depression is evident here.

Jaakobonski, 1985

Alcoholism (Considerations):

- ***May become a dysfunctional means of coping with realities of retirement***
- ***Increase awareness of faulty coping skills in place***

There is a strong correlation between post retirement and the abuse of alcohol.

Kros, 1975; Violanti, 1986, Brody, 1981

Retirement (Dilemma for Officer):

- ***Age considerations –Out of synchronization with society***
- ***Re-entry into job market***

At a time when most careers are in their prime, the police officer may be retiring.

McNeil, Lecca and Wright, 1983

Re-Entry Into Job Market (Can Lead To):

- ***Significant loss of direction***
- ***Loss in prestige in former role of a "Cop" (Authority figure)***
- ***Loss of self-esteem***
- ***Familiar way of life is gone***
- ***Security in question***
- ***"Off Balance"***

Role Confusion:

- ***Immediately following early retirement***
- ***Status change – From officer to civilian***
- ***Confusion of civilian role***

McNeal and Griffin, 1967

Police Role Defined (Historical Perspective):

- ***Military-like orientation/structure***
- ***Conservative***
- ***Traditional (Orientation)***
- ***Guided by written guidelines/operations/directives***
- ***Rank ("Chain-of-Command") driven***
- ***Role is operationally defined***
- ***"Black or White"***

McNeal et al, 1967

Retiring Officer (Loss of Structure):

- *Role occupancy is blurred*
- *The need to seek structure in life*

Retirement Survival Skills (What is Needed):

- *Flexibility*
- *Developing long-range plans*
- *Acceptance that stress in post-retirement is a factor*
- *Independence from work as a means of achieving satisfaction*
- *Reliance on inner resources*
- *Social contact*

Darnley, 1975, Atchley, 1976, Liuson, 1962

Personality Typology (Retiree):

- ***Reorganizer***
 - *Substitutes new activity for old one*
- ***Holding-On***
 - *Does not accept aging well or retirement*
 - *Wants to work indefinitely*
- ***Rocking Chair***
 - *Disengages from life*
- ***Dissatisfied***
 - *Low level of anxiety/activity*

Wellbeing Study of Retiree (Concluded):

- *Officer with low self-esteem prior to retirement, consistent low esteem after retirement*
- *Officer who retire with a realistic plan of retirement – do better*
- *In-Tack social skills lead to a better life satisfaction level*

NOTE:

Self-esteem appeared to be much more prevalent for the younger officers, but is considerably lower for older officer considering retirement.

Categories of Retirees:

- ***Voluntary – Early Age***
- ***Voluntary – Normal Age***
- ***Health Retirement***
- ***Mandatory Retirement***

NOTE:

Finance and health are important considerations in the decision to retire or not.

Rank Consideration (Of Retiree):

- *Plays a part in adaption to retirement*
- *Retiring from a higher rank has much more consequences for retiree than street cop does.*

Adjustment to Retirement (What is Needed):

- *Self-direction*
- *Intellectual flexibility*
- *Sociability*

Atchley, 1976

Retirement (Feeling of Loss):

- *Few can retire and not feel a sense of loss*
- *Acceptance of loss – Crucial to retiree's well-being*
- *Adjustment away from police work is necessary*
- *Emotional energy should be re-invested in new life*

NOTE:

Denying feelings of loss is a common defensive mechanism for the police officer (i.e., "I'm glad it's over" or "It wasn't important to me anyway") that can lead to long-term psychological dysfunction.

Retirement (Adjustment to Loss):

- *Takes time*
- *Necessitates setting new goals/direction*
- *Accepting loss signals the end of grief*

The adjustment to the loss is crucial to a healthy post retirement

Refusing to Accept Loss (Can Lead To):

- *Anxiety*
- *Withdrawal*
- *Depression*
- *Alcoholism*
- *Drug Abuse*
- *Suicide Ideation*

Family (Of Retiree):

- ***Must also adapt***
- ***Support integral during transitional period for retiree***

Relationship (Of Retiree to Family):

- ***Reduction in retiree's family status***
- ***Distressing to retiree***

Marital Satisfaction (By Retiree):

- ***Seen as no longer contributing to family***
- ***Lifestyle changes***
- ***Marital quality is altered***

The family as a unit experiences the effects of retirement as well

Returning to Work (For The Retiree):

- *Economic needs become strained*
- *Role reversal/role conflict*
- *Emotional disruption of family*
- *Decrease in self-esteem (Retiree)*
- *Family disruption*
- *Increase in family tension*

NOTE:

The police occupation has long been cited as a job where the need for control dominates. Not being in control can lead to feelings of invulnerability.

