

# Death Lives in Our First Responders – Reducing Stress and Prolonging Careers

## Introduction

The mind, body, emotions and spirit of each first responder we send into the field are deeply and profoundly affected by what they encounter. What they see and hear directly affects how they feel and how they relate (spirit) to the world around them. The focus of the EMS training program is on the whole person who walks into difficult and challenging situations as a regular part of their job.

## Objectives

This training program identifies the major stressors that first responders face regularly and provides tools and techniques to support total mind, body, emotional and spiritual health in a way that will reduce absenteeism, leaves, and early exits from the workforce due to burnout and PTSD. This training may also help with other quality of life areas in the lives of first responders, such as divorce and self-medication – drugs and alcohol misuse.

## Leadership

Our two trainers bring a diverse and powerful set of experiences, education and training to the field, combined with a real passion to provide our first responders with tools to keep them healthy members of the EMS team over a full career.



**Stephen Garrett** is an End of Life Coach specializing in dying, death and grief. He is an author, public educator, facilitator/trainer and death coach. He brings four decades of professional experience in the fields of adult education, workshop delivery, social and hospice work. His passion is to help individuals and families face end of life/death issues in a healthy, balanced way.



**Bernie Fitterer** is an End of Life Coach, trainer, author and professional speaker. As a veteran fire-fighter with over 22 years of experience, he brings a practical approach to workplace deaths from his own experiences and those shared by others. These include being a part of the Department's Critical Incident Stress Management Team and Delivering Public Fire and Life Safety. Bernie has a Bachelor's Degree in Adult Education, with training in Vicarious Trauma, Juvenile Fire Setter Intervention, and Psycho-Spiritual Counselling Practicum. He has a passion for working with Emergency Services personnel and families who have been affected by traumatic death.

## **Program Formats**

The program is available in two formats: as a five day program designed for a regular work week schedule, and as a two weekend workshop structure for learners with work week commitments. The program descriptions, including learning objectives, follow.

## **Five Day Program**

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### **Day One**

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#### **Morning**

***Learning Objective: To provide learners with the basic framework of the five day program and to begin the exploration of dying, death, and self-care.***

Introductions  
Personal death experience  
The self-care model and how to use it

#### **Lunch Break**

#### **Afternoon**

***Learning Objective: To bring awareness to participants that death is a regular and ongoing occurrence that will have significant impacts on them personally and on the families indirectly.***

First death on scene  
Effects of facing death on a regular basis (definitions and examples)

### **Day Two**

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#### **Morning**

***Learning Objective: To bring attention to how witnessing death on a regular basis, if unmanaged, can result in real health issues that can be career-limiting.***

Long Term Stress Disorder (unpacked) (personal and with co-workers)  
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (unpacked) (personal and with co-workers)  
Vicarious Trauma (unpacked) (personal and with co-workers)  
Downtime Stress

#### **Lunch Break**

#### **Afternoon**

***Learning Objective: To begin the exploration of the many different types of death that learners will witness and the unique impact each type of death could have on them.***

Death with the chronically ill  
Unexpected death  
Death of the elderly  
Death of middle-aged people  
Death of a young adult

## Day Three

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### Morning

***Learning Objective: A continuation of the different types of death that will be witnessed and will have an impact on students.***

Death of a teenager  
Death of a child  
Death of an infant

### Lunch Break

### Afternoon

***Learning Objective: Using the types of death as a framework, students will learn some basic communication skills that will enable them to speak with compassion and honesty to survivors on the accident scene.***

Dealing with survivors of a death (family and friends on scene) overview

## Day Four

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### Morning

***Learning Objective: Learners will explore some of the most challenging types of death and learn some coping skills.***

Responding to mass deaths (bus/plane crash, building collapse)  
Death of a co-worker (line of duty death)  
Facing your own death situations at work  
Murder  
Facing suicide (others)

### Lunch Break

### Afternoon

***Learning Objective: Learners will examine the more personal side of death and how that can be very different from 'on the job' deaths.***

