

Making a Difference

*"This was a good program put on by good people who want to see the good in me return."
-- Firefighter*

*"I could possibly be one of the world's biggest skeptics. I entered with an "I can sit through anything" mentality. An hour in I had an "Oh S***" this is me moment, and suddenly I couldn't stop a rush of emotions that I have harbored for years. The gift of forgiving myself was an enormous weight lifted off my chest. I won't be dramatic and say you saved my life, but I'm confident you improved the quality and length of it!" -- Tampa Police Officer*

"This was a very good experience for me. I got through things I thought I would never get a chance to. I feel like a weight has been lifted off my shoulders." -- Firefighter

"The retreat was fantastic. I would have liked for it to be longer. I feel the tools I have learned can be beneficial in my life. The food was amazing; I never went hungry in the past four days. Thank you for the time, attention and energy you've provided to me." -- Pinellas Firefighter

"I am so grateful for the opportunity to have been with an awesome group of people whom I never would have met if not for this program. I loved the yoga, fitness and grief sessions most of all. The connection between mind, body and spirit is real." -- Virginia Police Officer

Making a Difference

"I feel physically "lighter" than I have ever felt! I have a great appreciation of life and everything around me and gained a necessary connection to spirituality." -- Coral Gables Police Officer

*"It has been a privilege to be part of such an amazing retreat. I felt that I had already received what I was searching for just by taking the time to work on me. You made me see my self-worth and that I can still be a smile even when the world is full of frowns. It is a choice to be happy and I am in control of that. Suicide is an epidemic amongst first responders not because of lack of help, but because we choose to fight this battle alone. Every time a brother or sister takes their life, it makes it harder for those that have struggled with these ideas to not take ours as well. The help is there and I don't feel that depression is truly the cause of deaths. I feel that the ideology that it is weak to speak up about our struggles or that it is weak to receive help is truly the cause of these deaths. Thank you for helping me. I am truly grateful."
-- Pinellas Firefighter*

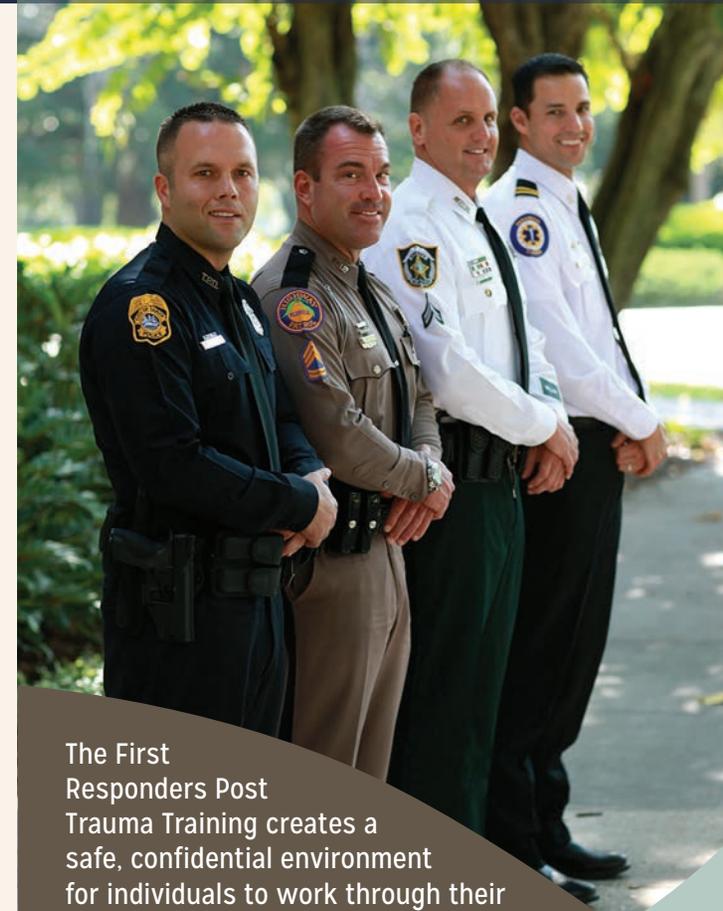
The Franciscan Center

The Franciscan Center opened in 1970 for interfaith retreats. It's located along the Hillsborough River just a few miles north of Downtown Tampa and five miles from Tampa International Airport.

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Retreat Restore Renew



The First Responders Post Trauma Training creates a safe, confidential environment for individuals to work through their most critical incidents and process the cumulative stress of risking their lives throughout their careers.

**OPERATION
RESTORE**
Franciscan Center
First Responders
Post Trauma Training

Retreat

First responders spend four days at the Franciscan Center located on eight acres along the eastern banks of the Hillsborough River. This private and peaceful setting allows individuals to connect with other first responders who have faced the same constant stream of critical incidents. Participants begin by identifying their cumulative stress reactions to various traumatic experiences during the course of their career.

The program serves all faiths and utilizes a combination of education sessions, group process, proven scientific methods for reprocessing traumatic events, and one-on-one confidential sessions. Each participant receives a certificate for 40 CEU's from the Florida Regional Community Policing Institute at St. Petersburg College.

“This course was the most profound personal and spiritual experience I’ve ever had. It gave me insight into pain that was hidden from even me.”
-- Tampa Police Officer

“This retreat was long overdue. It saved my life!”
-- Miami-Dade Police Officer

Renew

The course creates a renewed sense of self which is the first step toward improving their professional and family life.

The first responders will leave the retreat with a better understanding of post trauma stress and will be armed with a new resiliency for coping with the daily stream of critical incidents. The training helps them realize that their responses are normal reactions to abnormal events.

The team helps each participant establish 90-day personal and career goals and an action plan for maintaining their improved state of mind after the training course.

Course graduates can help fellow co-workers who are dealing with similar issues. Maintaining the wellbeing of all first responders is vitally important to ensure they continue making good decisions in their daily service to the community.

Restore

A team of Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) practitioners led by practitioners who are psychologists and mental health counselors and trauma experts, guides first responders through a nationally recognized and evidence-based method for reprocessing critical incidents. The U.S. Armed Forces utilizes EMDR to assist active and retired military personnel suffering from post traumatic stress. This process will help first responders process their thoughts and feelings about their most traumatic incidents.

The program utilizes certified police chaplains and licensed mental health counselors and/or

psychologists. This process helps first responders realize that many of their peers face similar challenges due to the nature of their chosen profession. This sense of community is a critical step in restoring them to a better state of mind.

The holistic training includes educational sessions each day that help participants understand the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual impact that critical incidents have on them. It also provides them with a tool kit of new ways to cope with these daily stressors. These range from breathing exercises to nutritional and exercise plans and skills for improving their stress management.

Each day starts with a short guided meditation to build skills for maintaining a sense of peace in their daily life. In between sessions, participants have time for personal reflection on the scenic property or group recreational activities. Throughout the training, participants have confidential one-on-one sessions with chaplains, peer support, and counselors.

