

The Cost · Sheriff Bob Jonsen

OFFICER SUICIDE · THE CULTURE OF SILENCE

End of Watch

"We've attended the funerals / We've said the words / We've raised awareness / Officers are still dying / It's time to try something different."



2X

OFFICER SUICIDES EXCEED LINE-OF-DUTY DEATHS ANNUALLY

2023

STUDY ON U.S. POLICE EMPLOYEES FOUND THAT PERCEIVED STIGMA AND FEAR OF NEGATIVE CAREER IMPACT ARE MAJOR BARRIERS TO SEEKING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

180-190

NUMBER OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CORRECTIONS PERSONNEL WHO DIE BY SUICIDE EACH YEAR (DATA COMPILED BY FIRST H.E.L.P.)

WHY THIS IS A CRISIS

Officer suicide is the leading cause of law enforcement death in the United States — yet it receives a fraction of the institutional attention directed at line-of-duty fatalities. The reasons are structural: suicide carries stigma that officer deaths by violence do not, and the culture of law enforcement actively suppresses help-seeking behavior. **The brotherhood is watching**, as the song names it. One crack in the armor and the professional consequences feel real.

Awareness campaigns, memorial services, and policy mandates have not moved the numbers. The profession has tried what it knows. This song argues, directly, that it is time to try something different.

WHAT THE SONG DOES

The chorus is a direct indictment of the status quo — not of the people who tried, but of the methods that haven't worked. That distinction matters: officers hear it not as blame but as validation that the system failed them, not the reverse.

The outro moves from statistics to survival: **"A song can pull one back from the edge tonight."** That claim is the campaign's central thesis, stated plainly. Music reaches where policy cannot because it bypasses the defense mechanisms that professional culture erects around vulnerability.

WHAT THE BRIEFING ACCOMPLISHES

- Opens the campaign by naming the crisis directly — no euphemism, no clinical framing, no institutional softening
- Establishes the briefing room as a space where the real cost of the profession can be spoken aloud
- Gives supervisors specific language to hold silence after the song — the most important facilitation skill in the campaign
- Surfaces the brotherhood-watching dynamic as the primary barrier to help-seeking — naming it reduces its power
- Closes with crisis resources embedded in the supervisor's guide, normalized rather than presented as emergency intervention

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SUPERVISOR'S GUIDE - BEFORE YOU PRESS PLAY

"This song is about what the profession doesn't say out loud. Just 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** What's missing from how we talk about this – or don't?
- B** The song says the brotherhood is watching. What does it take to feel safe saying "I'm not okay" on this team?
- C** What would actually make a difference – not the awareness campaigns, but something real?

TO CLOSE

"If anything from this week is sitting heavy, the resources below are confidential and built for this profession. My door is also open. Stay safe out there."

You do not need to be a counselor to lead this briefing. You need to be a human being who shows up honestly.

The most powerful thing a supervisor can say is:

"I've felt this too."

CRISIS LINE
988 · Press 1

SAFE CALL NOW
1-206-459-3020

PEER SUPPORT