



**PEACE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION  
OF THE COUNTY OF MONTEREY  
[DBA MONTEREY COUNTY PEACE OFFICERS ASSN]  
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***ATTN: MCPOA Membership***

***March 16, 2020***

***RE: COVID-19***

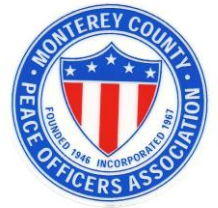
For those of you who have read my previous articles, you know that many of our messages end with “be safe, be well and be vigilant.” Now more than ever, this mantra needs to be a way of life. In light of the recent developments around Coronavirus (COVID-19), the necessity for preparedness has never been greater.

We write you today as a reminder that we are here for our association members and we are doing everything possible as a professional law enforcement association to do our part and provide on-going support and updated resources as they become available.

As a Law Enforcement Community, we must come together in support, and recognize that this new normal has increased vulnerability in some areas. It is now that we must be ever more vigilant and prepared than before. While a vast majority of people are tied to the news and “what do we do next?”, behind the scenes there are those evil forces that are increasing their scams, fraud, and taking advantage of those who are vulnerable due to the state of fear that many are experiencing. This is the time when we need to be most vigilant for potential criminal activity to include; potential acts of terrorism and active killers.

As Dave Smith has shared with us; We live in a world where we decide what risks we are willing to take, and we must compensate for those risks; just like body armor hardens us against armed assailants, our "universal precautions" developed after the rise of the HIV threat should still be a basic part of our inventory. First responders are selfless warriors precisely because, regardless of the threat, viral or mechanical, we don't "self-quarantine" to protect ourselves. We still rush to help where we are called. Blood, fluids, breath, and physical contact are part of the life of the law enforcement officer, a life that we proudly understand and embrace. And that is part of what makes us the spiritual comrades of firefighters, paramedics, nurses, doctors, and all who face risks to help others. Sadly, even as new viruses arise the old ones never completely go away; so refreshing your knowledge of the various steps you need to take to protect yourself AND your family is critical.

While the public merely needs to wash their hands regularly, you may need to change your duty boots before going home or disinfect not only your vehicle but your cuffs, your clothing, and anything else that may be contaminated. Wear your gloves, practice using your CPR mask, and if you don't have one, get one and learn how to use it. Please, take every precaution that you can as you take risks to protect and serve.



When circumstances change as rapidly as they are now, we train to go into a holding pattern, slow things down, and take in information. But in order to maintain vigilance, we must also take care of ourselves and be rested and calm to the best of our capacity.

To assist you, your loved ones, and the communities we serve, we are providing you with information from Dr. Jay Michaelson, author of 10% Meditation Weekly, that may help to maintain and increase personal capacity.

### **Three Points on Being Healthy and Dealing with Fear, Anxiety and Concern**

#### **1. Working with Anxiety**

Obviously, COVID-19 is scary. If you're personally in a high-risk population, major life changes may be necessary. But even if you're not – for most younger, healthy adults, the disease might just be a case of the flu, or even just a bad cough – you certainly know someone who is in that category.

And while scientists know a great deal about how the Coronavirus spreads, no one can predict when it might spread to you, from the next surface you touch or the next person who coughs on the bus. It's the perfect recipe for anxiety.

This is where mindfulness really can help. As Sharon Salzberg wrote, mindfulness can help you notice that you're anxious (which is generally a bad time to make decisions), and can help to distinguish justified fear from the extra anxiety produced by the mind.

So: take a look. What does fear feel like in the body? Are you feeling it now? Okay – that's fine – we're not here to judge the fear; only to notice that, hey, when you're fearful, you might not make the clearest, best decisions. Mindfulness is like a stethoscope you hold to your heart; it lets you know how you're feeling in a particular moment, so you can figure out what to do next.

Next, see if there's an actual, immediate threat that requires an immediate response. If not (and usually there isn't), give yourself a little calm break. Try a short meditation, or just some mindful breathing (Auto-Genic Breathing).

Reflect on your own balance between smart precautions and reactive responses. Should you wash your hands more? Absolutely. Should you cover your face when sneezing, yes! Should you maintain social distance, yes. And should you use enhanced precautions of sanitizing, definitely; All of these precautions are what every doctor is telling us to do.

Finally, check back in. How much of what you're feeling is anxiety added by the mind to an already difficult situation? Is your mind thinking, or spinning?



Noticing fear, accepting it, calming a bit, distinguishing between fear and anxiety – these are mindfulness “superpowers” that you can develop with a little practice.

## **2. Building Healthy Habits**

Mindfulness also helps you take some of those smart steps that doctors are suggesting right now.

For example, next to washing your hands, the most helpful individual act you can do to keep the Coronavirus out of your lungs is ridiculously simple: stop touching your face!

Simple, but not easy. Most of us touch our faces dozens of times a day, usually without thinking about it. I bet that a lot of you, reading these words, want to do it right now. Saying “don’t touch your face” is like saying “don’t think of a pink elephant.” As soon as you hear the words.... Well, you are almost preconditioned to do it.

Now, mindfulness wasn’t invented for this purpose – but it sure can help. You can, in fact, turn not-touching-your-face into a practice. Here’s how.

First, notice the urge to touch your face when it arises: Oh! There’s the impulse to touch my face!

And then, check in to see how that urge feels in your mind or body. Maybe it’s an awkward discomfort in the mind. Maybe it’s an actual itch. Either way, just like you might “sit with” moderate knee pain or back pain in meditation, just “be with” the desire, rather than indulge it. Okay, here’s what it feels like to not touch my face. Kind of Weird!

It is weird. It’s like not scratching an itch. It can be maddening. But from a mindfulness point of view, it’s just another thing to notice, allow, and let be. Eventually it passes. It can even be a game.

The same is true for other healthy habits, like washing your hands for twenty seconds, which is longer than most of us take. When washing your hands, wash your hands, feel the water, take a breath, feel your feet on the floor (or like we have taught our daughter, say you’re A,B,C’s twice while washing your hands) – pretty soon, the twenty seconds will be up.

Applying mindfulness in this way gives you a double benefit. Most importantly, these mindful habits improve your chances of staying healthy. But as a bonus, they also build your mindfulness capacity each time you do them.



### 3. Growing Wisdom

The biggest benefit of self-reflection (“Know Thyself”, the #1 Golden Rule in the Ten Golden Rules of Leadership) and meditation in a time of uncertainty, though, is wisdom.

Remember, mindfulness was originally developed, over 2,500 years ago, to help people be happy in an unpredictable, uncertain world in which suffering is unavoidable.

Of course, we all want to hold onto the good stuff and push away the bad stuff, but life doesn’t work that way. The Coronavirus pandemic is one more awful reminder of that. No one wants this, but here it is. It’s not good. Now how can I respond wisely, compassionately, and carefully?

Using mindfulness to build resilience, calm, compassion, and awareness will help us do the best we can under the circumstances. It will strengthen the “better angels of our nature” and lower the chances that we react out of fear or panic. It will give you the space to make smart decisions and care for those around you. It will help.

There is no escape from Coronavirus, just as there is no escape from the precariousness of human life. We’re all in this together. So, let’s stay calm, make informed decisions, try to help one another, to stay as balanced and resilient as possible, and to do the best we can in a challenging situation. Which is, of course, also true of life itself.

Be well, be safe and be Vigilant!  
Sincerely,

Michael C. Kimball, President  
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