CASAT Podcast Network

Welcome Melissa.

We are so happy to have you here today on the podcast and to hear about your life experience as a family member of a first responder?

Would you mind introducing yourself for our listeners?

Yeah, sure.

My name is Melissa.

Um I live in las Vegas Nevada and my husband is a police officer for the Metropolitan Police Department here, awesome.

So tell us, what is it like to be the wife of a police officer?

Extraordinarily hectic and sometimes stressful and overwhelming and strangely rewarding all at the same time, it's kind of a different mindset that you have to be in.

Um my husband was already a police officer when we got married, so I kind of knew what I was getting into thankfully and um you know sometimes when you get married and then they become a police officer, you don't really know what to expect and you don't know the strain that it can take on your family on a relationship sometimes.

And I think you just have to go in with a very specific mindset and trying to be very understanding of what the profession is, because people who don't understand the profession, it's it's going to take a strain on your family life for sure, So, um it has its challenges, but it's also very rewarding because sometimes the stories that he tells and some of the good things he does and the people he interacts with, its very uplifting and it can it can be a very emotional experience in a good way.

So it's it's everything all wrapped in one.

What are the major stressors for your family um that maybe non first responder families don't have to deal with.

Um a lot of it is honestly some of the things he has to see on a day to day basis and some of honestly the people that he has to interact with, the not so good things, um he's very good about trying not to bring it home, but you know, sometimes it just puts you in a negative space and a negative feelings that you just can't help and sometimes he just comes home, he's like, I just, I just need a minute, just just give me a minute I'm going to go and you know, do my thing for a second and then I'll be fine.

So it's just understanding the emotional turmoil that it can take on them is it's very hard and sometimes that accidentally transfers into your day to day life and then not just that just the honestly the fear sometimes of, you know, not knowing what's going to happen on a day to day basis and you know, is this the day he's gonna get hurt, is this the day he's God forbid not gonna come home, you know, and thankfully we try to be very, very vague with our kids, you know, they know daddy's a police officer, that he helps people, you know, my kids are only five and seven, but um thankfully we haven't had something, you know, since they've become older that they've had to deal with um seeing some of those scary things that he's had to go through and it's, it can be very hard, it can be very trying and honestly it's just truly the emotional toll that it really takes on you is can be difficult and a lot of people really don't understand that.

So how do you guys communicate about that emotional toll that it takes.

Um thankfully we are very, very open about, you know, things that go on now and when I say open, I don't want him to tell me the horrible details of the actual event, I don't want to know and he knows I don't want to know and he doesn't want to tell me, but we are very, very open about, you know his feelings for the day, you know, he'll say I really had to deal with something super horrible today and he is thankfully very good about talking about his feelings and thankfully that works for us very, very well and he's very good at talking to other people as far as you know, close friends and family about it too because I think it helps to really be able to have those close people that you can confide in about it because unfortunately we have seen other officers that internalize it and one day it just kind of explodes and that's when unfortunately marriages are very strewn and family lives aren't good and then the PTSD just gets too much, you know, certain things they just can't handle and instead of opening up about it, they internalize it and they're not dealing with it.

So thankfully he and I are very good about talking it through, if it's something I can't help him with, he's very good about talking to other people and thankfully they have very good peer mentor programs through the Metropolitan Police Department.

So he has other officers, he can go to, there's chaplains through the department he can go to.

So thankfully we have a really good support system and keeping the eyes open communication I truly believe is key for sure.

Mhm.

That's awesome.

Thank you.

How let me ask figure out how to ask this correctly, because I love I love the awareness you all have and your family has about um your husband being able to communicate about his feelings and and setting boundaries of like okay I'm having a tough time.

Like let me reset stuff like that.

Are there times, are there ways that you communicate to him?

Hey this is what's what I'm feeling with, maybe you're struggling with with what we talked about the first responders as families struggling with some of the stress of it and the stressors of having someone in that.