Death of a co-worker (away from work)  
Facing your own death situations at home  
Facing a family members death  
Facing suicide (one's own)  
Self-care

## Day Five

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### Morning

***Learning Objective: Facing the unavoidable – your own death, either sudden or of natural causes. Being prepared for the end of life.***

Preparing for one's own death (death binder)  
Setting the tone – personal values and beliefs  
Representation Agreement  
Advanced Care Directives  
About your Will and Enduring Power of Attorney  
Getting your paperwork organized  
Your digital life  
Celebration of your life

### Lunch Break

### Afternoon

***Learning Objective: Learners will review the entire week's body of work and be able to have any outstanding questions addressed.***

Q & A  
Wrap up (call to action)

30 hours  
\$625 per participant

## **Two-Weekend Workshop Program**

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### **Weekend One**

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#### **Friday Evening 6:00 – 9:30pm**

***Learning Objective: To provide learners with the basic framework of the program and to begin the exploration of dying, death, and self-care.***

Introductions  
Personal death experience

#### **Break**

Facing death on a regular basis  
The self-care model and how to use it

#### **Saturday Morning 9:00 – 12:00pm**

***Learning Objective: To bring attention to how witnessing death on a regular basis, if unmanaged, can result in real health issues that can be career-limiting.***

First death on scene  
Long Term Stress Disorder (unpacked) (personal and with co-workers)  
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (unpacked) (personal and with co-workers)

#### **Break**

Vicarious Trauma (unpacked) (personal and with co-workers)  
Downtime Stress

#### **Lunch Break 12:00 – 1:00pm**

#### **Saturday Afternoon 1:00 – 4:00pm**

***Learning Objective: To begin the exploration of the many different types of death that learners will witness and the unique impact each type of death could have on them.***

Death with the chronically ill  
Death of the elderly  
Death of middle-aged people

#### **Break**

Death of a young adult  
Death of a teenager  
Death of a child  
Death of an infant  
Unexpected death

## **Saturday Evening 7:00 – 8:30pm**

### **Informal Death Café**

An unstructured conversation about dying and death and the role they play in life, the meaning that they have to our lives.

## **Sunday Morning 9:00 – 12:00pm**

***Learning Objective: Learners will explore some of the most challenging types of death and learn some coping skills.***

Responding to mass deaths (bus/plane crash, building collapse)  
Murder  
Dealing with survivors of a death (family and friends on scene) overview

### **Break**

Death of a co-worker (line of duty death)  
Facing your own death situations at work  
Facing suicide (others)

### **Lunch Break 12:00 – 1:00pm**

## **Sunday Afternoon 1:00 – 4:00pm**

***Learning Objective: Learners will examine the more personal side of death and how that can be very different from 'on the job' deaths.***

Death of a co-worker (away from work)  
Facing your own death situations at home  
Facing a family members death

### **Break**

Self-care basics

## Weekend Two

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### Saturday Morning 9:00 – 12:00pm

*Learning Objective: Facing the unavoidable – your own death, either sudden or of natural causes. Being prepared for the end of life.*

Preparing for one's own death (death binder)  
Setting the tone – personal values and beliefs

#### Break

Representation Agreement  
Advanced Care Directives

### Lunch Break 12:00 – 1:00pm

### Saturday Afternoon 1:00 – 4:00pm

About your Will and Enduring Power of Attorney  
Getting your paperwork organized  
Your digital life  
Celebration of your life

### Saturday Evening 7:00 – 8:30pm

#### Informal Death Café

### Sunday Morning 9:00 – 12:00pm

*Learning Objective: Facing the unavoidable – your own death, either sudden or of natural causes. Being prepared for the end of life.*

Facing suicide (one's own)

#### Break

Self-care as it relates to emotional trauma and career longevity

### Lunch Break 12:00 – 1:00pm

### Sunday Afternoon 1:00 – 3:30pm

*Learning Objective: Learners will review the entire course's body of work and be able to have any outstanding questions addressed.*

Review and Q & A

### Wrap up (call to action) 3:30 – 4:00pm

30 hours  
\$625 per participant