

FOUNDATIONAL RESOURCE

A Pocket Guide for Peer Support Team Members of First Responders and Helping Professionals

The Art and Science of Trauma-Responsive Care and Compassion-Focused Engagement

Supporting people who routinely encounter tragedy takes more than good intentions. This is the foundational Presence Works™ resource, the one everything else in the library builds on. It brings trauma-responsive principles, the basics of the nervous system, compassionate communication, peer support, spiritual care, and organizational wellness together into something a peer supporter can actually carry into the moment a colleague needs someone trustworthy beside them.

Why This Guide Matters

This guide comes out of decades of service across emergency response, healthcare, chaplaincy, disaster spiritual care, veteran support, and peer support work. It's written to help readers recognize stress reactions, reduce the stigma around asking for help, listen well, respect scope and confidentiality, and connect people with the right resources. At its core, it's about building a culture where asking for help is understood as responsible, not weak.

What You'll Take With You

You'll come away understanding how trauma and cumulative occupational stress can affect the body, the mind, relationships, someone's sense of meaning, and their performance at work. You'll learn to offer compassionate presence and active listening without slipping into the role of a therapist, and how Psychological First Aid and early practical support can help in the hours after a hard event. You'll build an understanding of nervous system awareness and co-regulation, learn to recognize warning signs and hold ethical boundaries, and see how self-care, spiritual care, peer team development, organizational culture, and post traumatic growth all fit together into supporting the whole person.

How PRESENCE™ and ATTUNE™ Fit In

This guide is where PRESENCE™ and ATTUNE™ first take shape, not as acronyms to memorize, but as a way of showing up for someone and a way of noticing what they actually need. Everything taught later across the Presence Works™ Library and Presence Works Academy builds on the foundation laid here.

Who This Is For

Fire and EMS, law enforcement, dispatch, and other public safety personnel. Peer support team members and coordinators. Chaplains and spiritual care providers. Nurses, healthcare personnel, educators, and other helping professionals. Supervisors and leaders building healthier support cultures. Organizations developing or strengthening a peer support program.

How to Use It

Use this guide as an orientation resource, a field reference, a discussion companion, pre-course reading, or reinforcement alongside the rest of the Presence Works™ Library and Academy modules. It's educational and supportive. It doesn't replace clinical assessment, diagnosis, psychotherapy, medical care, or your agency's own policy.

Where This Leads

Equip yourself to support those who serve. Start here, then go deeper through the rest of the Presence Works™ Library and Presence Works Academy.

Learn the skill. Practice the encounter. Become the presence your people can trust.