

Building Resilience – Surviving Secondary Trauma

Secondary trauma is the effect of witnessing and/or hearing about traumatic events; a side effect or result of seeing or hearing about acts of cruelty or suffering.

Secondary trauma is a real and constant danger to first responders and causes permanent and often profound change in workers. Some signs and symptoms include:

- Chronic exhaustion
- Fear
- Illness
- Anger
- Avoidance
- Absenteeism
- Turnover

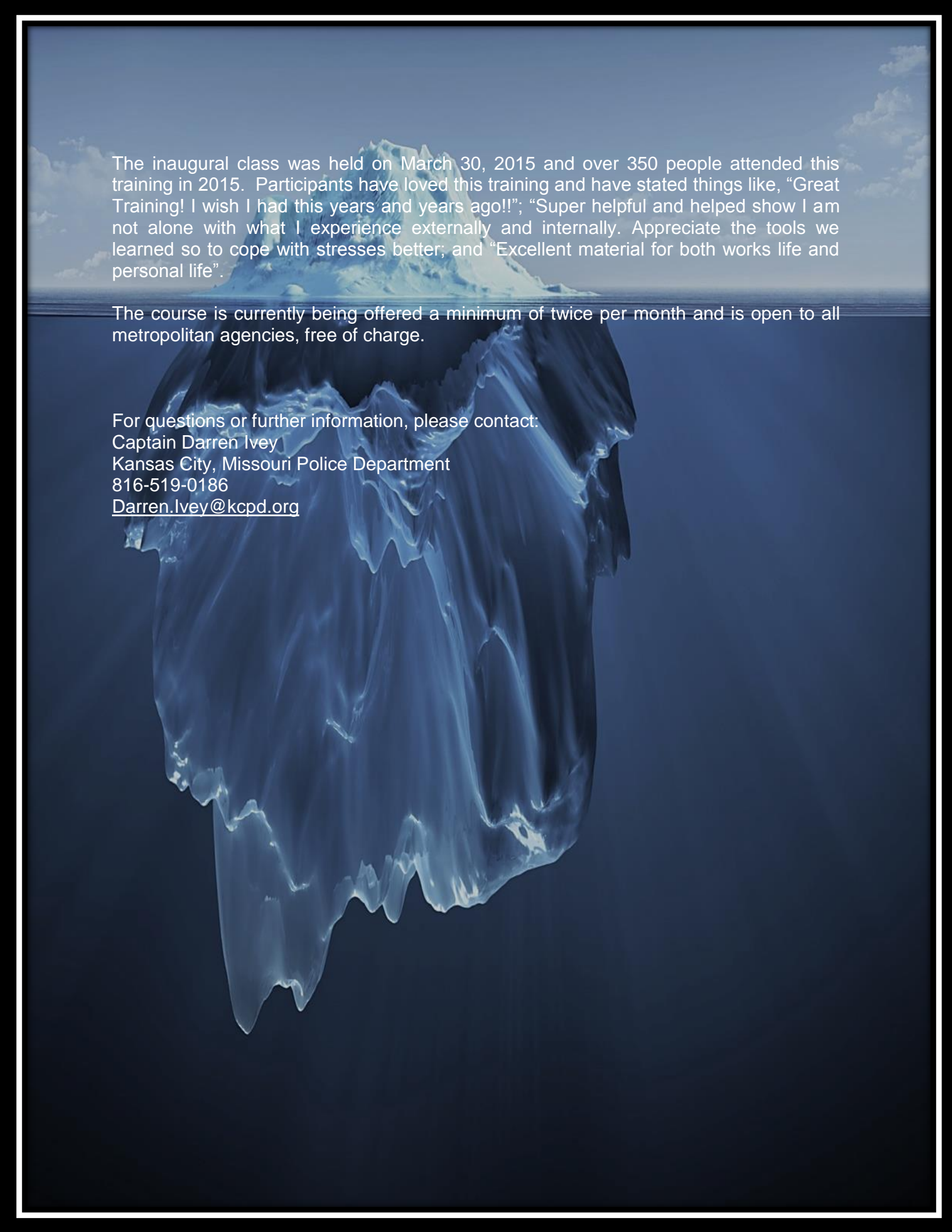
The good news is that if individuals, supervisors and senior staff collaborate, secondary trauma can be prevented and employees can learn and grow from their traumatic experiences. Positively dealing with secondary trauma boosts productivity, health, efficacy, morale and retention.

In September 2015, the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department was approached by Truman Medical Center's Behavioral Health to discuss participation in an innovative approach to building resiliency. This approach was to develop a train-the-trainer program regarding secondary trauma.

The Kansas City, Missouri Police Department was eager to pursue this opportunity and a team of about 12 Department members, led by the Crisis Intervention Team Commander, partnered with Truman Medical Center Behavioral Health's Resilience Incubator, with consultation support from the Secondary Trauma Resource Center, to develop an innovative training experience.

Over the next six (6) months, this inter-disciplinary collaboration developed a four hour training course entitled: "Building Resilience – Surviving Secondary Trauma." This P.O.S.T. certified (4 I/P) course provides important information regarding recognizing stress and secondary trauma; the physical and emotional effects they have on your body, and most importantly, developing easy and effective coping skills to help build resiliency for both self and peer support.

By the completion of training, the participants are able define & identify secondary trauma and risk factors; describe the mind-body connection to secondary trauma in work and life; complete a variety of assessment tools; and practice, reflect upon and develop coping skills to build resiliency for self and peer support. This is accomplished through course content that includes: challenges and barriers members face; alternatives to unhealthy coping; and a review of techniques to more effectively cope with work and life as first responders

A large iceberg floating in the ocean. The tip of the iceberg is visible above the water line, while the vast, jagged, and textured underside is submerged. The background is a clear blue sky with some light clouds. The text is overlaid on the image, with the first paragraph above the water line and the second paragraph below it.

The inaugural class was held on March 30, 2015 and over 350 people attended this training in 2015. Participants have loved this training and have stated things like, “Great Training! I wish I had this years and years ago!!”; “Super helpful and helped show I am not alone with what I experience externally and internally. Appreciate the tools we learned so to cope with stresses better; and “Excellent material for both works life and personal life”.

The course is currently being offered a minimum of twice per month and is open to all metropolitan agencies, free of charge.

For questions or further information, please contact:
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