

2. Taking Off the Uniform

The physical, psychological and relationship issues that result from maintaining a 'command presence' 24/7 are often neglected. In order to protect yourself from chronic health issues, emotional problems, divorce, job burn-out, CCPOA professionals must learn to bring the 'command presence' under conscious control. On a behavioral level, learning to hide feelings is often crucial for the success and safety on the job. The 'Command Presence' requires shaping attitude, behavior and thinking. In corrections work the indoctrination into hiding emotions and developing this prison guard persona was coined as "Emotional Labor" by Hochschild in 1983. He defines emotional labor as the efforts put into managing or hiding ones personal feelings, so that the feelings they show are in keeping with their occupation norms and is a huge part of developing a 'command presence'.

Most spouses of CCPOA men and women really do not understand and there is the concern that if what goes on daily on the job were known by spouses, there would be constant worry.

Up to this point we have been talking about how a command presence is adaptive and necessary on the job. And, this is true up to a point. However, if and when command presence is unrelenting it can lead to decreased job efficiency and job burnout. In a study done by Maslach (1976) it was found that when corrections professionals are burnt out they tend to become more negative and more rigid in how they handle their job; some even started taking short cuts.

'Spill - Over' takes two forms. The first and less insidious type occurs when after a bad day you come home irritable and angry, and take it out on the family. The other type of spill over is more pervasive. What is brought home is a prison guard persona/command presence. When the prison guard persona is brought home and continues to operate in the home the skepticism, commanding tone & look, firmness, non-disclosing and calm in the face of danger the family relations can be affected.

Some spouses and children see only cynicism, distrust, impatience, rigidity, and someone driven by rules, schedules and regulations. Spouses frequently describe their husbands as needing to be in-charge. Lambert (2001) found that 'spill-over' was even more difficult for the female correctional officer and her family than for male officers.

The good news is that there is confidential help for CCPOA Supervisory Members (SO6 & MO6) and their family members through the Holman Group. CCPOA has contracted with the Holman Group a private company that specializes in providing counseling services. Holman is available to you and your families 24/7. Please call 800-321-2843 and ask for a counselor who is experienced in working with correctional officers to learn how to Take Off the Uniform, when at home. This is a 10 session benefit per problem per year.

800-321-2843 24 - 7