Women (Who Retiree):

- ***No evidence of feelings of vulnerability – Post retirement***
- ***Not negatively affected as much as men***
- ***Stress in family minimal***

Retiree (Unmarried):

- *Self-esteem and levels of importance tied to job*
- *Adjustment to post-retirement is difficult*

Retiree (Disabled):

- ***Difficulty in family adjustment***
- ***May not be able to find or sustain work***
- ***Dependent on family daily living***
- ***The family is thrown “off balance”
(Retiree’s disability)***

Practical Family Matters (For Retiree):

- ***Returning to work (Lower salary)***
- ***Diminished status***
- ***Children in college***
- ***Mortgage***
- ***Medical***
- ***Life insurance cost***

Stress and Physical Illness (Factors Related):

- ***Correlation between stressful change and illness***
- ***Control over retirement (Mandatory or Voluntary)***
- ***Timing of it's occurrence***
- ***Stage/Phase of retirement***

"Timing is everything"

Early Retirement (Problem With):

- *Out of synchronization with the rest of society*

Retirement (During Recessional Period):

- ***May cause more stress than in normal economic times***
- ***Increase pressures***
- ***Resistance to retirement***
- ***Increased mortality rate (2 to 5 years)***

Post Retirement (Decrease Activity):

- ***Leads to:***
 - ***Diminished interactions***
 - ***Death comes sooner***
 - ***Decline in health***

Retiree's who left at a normal age did not show an increase risk in mortality

Retiree's (Over 60 Years of Age):

- ***Higher risk of cardiac failure***
- ***2x times more prevalent than the general population***

Mortality Rate (For Retiree):

- *High risk to certain diseases*
- *Heart Disease*
- *Diabetes*
- *Suicide (3x time higher – 45-54 yrs)*
- *Cancer of the colon/liver*
- *Average Death: 64.3 years-of-age
(General Pop. 76 years-of-age)*
- *12 years sooner than general pop.*

Suicidal Ideation (Risk Factors):

- *Highest during time just prior to retirement considerations*
- *Psychological issues likely to occur (Once decision to retire made)*

NOTE:

Police officers who accept the inevitability of retirement and prepare for it will fare out better than others who don't.

A staircase with red steps leading up to a dark red background. The steps are illuminated from above, creating a bright glow on the top surface of each step. The background is a solid dark red color.

The Decision to Retire

Retirement Decision: (Significance):

- *A career development process and turning point in changes in attitude*

Developmental Theory (Of Retirement):

- ***Marks the passage of a series of life and career stages of changes***
- ***Mid-life transitional period
(40 – 45 years-of-age)***
- ***Major transitional role***
- ***Early adulthood to middle-age adulthood***

Questions Asked (By Retiree):

- *What do I want to do with the rest of my life?*
- *Who am I?*
- *Where am I going?*
- *What changes do I need to make?*
- *What will I leave behind (legacy)?*

Police Officer (Two Types):

- **Active**
 - *Higher than normal job satisfaction*
- **Inactive**
 - *Waiting group*
 - *Lost interest in their job*
 - *Waiting for retirement*

Transitional patterns are different in police work than in other occupations.