So do you communicate to him or is that something that just kind of you cope with the stress of being a wife of a police officer, you know, and that's actually a really good question, I think in the beginning it was more of coping and just kind of like, you know, I don't, I don't want to burden him, it's okay, I don't want to, you know, get into my feelings because I know he has feelings and deals with things, but then that was almost worse because then I would do, I would do the internalizing and then have the emotional blow up one day and it just got, it's, it's just not, it's not healthy on either end, so if I was feeling a certain way, you know, I'm very open about doing it, so, and I'll kind of give you a little bit of a background into my history to um my husband actually was injured in the line of duty um Gosh, almost six years ago now, um he was shot with an Ak 47 to the hip and um blew out his femur, He's got a titanium rod in his leg and I was 4.5 months pregnant with my daughter, my son was 18 months old and it was, it was um it was, it was traumatic and it really was, and honestly, and I'm sorry if I get a little emotional, you know, it's still, as you can see, it's still very um very raw.

It really is, and in the beginning I was very um very hesitant to talk about it because I didn't want to be the burden, not because I was afraid to talk, but I didn't I knew that he was going through something so horrible.

I was like, he needs me to be strong, he needs a support system, this is not the time.

And and honestly, I'm kind of glad I did that because at the time he needed me to be his rock, because if I had broken down and if I had fallen apart, it it would have made it worse for him, honestly.

Um now that time has gone by, it's very easy for us to, you know, if something might trigger me, something might trigger him, and one of us will just start crying on the couch and, you know, and we'll just kind of talk about it and hug it out and it's it's very good to talk about it now, you know, it's it's it sounds kind of bad, but, you know, a lot of the time as a police wife, you'll find there's a time to show my feelings and there's a time to, not to be very honest, because it's, you know, and being the supportive spouse, I'm really trying to make sure he's okay, and then I'm able to kind of go through my feelings and, you know, if that kind of makes sense.

You know, it's not that it makes it worse, but you really just have to be cognizant because you don't want to overshadow and diminish what they're feeling because if that kind of makes sense, it's it's kind of hard to explain, but it's um yeah, being able to talk about it now is very, very key to our relationship for sure, um because if we if we don't it internalizes it even more and it makes it even harder, so for sure, I love the way and thank you for sharing that, I mean, and that's kind of the whole theme of this and why we're doing this series is because being a first responder is is tough, is hard, right?

There's a lot that goes into it and being a family, we talk a lot about supporting the first responders, but we don't talk a lot about how to support the family and the thing that keeps coming up a lot in our podcast is awareness, right?

And and how difficult it is for the first responder to have awareness of their feelings, but also, you know, the spouse or the partner and the kids, and so I think just that example of what you you said of maybe there's times where you have to hold back because, you know, it could be detrimental.

And so it's okay because there's going to be a time where you can talk about it and share it and being able to gauge that in that aware, I think it just, it really solidifies a lot of what we've talked about and a lot of what folks go through that we don't talk about a lot, so I appreciate that.

Yeah, absolutely, and I do think it goes back to that understanding how to communicate with your spouse piece because you can't just verbal diarrhea, you know, all at once at the wrong time, if that makes sense, like you have to understand, okay, this is not the time for me to be a big blubber baby right now, while he's having a moment, I need to, you know, scale it back.

Okay, now it's my turn to cry, like, so it's it really is, it's a it's a balancing act, but really being able to understand each other and talking about that too.

Even that piece, the communication piece is really, really crucial to maintaining a healthy relationship and family life, it really is.

I have a colleague who um has these rules for communication.

The one I always remember is is it timely because, you know, sometimes our spouse or walks in the door and like, for, well for me, I just want to, You know, I've got 10 things on my mind.

It's like, let me get these off my mind and tell you all of them right now, it's like, is this timely?

Probably not.

That's so it's like that.

So it sounds like you you practice that quite a bit.

Absolutely, absolutely.

So when the incident happened with your husband, um what helped you get through that challenging time.

Um honestly, just the support support system we have um it's it's hard going at it alone like and you shouldn't have to and I think thankfully you know um the metro community stepped up in a huge way, you know we had a meal train for months like I didn't have to cook for months thank goodness and you know they offered child care, you know we had officers constantly coming over to check on him and check on me and the police wives that um you know have had come by and just to talk and see if I needed anything and um it was it was a huge help and and not even talking about it, you know just just being there um was helpful because there were times when we didn't really want to talk, you know we just wanted somebody to be there and even just hang out or if I needed to just get out of the house to even just go to the grocery store to you know have a minute away.

