

COMMUNITY POLICE OFFICERS PRACTICING I > E > S

I've been working with community outreach police officers and found that some officers have biases or have become jaded, an occupational hazard because of the things they've dealt with on the streets. But now these police officers are working community-based as Crime Prevention Specialist (CPS), which is a big change for them. I've been assisting with their transition by working with them to think more intrinsically about themselves, their goals within the community, the community's goals, as well as approaching people more intrinsically to foster more effective communications and relations with the community. We talked about the formula and the hierarchy of people first and information second. Information gathering and communication can be more effective when you first identify the person as a fellow human, as well as maintain awareness of yourself as a fellow human, first, and a police officer, second. And then, once you've done this, then you can make the connection and then tackle the challenge. It was really interesting to work with police officers in this way and hear their responses. After implementing it, police officers reported that when they approached people as people and not as subjects they were better able to make a connection, hear what people were saying that they otherwise would have missed, and police officers were finding they were getting a better response than they expected.

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In working with community-based police officers, it is really interesting to see how Intrinsic Coaching™ can break barriers and cross over into an industry that we might expect wouldn't be receptive to it and then find out that it not only impacts the success



of their work but also contributes to the health and well-being of the community. It really does apply to all aspects of life because it builds up the intrinsic - what's important to people, what's important in building relationships - and it can be applied to anything and we don't even have to be experts in the area where we're bringing it because what you're doing is increasing people's ability to think better about their choices.

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It was really satisfying to see the police officers' growth and watch them change their paradigm for working with people in the community and see their own satisfaction because they came back and said, "Wow. I'm seeing a difference. I'm not only feeling a difference, but I'm seeing it." And it's the kind of difference they really do want.

Some of the officers are hesitating - they're still approaching things the way they've always approached things - but the Intrinsic Coaching™ methodology makes it possible to encompass them as well. They're not outsiders to the process; they're just being given time to pause and ponder, have a new thought, a new question, and they are in the beginning of a process, taking time to internalize it.

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And there are some Law Enforcement Officers who are more jaded, have become more strongly biased, and they've been assigned to community policing and don't want to be there and, as can be expected when people don't want to be there, you're going to have that resistance from some. But with continuing to approach them as an Intrinsic Coach™, I can say that I am seeing a reduction in resistance and they generally come in smiling now. So I know the connections are happening and they are starting to internalize what is being presented to them - they just needed to do it in their own way. And I think seeing their colleagues within community policing coming back with positives and seeing other police officers having success with this paradigm shift helps a lot; it shows in their eyes and in their smiles that they are noticing. They may not say so in words, yet, but their body language is changing and they're thinking that maybe this little formula really can make things better for them.



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In particular, these community based police officers are beginning to understand how to get past the challenges of keeping their extrinsic and systemic thinking from dominating and making things more difficult for themselves than things really need to be. For example, I'll ask them to articulate their ideal interaction with the community in which they're based - a really perfect interaction from their own perspective - and, as we talk about it, I'll ask them to explore the challenges that keep them from having this kind of connection that they want. And they'll be so surprised to discover things they never really thought about - that what they thought were the challenges many times weren't challenges at all but, instead, internal barriers that came from their own internal dialogue.

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And then, when we talk about things like internal dialogue, I go to the basics of Intrinsic Coaching™ and I'll even explain what Intrinsic Coaching™ is. And, periodically, I'll reinforce it by saying, "Hey, this is not a therapy session; this is about you bringing your best thinking forward and bringing your best answers to the forefront. I'm just the catalyst; the answers are yours."

And it's a great feeling to leave these police officers with the awareness and experience of what intrinsic thinking is all about. And I also remind them that this is a process - it happens over time - because sometimes they come in with the feeling that they didn't do anything differently that week and so have nothing to bring to the table. And so I remind them at the beginning of every class that this is about their thought processes and about working on them over time and even if they sometimes listen just a little bit longer or notice an assumption or notice that their thoughts were going on automatic that week, it's ok. They will learn to think better about their choices, including their internal dialogue, the same way people learn Intrinsic Coaching™ - one step at a time and in different ways.

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Taking the pressure off and allowing them to be learners has been a really important part of their learning process because increasing the ability to think intrinsically is a very real process and people approach it in all different ways. Some want to understand it all upfront. Others see other officers' successes and then they trust it enough to try it themselves and also get in touch with the fact that they want to have different experiences from the ones they are having and it begins with experiencing things differently, thinking differently, thinking more intrinsically.

So they all do this at different rates and respecting each individual's process, making it ok, has been important and it keeps them learning and moving forward in this process. I really do think Intrinsic Coaching™ is needed and the best approach to help these officers have the kind of impact they want to have in the community as well as have the kinds of experiences they want for themselves as police officers in the community.



Susan B. Spofford, M.S., C.H.E.S., PCPP, Intrinsic Coach™, President, Research & Technical Solutions, Inc., Falls Church, VA, enjoys a varied and dynamic background. Susan has 19 years of cumulative research, instructional, and contract management experience both in the public and private sectors. In 1993, Susan began bridging her public health interest with the private security and law enforcement industry where she has been working as a Virginia Private Investigator and Personal Protection Specialist, as well as actively teaching for Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services Private Security and Law Enforcement Initiatives, National Rifle Association Law Enforcement & Civilian Programs, as well as various Federal Intelligence Agencies. This afforded Susan the opportunity to do investigative and academic research, publish in peer-reviewed journals and present at professional conferences, as well as to expand instructional/team leader skills in the areas of surveillance/counter surveillance and intelligence/counter intelligence gathering as part of ongoing governmental contracts and homeland security needs. Susan holds multiple degrees from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and Virginia State University located in Blacksburg, Virginia. She has a Bachelor of Science in Sociology with cognates in Deviant Behavior and Small Group Dynamics; a Master of Science in Community Health Education with a concentration in Intervention Strategies and Programmatic Evaluation; and is presently a Ph.D. Candidate in Research Methods, Theory & Evaluation with cognates in Adult Learning and Qualitative Research Methods.

