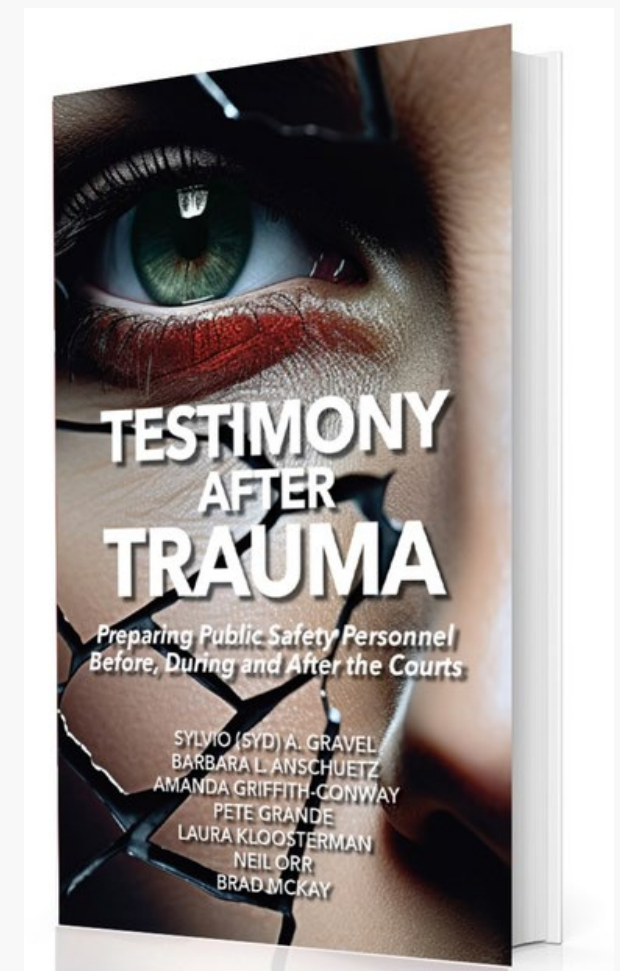

Testimony After Trauma

Preparing Public Safety Personnel Before,
During and After the Courts





Testifying after an Investigation: Shaping the Mental Health of Public

Safety Personnel



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Introduction

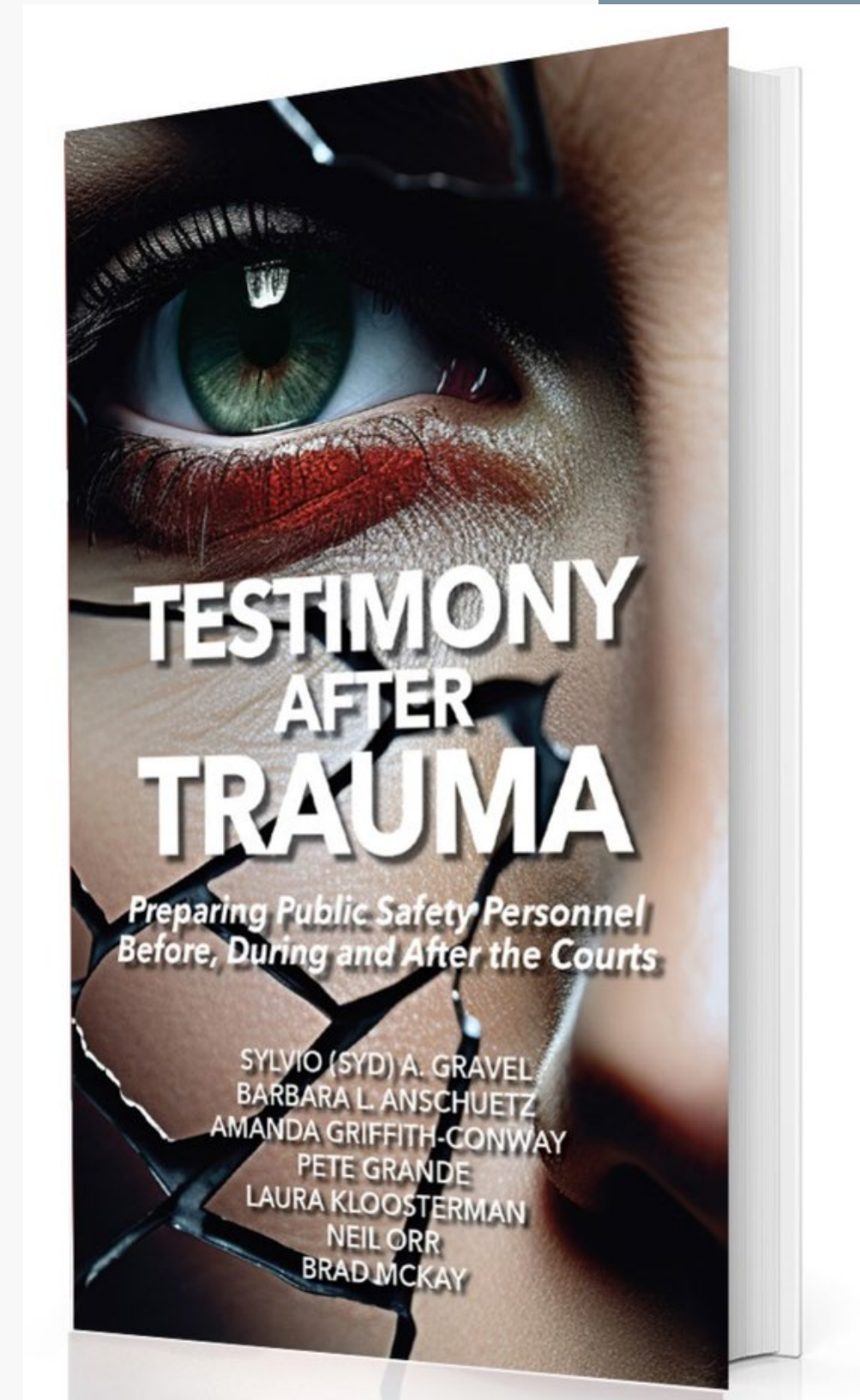


- Explore the significant mental health impact of testifying on public safety personnel (PSP).
- Comprehensive guide for supporting them through the process. Emphasize a trauma-informed, people-centered approach, addressing the challenges PSP face, such as reliving trauma during testimony and dealing with stigma.
- Identify risk factors, strategies for support, and the importance of family and peer support.
 - A call to action for organizations to implement sustainable wellness programs
 - Valuable insights for PSP, mental health professionals, and leaders, connecting operational readiness with emotional well-being.



Key Highlights:

- Identifying Risk Factors
- Strategies for Support
- Trauma -Informed Practices
- Family and Peer Support

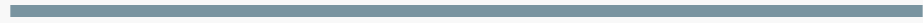


Testimony After Trauma



THE RESILIENCE OF PUBLIC SAFETY PERSONNEL (PSP)

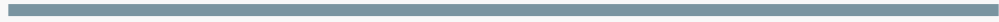
Public safety personnel (PSP) are resilient due to their training, but the dangers and stresses of their job can harm their mental health. Their ability to cope with extreme situations makes them more vulnerable to psychological challenges, despite not intending to cause harm.



Longitudinal study, conducted by the (RCMP)

RCMP Cadets have strong mental health at the start of training, better than serving RCMP members and comparable to the general public. This indicates that mental health issues in serving RCMP members are likely caused by their service experiences, not by poor screening during recruitment.

Ongoing mental health support is crucial to mitigate this impact.



GIVING TESTIMONY

Testifying in court forces PSP members to relive traumatic events, which can be difficult for anyone, even experienced officers. Police officers may be more accustomed to court, but the emotional impact remains significant, with the court system potentially provoking PTSD symptoms.



Risk Factors in Preparing for the Courtroom

Canadian Standards Association and Risk

- Canadian organizations are encouraged to assess risks by evaluating their likelihood and severity, then conduct a risk analysis to identify and, where possible, eliminate hazards, including psychological risks.
 - Traumatic events requiring court testimony.
 - PSP member's past and current environment unrelated to traumatic events.