Um it was extraordinarily helpful.

Um You know my parents, none of my family lives locally.

So thankfully when it all happened we had family come in and almost take shifts to stay with us for a month or so to you know help with my son and helped me since I was still pregnant and had to go back to work and help my husband because he was in a hospital bed in our living room for three months and they pretty much told him he'd never walk again um without a cane and thank thank goodness he's stubborn and prove them wrong.

So it's you know just having those supports and having those people.

Um I think was honestly one of the biggest things that helped us and and again the open communication between the two of us, I think helped a lot.

So it was, it was a struggle for awhile.

It really was.

And another thing that people don't realize is there's that initial, you know couple months where everybody is there to help you and you know you have nonstop people coming to say hi and then it just kind of slowly trickles away and then you're kind of left there after you know the first year like okay what now?

And at times it almost feels like you are alone trying to figure it all out.

So I think a big part of it is just people don't know how to help sometimes.

So I think not being afraid to reach out is the biggest thing because it's not that people are forgetting you and it's not that they don't want to help, they don't know how and they don't know what you need and they don't know what you want.

So I think the big part of it was learning to you know let go of that little piece of pride and stubbornness and say, hey I really need help, can you just come over for a minute?

So I could take a walk, like I just, you know, anything and really making sure that you have that core group that is there to support you.

Absolutely, it would be my number one, yep, I'm curious if there was anything that um was not helpful at the time.

Um as bad as it sounds, sometimes too much attention is not helpful and you know, it's the never ending that the support was so, so appreciated and you know, I would never, ever not thank people enough for everything they did.

Um but you know, sometimes there were times where I'm like, please leave me alone.

I, you know, we, we need some time and you know, at the very beginning, I think it was almost slightly overwhelming how it was, it was super amazing, but it was slightly overwhelming at times, but at the same time I would never ever tell those people not to do that because I know in a weird way that's part of their healing too, because even if they weren't extremely close to us when one officer gets hurt, the entire officer community feels it and sometimes it triggers something for somebody else and sometimes they want to talk about the incident and about what happened.

So even if it's not necessarily helpful for me, it could be helpful for somebody else that needs that time and needs that venting ability.

So I think sometimes it seems like a little much, but at the same time it's it's almost needed for everybody if that if that kind of makes sense in a weird way.

Yeah, I think that totally makes sense.

And a lot of what you said, I think it's important because we can feel like when people, especially if it goes a little bit right, people feel like I can't bring it up or I don't want to talk so people wanna be helpful, but they don't necessarily know how or or maybe if they bring it up, it could be painful, right?

Because we don't understand we just as a culture in society, we don't really understand, you know, some of that stuff.

And so I think that's an important piece of being able to communicate when you need help and what kind of help you need, Right?

I think that's an important piece and I think it and for those people that don't know how to help and are scared to ask to me, I would rather them ask and say do you need anything?

Do you want to talk about it?

And then I can say, you know, that's okay, I'm okay right now.

I you know, I think just even the gesture, it is worth it because then I can be like okay, you know what yes, help me, please, yes, I do want to talk and I can always turn it down if I need to.

So and really just um kind of on, on the reverse side of it because we've talked a lot about stressors and obviously going through a difficult situation and how to handle that, but I think on, on the other side around it's, it's really important obviously for self care, but just as a family to have fun and to enjoy each other and to not just to kind of manage, you know, being the wife of a first responder and being a first responder.

So how do you, you all incorporate that into your family that's self care or that family care?

Um, you know, I think especially after the incident, um, we try not to take any day for granted, you know, we, we try to travel all the time, you know, and you know, in the beginning were like, you know what, we'll wait until the kids are older to travel, you know, maybe even right around the time they graduate, then we'll save up do all that.

And now we're kind of like, you know what, let's just have all these experiences, you never know.

