EMPLOYEE WELLNESS

STEARNS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

TRAUMA ADDS UP

You don't get used to it.

WHY IT MATTERS

Most people face 2–3 traumatic events in a lifetime. First responders face about 188 over a career.

Trauma **accumulates** over a career. Repeated exposure doesn't build immunity. It leads to sleep, anger and memory problems and often spills into family and home life. Chronic stress drives inflammation, and inflammation drives illness.

REVVED UP

Fight/flight · hyperarousal · often felt in the chest

- Racing heart, chest tightness or pain
- High blood pressure
- Irritability and anger
- Can't switch off or sleep

SHUT DOWN

Freeze/flop · hypoarousal · often felt in the gut and limbs

- Numb or disconnected
- Heavy, low energy, brain fog
- Poor digestion
- Cold hands and feet

Chest pain or high blood pressure can be medical. Get them checked, and don't assume it's "just stress."

BRING IT BACK: LEFT–RIGHT REGULATION

1–3 minutes each.

BUTTERFLY HUG

Cross your arms over your chest. Tap each shoulder, one at a time, with slow, deep breaths.

BILATERAL SOUNDS

With headphones, listen to audio that moves from one ear to the other.

SIDE-TO-SIDE EYES

Track slowly left and right, much like the eye check in a field sobriety test.

STANDING ROCK

Gently rock side to side or back and forth. Finish by feeling your feet on the floor.

EMDR

These left–right techniques are the building blocks of **EMDR** (eye movement desensitization and reprocessing), an evidence-based trauma therapy. Pairing them with a **distressing memory** is the therapy itself, so do that with a trained EMDR therapist.

Sources: World Health Organization (2013) and VA/DoD PTSD guidelines (EMDR as evidence-based therapy); McEwen, NEJM 1998 (chronic stress and the body). Calming techniques are low-risk; research on them is still growing. Fact-checked October 2026.

FOR MORE WELLNESS GUIDANCE, CONTACT

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