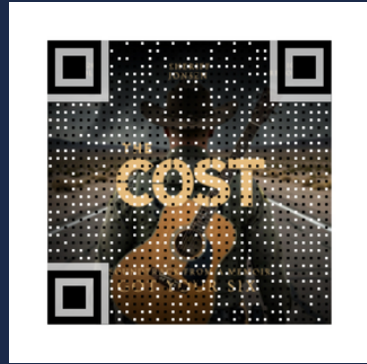



The Cost · Sheriff Bob Jonsen

ALCOHOL AS COPING · THE INVISIBLE LINE

# The Edge



"The edge isn't the problem – it's the things we can't feel / The culture's open secret, the silence is the law."

**Significantly**   
ALCOHOL USE DISORDER RATE IN  
LAW ENFORCEMENT VS. GENERAL  
POPULATION

**Roughly 25%**  
OF OFFICERS REPORT DRINKING  
TO COPE WITH OCCUPATIONAL  
STRESS

**\$250 Billion**  
ANNUAL ECONOMIC COST OF  
EXCESSIVE ALCOHOL USE IN THE  
U.S. (CDC)

## WHY THIS IS A CRISIS

Alcohol is the law enforcement profession's most widely sanctioned coping mechanism and its least examined one. Post-shift drinks are cultural ritual, social bond, and stress relief simultaneously – which makes the line between use and dependence nearly invisible until it has been crossed significantly. The culture does not merely tolerate heavy drinking – it celebrates it.

Officers who develop dependence do so inside a social structure that provides cover, normalization, and active discouragement of help seeking. By the time dependence is visible to colleagues, it is typically severe.

## WHAT THE SONG DOES

Written from personal experience – tracing the arc from one beer in a quiet kitchen to tequila as the only way to unwind – the song names the progression with the specificity of someone who lived it. That specificity bypasses the denial that clinical descriptions of alcohol use disorder reliably produce.

The outro names alternatives – **box breathing, body scans** – not as replacements for alcohol but as the first steps toward a different relationship with decompression. It ends with a choice, not a lecture.



The Edge



Forgotten Breath

## WHAT THE BRIEFING ACCOMPLISHES

- Names alcohol dependence as a predictable occupational outcome – not a moral failure – which lowers the barrier to self-recognition
- Introduces the progression model (social → habitual → dependent → crisis) without requiring personal disclosure
- Makes confidential EAP and peer support resources feel like reasonable next steps rather than emergency measures
- Gives supervisors language to hold the topic with officers who are currently struggling without triggering administrative responses
- Normalizes the conversation in a culture that has historically made it impossible

# The Edge

## Alcohol as Coping

*"If an officer comes to you privately after this briefing, your first response matters enormously. Lead with: "I'm glad you came to me."*

*Then connect them to confidential resources before any conversation about job impact.*

## BEFORE YOU PRESS PLAY

"This one's about what a lot of us use to decompress after a shift – and what happens when that stops working. Give it a listen."

AFTER THE SONG → Hold **10 seconds of silence** before you speak. Do not fill it. It's working.

## DISCUSSION PROMPTS

### CHOOSE ONE – DON'T RUSH THROUGH MULTIPLE

- A** The song says the edge isn't the problem – it's the things we can't feel. What do you think officers are actually trying to outrun?
- B** The chorus calls alcohol 'the culture's open secret.' Why do you think we don't talk about this more openly?
- C** The outro offers some alternatives – box breathing, body scans. Does that feel realistic to you? What actually works for decompressing after a hard shift?

## TO CLOSE

"If any part of that song hits close to home, you don't have to say anything right now. But don't carry it alone either. Our EAP is confidential – and so is my door. Stay safe out there."

Consider your own relationship with alcohol as you prepare for this briefing. You don't have to disclose anything. But if you've had a moment of honest reckoning with it – even a small one – sharing that quietly can open a door nothing else will.

There may officers you already suspect are struggling. This briefing is not a disciplinary moment – it is a wellness moment. The goal is to lower the barrier to help-seeking, not to surface problems for administrative action.

**CRISIS LINE**  
988 · Press 1

**SAFE CALL NOW**  
1-206-459-3020

**PEER SUPPORT**