So we try to, you know, give our kids as many experiences as possible and, and us to, you know, we'll go on every year, we try to do a little, you know, even if it's a staycation for him and I, we try to do a little something for each other just to get away even for a night, we try to take a little family summer vacation every summer, um things that we might not have originally done, but you know, just cherishing those moments and doing all that and then as far as like in the home we really tried to keep everything extraordinarily positive with our kids and the way we talk to them about you know, daddy being a police officer and um because my daughter wasn't born yet, but my son was 18 months old and I think in the beginning, you know it's he was still a baby but he knew something was wrong, so when we started to talk to him about it as he got older, it was always, you know, just kind of a more positive thing, you know, daddy got hurt but he's okay now and you know everything's gonna be fine and daddy knows how to protect himself and he has people around him who know how to protect him so where we try not to make make sure there's any fear around them, if that makes sense.

Um really just trying to keep things very positive about what he does and if I try not to have him bring things home around the kids like um kind of like what I was saying, you know him coming home and needing a minute because he doesn't want to accidentally, you know, say something from the kids or unload and you know in front of the kids and and and and and that's not easy either.

It really isn't, um, you know, but I think a lot of it, you just gotta make things positive, have good interactions and you know, really embrace every minute of every day.

Honestly.

So really good values that I, I love that it's things that everybody should attain in all families I think should have those values, right?

But it's almost like as a spouse of a first responder or as a first responder family, it's it's a necessity to be okay.

And so you almost live at this level, it sounds like that people may not get to as a family because there's not something kind of pushing them to that level, right?

And so it's, it's, it's actually really interesting you say that because I almost feel like he and I are not the norm in a weird way.

Um because honestly, I see a lot of first responder families that do struggle very much.

You know, I've talked to other police wives that are terrified every single night when their husband goes to work and I got, I've thankfully, I've always been in the mindset of, I can't do that.

Like I absolutely can't otherwise not only will it drive me crazy, but it will affect my marriage and it will affect my family life.

And as much as you try to hide those feelings from kids, They are very perceptive and they know when there's something wrong, they might not know what, but they will know.

So I cannot have the mindset of, oh my gosh I can't what's going to happen, you know, is my husband gonna be okay tonight?

You know, I've thankfully always try to maintain that you know, he knows what he's doing, he has people around him that know what they're doing.

I cannot be fearful because it's it's just gonna fester and and be horrible and thankfully, you know the way we are with our kids, we try to do the same thing and you know, some families are great at it and some families aren't.

Um and like I said, it's it's it's a little weird I found because he was already an officer and I married him, it was a little easier because I knew what I was getting into.

I find the ones that struggle the most are the ones who already our family and then the husband decides to become a police officer or the wife becomes a police officer.

And that's when it gets hard because they don't know what to expect.

They don't understand the toll that it can take.

They don't know how to communicate it and they don't know honestly what society the way it is.

They don't know how to deal with that either.

Um because I found that honestly that's one of my biggest challenge is to is just you know, seeing the things on the news and hearing, you know, even people who you consider your friends or colleagues, you know, bashing police officers and things like that, and it's it's really hard because good police officers don't like what's happening either.

They don't, but a lot of them are scared to speak out, I'm scared to speak out sometimes at work because, you know, it's not always a popular opinion to be supportive of police officers and it's really not, and I don't think people understand, you could be supportive of both ideologies and you know, I understand what's going on in the world, but still be supportive of what they do and who they are.

So I think trying to be able to process that part of it too is is very difficult.

Um trying to really maintain your sanity with your friends and colleagues can be a struggle.

And thankfully I'm the type of person I just, I I like to just try to kind of keep my mouth shut and if there's, you know, something very, very wrong or I feel is wrong, I'll kind of talk to that person individually and say, you know, not not okay, not cool like, you know what my husband does, you know, you gotta stop.

Um, but you know, you can't make a scene about it, you really can't and because it will almost just be worse for you and your family, it really will thank you for bringing that up because that's such an important piece of being a first responder in today's climate.

Um and you know, your husband's out there protecting the community on a daily basis, um and so I can't imagine trying to deal with that.

