



## THE BLUE FAMILY TREE

Newsletter article October, 2019

It's that time of year when we close-up the windows, winterize the lawn mower, make bean dip, buy a six pack, and plop on the couch to watch the NFL all weekend long. For many of us, this turns into hibernation until spring, and ask any bear worth his pelt, hibernations are good for one thing... weight gain.

Friends, it's been said here before and it will be said again...our health is likely the most important decision we can make with regards to not joining so many of our friends on that wall in DC. The easy number to pull is heart attacks. 10% of LODD incidents in a typical year are from heart disease. But this number is not accurate in terms of how many we lose to our fitness, or lack thereof. How many of us have lost that fight, or couldn't access the proper tools because we were in worse shape than our adversary? A number we will never be able to calculate, but a number we all know is far too high. The worst of criminals work just as hard at defeating us when that final match comes, as the best of cops work at being prepared for them. If that's not you, you are underprepared. Maybe our DOCs should be providing inmates free donuts instead of weight rooms to even the odds, but until they do, we have to drive past Krispy Kreme and park at 24 Hour Fitness.

It becomes even more important in these winter months when all we want to do is curl up on the couch and watch football. I know many LEOs have turned away from the NFL in recent years for various reasons. I am one of those. I do not promote a boycott. I'm not trying to start a movement. I just don't enjoy watching them anymore. In part, it makes me sad that I feel that way, but I just can't bring myself to support organizations that actively promote a false narrative against my profession. A false narrative that I believe has been and will again be to blame for the senseless deaths of peace officers AND members of our communities. But there are benefits to not watching football for 13 weeks out of the year: I'm not spending money on the NFL package or going to a bar to watch six games at once. I'm not sitting on the couch carb loading without a physical use for the fuel I'm taking on. I'm not as lethargic, and I can actually get things done that I want done - both off my chore list and off my recreation list. It's amazing in hindsight what a time suck and fitness drop the NFL had been for me over the years.

I still struggle to keep the LBs off. Like anything else, there is no magic about it, but not indulging in the NFL season is one great step to stay on the right track. Our fitness impacts every aspect of our lives on and off duty, from feeling physically well, to being mentally stable and emotionally sound enough to deal with work and home and make appropriate transitions between each. That's a difficult skill in and of itself and one that requires some practice to refine. Don't consider your healthcare to be just pumping iron. Lifting weights can benefit you in all three areas (physical, mental, and emotional health), but the latter two need more attention than that. Actively seek those opportunities to exercise your mind by finding whatever it is that interests you. For me it's Sudokus, ironically because I work them similarly to how I work a criminal investigation. Using my mind in a similar manner, but for recreation instead of work. And consciously take time to help others in your family and neighborhood with tasks and chores. I know it sounds silly at first, but positively affecting others and receiving gratitude for your efforts is tremendous for your emotional health. While we know that our jobs in the big picture positively impact others, we have to concede, that on the short side, sometimes our actions can be seen as negative, or at best, go without visible gratitude. Take the time off duty to benefit your own emotional health by working for others and reaping their gratitude. In turn, this will make you better at recognizing you are serving others while at work, even when you are laying a fine on them or giving them a ride to jail. When you're emotionally mature about it, the job becomes much less stressful and "taking it home" can become nearly obsolete.

Your health is everything. I didn't say "everything in this job" or "everything to your home life" Your health is everything. When it suffers in any category, the symptoms will be seen throughout your life on and off duty. Take a moment to silently reflect on our brothers and sisters we have lost to health issues...

stamina and strength failures...suicide. Recognize that ALL of them could be here today if their personal care had been more refined.

For once in your life, make your life priority number one, and all the priorities you have placed ahead of that in the past will be better off.

\*Authors Note: Please focus on the concepts of this article and don't email me that 9/11 cancer deaths couldn't have been avoided. Like all discussions about LODD, there are always exceptions and we will continue to lose some officers despite our greatest efforts. Our goal is to reduce line of duty death by studying the past, recognizing common factors, identifying those factors in ourselves today and changing them.