Middle-Age Police Officers (Retiree):

- *Retirement identity crisis*
- *Cynical attitude*
- *Complains often*
- *Dislikes their work*
- *Fells trapped*

NOTE:

The key to successful retirement is diversity in interest and social interaction outside of police work

Retirement: Doucet Study (Reasons):

- ***21% Ready for change***
- ***11% Tired of police work***
- ***30% Disabilities***
- ***16% Job opportunities***
- ***5% Started their own business***
- ***2% Pressures from administration***
- ***1% Forced to leave***
- ***14% No Specific reason***

Mid-Career Retirement (Dilemma):

- *Reported difficulty with work*
- *Difficulty with decision to retire*

"Did you ever have the feeling that you wanted to go, but still had the feeling that you wanted to stay"

“Wait-and-See” Attitude (Towards Retirement):

- ***Officers who don't decide to retire, experience personal issues that if things do not change at work they are prone to become:***
 - ***Bitter***
 - ***Cynical***
 - ***Disenchanted with mid-career if still a patrol officer***

Harpaz's Typology (Perspective of Retiree):

- ***Category 1***
 - ***Work central to their lives***
 - ***Oriented internally***
 - ***Intrinsic rewards of work valued
(i.e., autonomy, job variety, etc.)***
 - ***Delays retirement***
 - ***Job still interesting***
 - ***Being needed is important***
 - ***Promotion important***

Harpaz's Typology (Perspective of Retiree):

- **Category 2**
 - ***Work is central***
 - ***Oriented toward extrinsic values***
 - ***Financially motivated – “Money Matters”***
 - ***Decision to retire is easy for them***
 - ***Pension plan important***
 - ***Tendency to retire early***
 - ***Pension without having to work -
Appealing***
 - ***Usually a patrol officer***

Harpaz's Typology (Perspective of Retiree):

- ***Category 3***
 - ***Work not central to their lives***
 - ***Low importance to intrinsic values***
 - ***Will retire as soon as they can***
 - ***Do not value much of anything***
 - ***Money and work not a motivating factor***
 - ***Loyalty to organization minimal***

Turning Point (On The Decision to Retire):

- **Age**
- **Removal of barriers**
- **Blocked promotions or special assignment availability**
(80% do not get promoted)
- **Stagnation in police work**
(98% routine, 2% Terror)
- **Traumatic incidents**
- **Attitudes towards retirement**

NOTE:

Police officers tend to psychologically "deaden" after approximately 12 to 15 years of service on the job.

Stagnation is synonymous with "burnout".

Inherent Dangers of Police Work

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COCAINE COWBOYS



NOTE:

Although by nature, police work is routine, it has its moments of sheer terror and fear.

What a Police Officer Witnesses (In The Course of Their Career):

- ***Accidents (Minor and Fatalities)***
- ***Child abuse***
- ***Life/Death situations***
- ***Riots/disasters (Natural/Man-Made)***
- ***Shootings***
- ***Death of fellow officers***
- ***Nightmares/Flashbacks***
- ***PTSD***

Violence Experienced (By Officer):

- ***Violence towards others***
 - ***Rape***
 - ***Violent accidents***
 - ***Murder***
- ***Violence used against another***
 - ***Shootings***
 - ***Physical altercations***
- ***Violence against the officer***
 - ***Shot at/Physically Attacked***

NOTE:

The most disturbing incident for a police officer to witness or experience is to shoot or kill another human being.

Percentage of officer that leave police work after a shooting or witnessing a violent event – 35%

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MIAMI IN THE 80's



Stress and Health Mangement in Retirement

NOTE:

"Every human being experiences stress...complete freedom from stress is death"

Hans Selye, 1975

Stress (Defined):

- *“The body’s reaction to some event in the environment....that arouses an individual’s senses.”*

Stress

(Includes):

- ***Perception of the event***
(Key mediating factor)
- ***Either (Positive or Negative)***
- ***Affects (Both):***
 - ***Nervous system***
 - ***Endocrine system***



NOTE:

"Perception is reality"

Stress

(Three Major Phases):

- ***Immediate***
 - ***Occurs in 2-3 seconds***
 - ***(Usually after the stressful occurrence)***
- ***Intermediate***
 - ***Occurs approximately 20-30 seconds***
 - ***(After the stressful event)***
- ***Long Term***
 - ***May last as long as 10 weeks (After occurrence)***
 - ***Can cause imbalances in body***
 - ***Precipitates physical disease***

Violanti, 1992

Retirement (Viewed by Retiree):

- *Stressful life event*
- *Demand for change*

NOTE:

***"Police officers may leave the job,
but they can never retire"***

Violanti, 1992



PSTD

PTSD

(Retiree's Response):