Um you're I'm curious about you talked about your mindset um and really keeping this positive mindset and I'm I'm curious like, have you always been that way, do you practice positive self talk?

Like, what, I'm just curious about your process for that?

Um thankfully, I've always been a very, very positive person in general, um it's just always kind of been my mantra and my goal in life.

I don't like negativity, I don't like being around negativity and I'm the type of person, I just want everybody around me to be happy and sunshine and butterflies and that's and that's not always the case, and I think, you know, after his incident for a while it was kind of hard to be positive, but I think, you know, kind of, like you said, doing those positive talks, you know, I I started doing like yoga and a little bit of meditating and he actually does the yoga with me, we do yoga together and to kind of just, you know, getting a good mindset, kind of, you know, try to get a little more physically and mentally healthy and um I think just practicing positive habits is a must and you know, trying to almost check yourself constantly.

I know, and as bad as it sounds, it's like, you know, having those negative feelings and emotions and letting them fester is it's not okay, everybody's gonna have those emotions, everybody's gonna have those thoughts, it's just what you do with them and how you react to them, you know, you can't act out on it, you can't blow up as somebody, you really truly have to be kind of diplomatic and try to keep everything in a positive, you know, kind of loving tone because if you don't not only will affect you, it will affect your family, it will affect the people around you and that's when divide happens.

So I found just trying to be as even even though it's hard, it's not easy being as positive as you can and really approaching things with a better mindset and a glass half full mindset, you just have to, if you want to succeed and stay, you know, mentally sane honestly.

So yeah, that sounds like you you practice it throughout, you know, with yoga with practicing self awareness, meditation, um the way that you speak with your Children, so thank you So for modeling that so beautifully.

Yeah, I think that's such an important piece that I mean at this point in our recordings, we haven't got to, we may get to it, but just to have mindset piece, I mean we know there's so much information that's available to everyone on the brain and positive thinking and I think people are more aware of how important that positive mindset is and then you look for, you know, more kind of positive sides just naturally as you develop that and that's a piece we haven't really talked about that I think is so fascinating in the way you talk about the health of your marriage and your family and even walking through something so difficult, but still not kind of succumbing to the fear.

Like you talked about is that mindset and developing that mindset and I don't know if that's something we talked about enough for first responders families and I think a lot of the time people don't know how to be that way and they don't know how to do it and honestly, I don't, I don't even know how to do it half the time and I think it's it's it's not something that happens overnight either, it's something that you truly have to work constantly 24 7 at and and believe me, we definitely have our shortcomings, we definitely have our fights, we definitely have, you know, like every family does, but it's it's trying to be able to grow from that and talk about it.

Like I said with, you know, the communication is key, um because we see, you know officer and you know, they're spousal marriages that do fail, it's because communication is lacking, honestly a big, not, not the only part, but one of the biggest reasons is because of the communication piece because you know, sometimes the officer feels like I'm not gonna talk about my feelings, I'm, you know, I'm a macho police officer, I'm not gonna, you know, I can't show, I can't show emotion, I can't show fear, I can't show that.

And then on the other end, the spouses, you know, you're closed off to me, you won't talk to me, you know, I don't know what's going on and you know, it's stressful, so I think it's it's a it's a battle constantly, but one that you have to be, you know, all in, you have to be all in and ready to do it and thankfully he and I have really gotten to that good place and we did very early on to where it's more of just trying to continue the conversation and as we get older and as we grow and as our kids grow adapting and you know, changing it up if we need to and you know, finding new ways to stay positive and stay healthy and um doing what we can, you know, unfortunately my husband's health kind of suffered quite a bit after he got hurt because he couldn't be active anymore.

Like he was, you know, we used to go hiking, we used to go biking and after he got hurt, he was, you know, he couldn't even walk for almost a year and then he was with a cane and crutches and then finally he was able to kind of walk, but you know, after all that time not being able to do much his health health suffered quite a bit.

And so taking those steps to get physically healthy too was paramount for him and for us because we found once he started getting healthier again, it really made things a lot better emotionally as well, honestly.

So I think really trying to take it day by day and understand what's going on at each part of your life and adjusting where needed is really important and really understanding, you know, what the other person needs.

