

# 13<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Mental Health and Human Resilience

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Webinar

## 35<sup>th</sup> International Congress on Vision Science and Eye

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### First responder PTSD and suicide: A candid view from the other side

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This presentation is intended to bring even more awareness about first responder mental health and wellness/suicide prevention to all in attendance. Most are familiar with this epidemic within our military and veteran communities and thankfully they are working to fix this. However, not many are aware of how this same epidemic is plaguing our first responders. Historically, we are losing over 100 firefighters a year to line of duty deaths (LODD). This consists of but is not limited to: perishing in a fire, motor vehicle accidents, medical emergencies, etc. Research is now showing that we are actually losing more than that amount each year to suicide and that's with only about half of the suicide completions being reported and verified. These same type of numbers are also applicable to our law enforcement, Emergency Medical Technicians, Corrections and 911 communicators. Sharing my story and helping other first responders is my passion and, in my presentation, I candidly discuss PTSD and suicide within the first responder world, the unfortunate stigma associated with getting help and the effects all of this has on not just the responder but the family dynamic as well as the organization. I will share my story of living with post-traumatic stress and a suicide attempt, how it not only affected me but affected others that I love as well and how I have overcome this. By doing so, I hope to let others know what to look for, know that it's ok to ask for help/how to get help and to end the stigma surrounding our mental health. My presentation constantly evolves as do I, and I remain completely open, honest and transparent with my journey, as I pride myself on that and believe that is what's needed to assist in the healing process for all. Not only do I offer tools for our members' mental health and wellness, but I also give them the know-how and know when to use the tools. Imagine showing up at the firehouse or fire academy your first day and your Officer just gave you a set of irons and told you to open a door? The tools aren't as effective if we don't have the know-how and the know when. I offer that. In closing, it would be an honor and a privilege to present this unique, raw and candid presentation at your conference because this is extremely important for all members of the mental health and wellness community to hear and to learn more about us, to better help us. I was just recognized as the Fire Service Leader of the Year for my work in first responder mental health and wellness/suicide prevention by the Fire Service Psychology Association and I hope to continue my efforts to bring this awareness to Doctors, Therapists and Clinicians globally. Thank you for your consideration.