- *Intense emotional response*
- *Fear of what lies ahead*
- *Helplessness*
- *Significant distress*
- *Impairment at work, home, social functioning*

PTSD

(Clusters of Symptoms):

- *Re-experiencing the event*
- *Exhibit avoidance*
- *Numbing of behavior*
- *Persistent signs of increased physical arousal*

PTSD

(Signs of Re-Experiencing Event):

- *Recurrent, intrusive recollection of event*
- *Recurrent disturbing dreams*
- *Flashbacks (As if happening again)*
- *Intense psychological distress (To sounds and smell, etc.)*
- *Intense nervous system activity (Adrenalin rush)*

PTSD

(Numbing/Avoidant Behaviors):

- *Efforts to avoid thoughts*
- *Avoiding people, places and things*
- *Inability to recall an important aspect of trauma*
- *Diminished interest in activities*
- *Feeling detached/Estranged*
- *Inability to express feelings*
- *Sense of foreshortened future*

PTSD

(Signs of Increased Arousal):

- *Difficulty falling asleep*
- *Irritability/Outburst of anger*
- *Difficulty concentrating*
- *Hypervigilance*
- *Startled response to loud noises*

NOTE:

"Its difficult to predict who will develop PTSD. Research is contradictory and at time inconclusive. Anyone, can become overwhelmed in a catastrophic event. Personality traits, genetic disposition, age, are all factors."

Dr. Bessel van der Kolk

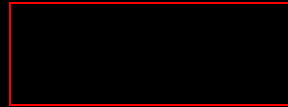
WHAT IS KNOWN:

"...if people live in a supportive environment, if they can talk about what happened...they stand a good chance of recovery."

Dr. Bessel van der Kolk

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POLICE TRAFFIC STOP





Family Intervention

Family Intervention (Therapeutic Goal/Intervention):

- ***Setting realistic goals for family***
- ***Discussing in advance domestic responsibilities***
- ***Planning for the future (Balancing present transitional factors for retiree's with family goals)***
- ***Therapy as an option***
- ***Supportive groups for retiree's and their spouse***

NOTE:

"The basics of a successful relationship are the same regardless of what either spouse does for a living."

Kirschman, 1997

Family Intervention - Cont'd (Therapeutic Goal/Intervention):

- ***Making adjustments to each others lives (In transition)***
- ***Diversification of interest***
- ***“Time Out” to do things completely unrelated to police work***
- ***Develop support systems outside of immediate family***

NOTE:

"Just because one may love their spouse, that doesn't mean that they automatically understand their spouse, or that one always knows how best to support the retiree."

Kirschman, 1997

Family Intervention - Cont'd (Therapeutic Goal/Intervention):

- ***Cops (Retiree's) are by training, critical and analytical
(Use that to your advantage as a therapist - Cognitive Re-Structuring)***
- ***Facilitate an atmosphere that is both supportive and respectful of the retiree and their family***
- ***Utilize the coping skills (resolution techniques) that a retiree brings to therapy***

Kirschman, 1997

NOTE:

"Sometimes family members are just too invested in each other to be helpful, no matter how much both of them would like to be otherwise."

Kirschman, 1997

Family Intervention - Cont'd (Therapeutic Goal/Intervention):

- ***Evaluate the propensity for higher-than-average incidence of domestic violence***

A FINAL THOUGHT:

"I was causally walking down an open mall, and I couldn't help but notice a police officer leaning against his patrol vehicle. I walked past the young officer who was standing in a relaxed posture, with one foot on the bumper of the car. As I got closer, I could see how edgy and apprehensive he really was, how his eyes constantly scanned the crowd. I felt like a spy. He was trying so hard to look cool and brave. No one was suppose to see his fear or concern: not the crowd, not his fellow officers, not even himself. Was I in danger, was there a threat that I didn't see, that he saw? Was it my imagination? I was able to talk to someone close and quickly was able to diffuse any fears. I wondered about the officer, and hoped that he at least had someone to confide in too. I hoped he at least felt secured as well, and I remembered, that I forgot to say Thank You for looking after me; knowing that while he was on watch, I was safe."

Anonymous Client



Thank you!