So I'm curious, um, this past year with Covid has been stressful for, um, really our entire world, but what, but what, how did it affect your family?

Um, it's, it's hard to explain.

It's thankfully, you know, with everything we had gone to, we weren't really as scared as we probably should be to be very honest with you because it was kind of like, you know, well honestly we've gone through a lot.

We know we know how to go through trials and tribulations, we know how to be safe and we can't, we can't be scared honestly as kind of the mindset he and I went into it and so because we knew he was going to be at work, you know, every day.

Um, thankfully I was able to kind of work from home for a while because, you know, all the schools shut down and all of that.

And so I wasn't, you know in the school building anymore as a teacher or as an assistant principal, so I was able to kind of stay home with my kids and we didn't really go anywhere.

But again, I think for us we just knew you, you can't succumb to the fear you really can't because he's going to be out there and you know, and that's that, you know, we can't change that.

We can't, you know, we can't do anything to stop him having to go out and do his day to day job.

So I think just, you know, for us, we really just knew, you know in the beginning, okay, you know, we're gonna wear masks, we're gonna make sure the kids know how to, you know, wash their hands and stay healthy and you know, same with him, he always, you know, would you leave his work boots outside and go straight upstairs, change out, you know, and wash up really good.

And so I think for us thankfully, um it wasn't, we, we weren't as scared just because we kind of had already gone through the gamble a little bit of that makes sense.

But I do know a lot of other, a lot of other families where it was pretty terrifying, especially for people who had vulnerable family members in the house with a police officer working on the street because you don't know if they're going to bring something home or not like you, you just don't know, they are in contact with people every single day and you know, I know some of the things my husband does is work with the homeless community and you know, unfortunately that's not always the cleanest population and so there's a lot of things that he's exposed to there when he does work with them and it's, it's very um it can be scary, but again, you have to really just do what you can to be safe and protect yourself and not succumb to the fear, just take the steps you need to do to really, you know, do what you can to protect your family.

So yeah, I think it goes back to your values in your mindset that you've really developed and embody that help, you know, I think for a lot of the world, all the sentences global trauma, but you're experiencing trauma inadvertently on a daily basis and managing that level of stress on a daily basis and honestly, I think that's a great point that you make, cause I also have friends that are nurses and you know, it's kind of the same kind of the same thing, you know, they just, they can't succumb to the fear because they know, okay, I'm gonna be at work, you know, as a nurse every day and there's always that chance I could bring something home and living in that fear is just, you know, just as unhealthy, you know, because mental health and wellness obviously has been a huge factor recently too, and I think just, you know, really making sure that you just know that you're doing what you can to protect yourself and then just not allowing yourself to get into that negative space.

Because as soon as you do it's a lot, it's very easy to get in that space, it's a lot harder to get out.

And so really just maintaining as much of a positive open attitude as you can, I think is really, really, truly key.

Absolutely, I love that.

I think that speaks to to, I mean obviously the resiliency of your family, you know, we think of walking through situations and how difficult they are and we forget that we we carry something from those two.

And so the mindset and the resiliency and I think it's it's interesting, I have a lot of friends who are, we were kind of in that mindset with this, but you have to be really careful explaining to people, it's not that I'm not aware of the situation, it's that there's it's just, it's a resiliency and when you're in that trauma, you know, in a regular basis, you already have that resiliency that kind of passes over and so you there's awareness, there's, you know, kind of what you're saying with it, but you're not kind of giving into the fear of it, right?

The reality of it, That's good, I like that, I've never made that connection before.

That was a good that was a good connection.

I like that Melissa.

What services do you think are needed for families of first responders that maybe aren't available at this point?

Um You know, I think I think every department is different, but I think honestly the mental health and wellness aspect is the biggest thing that they need.

Um and you know sometimes the officers don't even know they need it.

But having um people there to you know be either peer mentors or provide resources and things like that.

Um We actually have a group through our department called Peep.

It's the police employee assistance program and its other officers who kind of serve as mentors and help provide resources to families and and not just even police related things, you know, they help if you have family members who are sick or going through cancer, they'll help get you resources and they'll help find you counseling.

