

"Mindful Policing": A Promising New Path for Enhancing the Resilience and Wellbeing of Israeli Police Personnel

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As part of their work, police officers often attend stressful crime scenes, and are required to make snap decisions as they operate. The role of Israeli police officers is particularly complex and includes military and security tasks, on top of more conventional police work. Hence there seems to be a great need for mental health interventions aimed at alleviating the distress of Israeli police personnel, as well as strengthening their psychological resilience. In this paper, we present a possible path toward completing this complex mission: mindfulness-based therapy.

Mindfulness refers to cultivating one's ability to observe and pay attention to the present experience, moment by moment. It includes elements of openness, receptivity, and an attitude of curiosity and nonjudgement. Mindfulness-based interventions have been studied among various clinical populations, showing positive effects on physiological measures, as well as on symptoms of anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. Studies on mindfulness-based interventions among police officers (more generally known as "Mindful Policing") have been conducted mostly in North America. Following such interventions, studies have shown a significant reduction in both physical and psychological problems. In this paper, we describe a first-of-its-kind project we have conducted in the Jerusalem district of the Israeli Police, aimed at implementing mindfulness-based intervention among police personnel.