Trauma Related Risk Factors

- Event-related risk factors
- Public safety personnel's actions
- Media and public attention
- Lack of quality support
- Operational stress injury

Existing and Environmental Risk Factors

- Environmental risk factors include experiences starting from childhood, both at home and at work.
- Unresolved childhood trauma and current home environment can contribute to mental health risks.
- Unsafe or toxic environments at home or work, which should be sanctuaries for support, become additional risk factors.

Preparing for the Court System



- Executive Command and Management
 - The Trauma -Informed Courtroom
 - Mental Health Professionals (MHPS)
 - Peer Support Workers
 - The Court System
 - The Integrity of the Court Process
 - A not Criminally Responsible Ruling
 - Premature Ending of Court Proceedings
 - Medical Exemption from Testifying
 - Canine Support
-

Preparing the Member to Testify

- **DENIAL AND FEAR**

- PSP members may deny having issues with testifying, even though they may be experiencing trauma -related distress.

- **FEELING ALONE AND ABANDONED**

- Testifying places the burden on PSP members, and without support, they may feel abandoned, highlighting the need for resources throughout.

- **SECOND GUESSING AND LOSS OF SELF-CONFIDENCE**

- Cross-examination may cause PSP members to doubt their split -second decisions during traumatic events.

- **PUBLIC AND MEDIA REACTION**

- Trauma or PTSD can make PSP members more sensitive to public criticism.

- **FAMILY AND THE IMPACT OF TRAUMA**

- As PSP members prepare for court, they rely on support, with loved ones often sharing the impact of the trauma.

- **SUPPORTING FAMILY THROUGH THE COURT PROCESS**

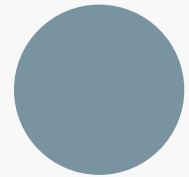
- Family members, particularly children, may experience mental health issues due to a PSP member's trauma, with peer support available to assist them if needed.

- **ON BEING A HERO**

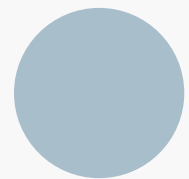
- PSP members may experience stress from media portrayal as heroes or villains during testimony, with peer supporters helping to ground them.



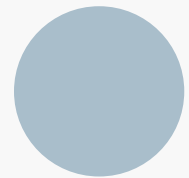
Support during Court Testimony



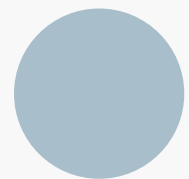
Lack of Support



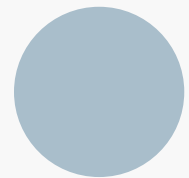
Support During Testimony



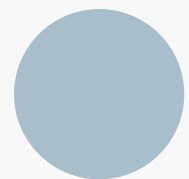
Communication



Wellness/Communications Advisor



Mental Health Professional's Role



Post-Court

Support after Testifying

After court proceedings, PSP members, especially those testifying about traumatic events, may experience re-traumatization and emotional distress, requiring continued support for their well-being.

- Critical Incident Stress Debriefing
 - Training in CISM
- Organizational Culture
- Re-Integration Programs
- Moral Injury
- Formal and Informal Peer Support
- Mental Health Professionals
- Trauma-Informed Care
- Post-Traumatic Growth

Support when Facing Investigation



● TYPES OF SUPPORT

- Psychological support
- Legal and procedural guidance
- Organizational transparency and communications
- Training about testifying and handling investigations
- Promoting a supportive culture
- Continuous monitoring and support



Testifying at Coroners' Inquests and Examinations for Discovery

- **Purpose of an inquest:**

- Determine the cause of death, not to assign criminal responsibility.
- Less formal procedures
- Primarily fact-finding, rather than legal accountability.
- Testifying at an inquest differs from court testimony, with fewer legal restrictions.
- The goal is to develop recommendations to prevent similar incidents in the future, unlike most court proceedings.
- Testifying can trigger the re-experiencing of traumatic events, potentially worsening mental health.



Supporting PSP members during coroners' inquests is crucial, as the emotional and psychological impacts are just as significant as those experienced in court proceedings.

Conclusion



The most valuable asset in PSP organizations is their workforce and families. Supporting traumatized members through court proceedings is crucial, and investing in mental health programs for testimony preparation offers high returns and strengthens the organization.





Thank you