Um people that are going through major marital problems, they'll help provide people to talk to and um resources like that.

Or even you know, people that are going through their demons and are having alcohol or drug problems and things like that.

Um You know, it's being able to have a group to provide those resources as paramount and while we do have that group, I think you know being able to expand it would be extraordinarily helpful as well because they get so many calls and so many people that reach out that it's, it's, it's a lot.

And I think expanding those services to officers and their families is paramount because they need people to talk to who are professionals, they really do, sometimes they need counseling, sometimes they need substance abuse help, Sometimes they need help with their marital issues, sometimes they need help, you know, just because their family members are going through cancer or going through something like that.

So it doesn't even have to be related to police.

But I think really addressing the mental health and wellness of officers is what is needed and probably what is lacking a little bit because I think people have, again the stigma of police officers, especially that, you know, oh, you know, they're, they're police officers, they're macho and you know, they just, you know, do their job and some of them can be a holes and this and that and it's like, no, these, these people go home to their families every day to and you know, feel the trauma with you.

They see these horrible things that people do and people go through every single day and they don't always get the help that they need to deal with those events.

So really just trying to find ways to address that, whether it's through one on one help, whether it's through seminars, whether it's through, you know, things like this, even having podcasts available to where people can listen and be like, wow, you know, that actually really could help.

Um and being able to look at things a different way or figuring out ways to talk and things like that, I think is really paramount.

Um yeah, for sure, thank you.

I'm really struck by um you talked also about wellness services and you know, we all human beings were multidimensional, we have physical, social, emotional, right, all of these needs.

Um and you really highlighted that here for us today on how, you know, physical health impacts the family and how um, you know, social impacts emotional and so thank you for highlighting that for us today.

Yeah, I just want to say thank you to, I mean Melissa, this was, I know it's it's not always easy to, to talk about some of these difficult things and especially now, you know, in our culture and with everything that's going on, there's almost a stigma I think is we kind of alluded to being a police officer and being a family member.

And so it's not easy to talk about, but um obviously needed and I'm sure there's, there's spouses and family members, um, first responders that listen to this and got a lot out of it and, you know, I hope that, that the mindset and all of that, everything you talked about, it's helpful, so I just want to thank you Absolutely, you know, and I think it's important for people to be able to talk about it and you know, honestly that's one of the biggest reasons why I wanted to be able to do this because I am thankfully very open about, you know, what's happened in my life and our relationship and um a lot of people are very scared to talk about it to be very honest because like you said with the societal stigma, you know, many times people just see a uniform, they don't see the person behind the uniform and they don't see, you know, that's a husband, that's a father, that's a brother, you know, that's a wife, that's a sister, you know, that's it's people don't see the personal aspect, unfortunately sometimes, and I think being able to talk about it and hopefully share anything that could help another family or another police life, you know, I'm very grateful that I was able to have this opportunity to do that.

So thank you guys very much for what you're doing for you know, our our first responder community very much.

So thank you.

Thank you Melissa, can I ask you one more question?

Sure, so, um, you know, there is a fear to come out and to talk about these things and to share our stories, like sometimes even just sharing our stories is very vulnerable.

Um, so one first, thank you and to, I'm curious how was it for you to share your story today.

Um it's, you know, it's it's very relieving for me honestly.

Um thankfully I'm a very, I'm a very open person and for me talking about it is helpful in a, in a weird way and you know, I know, I know there is a fear that you know, you'll get judged or that people are gonna, you know, not really understand where you're coming from, but at the end of the day, it's one of those things that if it's something that's gonna help somebody else, it's it's gonna help me too, because I know that I am doing something for the better, good for our community and for somebody else's health and wellness.

So it's, you know, it can be a little scary.

It would be a little emotional.

You know, obviously I teared up a little bit, but you know, I tend to wear my heart on my sleeve, but um it's also very therapeutic in a weird way.

So um yeah, it's it's it's good.

Yeah, I do.

I appreciate and enjoy in a weird way talking about it.

Well, we have so appreciated it and enjoyed it.

And so thank you for joining us today.

Absolutely.

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