



## THE BLUE FAMILY TREE

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When you became a police officer you were likely young. You were in great shape, either fresh out of college or the military. You worked out daily, like a dog dreaming of chasing mailmen, only you were chasing down bad guys. You practiced your sprints, your vertical, your low crawl. No one was going to get away from you. Well.... some time has passed hasn't it? We're not all as spry as we once were. We are most certainly more intelligent. We know how to set perimeters and use Motorola. We know what's on the other side of that fence and that our bad guy will be coming back into our welcoming arms any second now. We still catch our guy, we just don't beat up our old dilapidated bodies to do it anymore.

Wear and tare in our industry is normal. Look at the seat back in your cruiser. Whatever did that to your seat has damage too, guaranteed. We just tend to miss it or dismiss it from day to day like dust collecting on the mantle. You only notice it when you look close and then you can't unsee it. Encourage the young guys to recognize those aches and pains for what they are, a result of their job and their service to the community. They need to make those first report of injuries as they go, even if they seem like dust that can be swept off. 20 years from now they will need evidence of the death by a thousand paper cuts that has become their back.

While "wear and tare" should fall in the same category as "injury", for the purpose of this article, I'd like to address the acute and obvious on-the-job injuries as well. Injuries will happen to the most fit amongst us and certainly those who are less fit, may be more prone. Sometimes it's kneeling to look under something and blowing out a knee. Maybe it's an assault by a suspect. It could be choking on a chicken bone while typing

a report. Many of these injuries can define your career, some will just give you good war stories.... Like the time I pursued on foot at night. We were running through weeds and my perp was just a few feet ahead. He bent a brach forward as he ran through and when it came back again I was stabbed in my eyelid. I went into the ER with a branch projecting from my face. Good story. But the defining ones are the injuries you have to fight with. You will struggle emotionally, mentally, and physically as you attempt to overcome them and return to the police officer you once were and know you can be again. You will become fatigued of doctors offices and tests and you will talk about throwing in the towel. We need good cops now more than ever. We need guys that fight this internal battle and want to be on the road next to us. We need you to fight through this chapter and make every effort to return to work. There is a place for you, and after you overcome your battles it will be waiting. Very few agencies would disagree. Cops with history are not replaceable. Keep your focus on returning to work. It's the best way to support your family. It's the best way to contribute to your community. It's the best for your personal satisfaction. It may be a long road but it's still a road.

Acute injury or injured over time through repetitive movement makes no difference. We fight and sacrifice our physical well being for our communities and we deserve to be taken care of.

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