

# OHIO ASSIST POST CRITICAL INCIDENT SEMINAR #1

## March 27-29, 2017

### Participant Comments

“This is an invaluable program. When it was provided for my husband it was such a relief for me to finally have a resource to help him (and us) learn how to cope with the many traumatic incidents he’s been through. I’m so grateful for the ASSIST program!! It’s clear that much thought was put into planning the past 3 days – from our accommodations to small group organization. Thank you! This program changed our life. As a participant this time it was very therapeutic to be with fellow spouses that truly understand my feelings. [My husband] and I made even more progress as he shared things with me that he never had before. It’s incredible to feel validated and such a huge, huge relief to know that our marriage cannot only survive, but be happy and fulfilling.”

“I’ve never wanted to talk about my incident because of my guilt and embarrassment feeling like it was my fault or that I wasn’t able to prevent it. I told my story to this large group of strangers because they also were hurting. The instant support I felt from my peers was overwhelming and astounding. I felt a huge weight lifted off of me like I had been carrying a bus around on my back for 7 years. The more I opened up in small group the more I felt myself letting go and I truly believe this is my personal start to actual healing. The way I looked at my incident shifted allowing me to change the way I felt towards it.”

“Great program. Wish this class to be offered to Supervisors so they might be able to understand what state of mind an employee might be in or going through. Would be a great lesson plan for the Academy. How to live life after a critical incident. Resolve that I can’t change events, history. Not to take blame for other’s actions. Reduced my anxiety. Note that life goes on. I need to start living again (future). Get back to doing things I love. Communicate better with my spouse.”

“Hands down best seminar/training I have ever been to and would and will recommend to everyone. Knowing how to handle some stressors and being able to educate others on how to deal with it. Now know how to approach providing information to a spouse and not keeping it quiet.”

“This was a great program. It was a very diverse group and I really learned a lot about others’ struggles. I would highly recommend this seminar to anyone in this profession with any kind of struggle, either personal or professional. The accommodations were very nice as well. I entered the program with a huge weight on my shoulders due to not handling my incidences appropriately within me. I’m leaving today with that weight lifted and the tools I need to continue to keep it off of me.”

“Very good info, insight. The first day was very impactful. Good breaks. Coming into this program I did not quite understand what it was about. The first day was INTENSE! Listening to the stories, seeing the other side on how the situation affected the person in the stories that I had

read or heard about showed me the aftermath, “real” story to the crisis that happened. Next day the small groups that were into further depth helped people say their feelings out loud, maybe for the first time. Throughout this process I realized that if I take on someone else’s burden, it will weigh me down, which is not helpful for my sanity. I learned new techniques on how to deal with someone else who has issues. And in the future, when something tragic happens, I can use this information to tell my mind, ‘I will stand up again.’”

“I can’t begin to tell you how wonderful the PCIS seminar is. I came in wondering how three days could change anyone and now I know it can. I heard so many stories, each one so tragic for the person telling it and by the third day, I felt most had felt a relief from your seminar. I never realized that I was keeping the biggest part of my incident inside, never really talked about it. Counselor \*\*\*\*\* caught it. They talked to me and did EMDR and it work. I feel like I’m more at peace and calmer. I can’t begin to tell you how grateful I am for your program.”

“This seminar saved my life. Feeling suicidal for a long time. This seminar gave me the tools and education to move on and know how to deal with my traumatic events. I feel more educated on stress management and learned how important communication is with your family and not hold things in.”

“This seminar is very helpful for both spouses. Learned how to cope with stressors in daily life. I’ve opened up more with my spouse. More opened minded about PCIS.”

“Wonderfully beneficial program that serves a huge need. It would seem to me that the most important thing to do is to get information regarding the program out to the people who need it. It feels like the specificity of the program provides another level of “brotherhood” to a group that really needs it. As a spouse, I am thankful that my husband had the opportunity to share his experience with others that can understand. The friendships developed have been very therapeutic for both of us and will hopefully continue beyond these 3 days.”

“I was stuck in rut and his program was the vehicle to get me through the problem. I was able to share things I was internalizing and struggling with. I felt comfortable because of the group itself and the environment.”

“Best training I have had. I feel this training is the best I have seen. Great training.”

“The course was well thought out and planned well. I have a greater understanding on how to handle and understand the effects of critical incidents with myself and those I work with. Having my wife attend the course with me was priceless. I now have a better understanding of what her experience and difficulties are dealing with my profession. A better understanding of the responses we have to critical incidents. Also, knowing my experiences are not that unique and have many similarities to other first responders.”

“Great training event for officers and their spouses. Awareness is what shifted for me. We all have a story, an event that dramatically changed our lives. We can choose to focus on that traumatic event and allow it to beat us or we can look at the blessing of the event. No matter

how tragic, each person received a blessing. Shift is to focus on that blessing and not the event. Aware of the support groups available for the spouse.”

“Going into this program I was set in my mind on what it is that I was here for. My intention was strictly for my husband and to be his support. Little did I realize that I would gain some of my own inner and underlying issues that I now realize I need to resolve. There are things that I heard that I didn’t realize I needed to hear. Not only was there some eye opening experiences for my husband, but for myself as well.”

“I think it is a very good, worthwhile program. The venue was great. Able to relax when not at the seminar. I would suggest it to anyone who has been involved in a critical incident. I felt better about my incident by the end of day 3 than I did at the beginning. I have been able to let go of the incident better. Not dwelling on the “what ifs” of my incident. I was also able to let go of some anger I still had about the incident.”

“1) Make sure the person taking the class asked to be here. Not told or forced. 2) Should not push religion on people. 3) I feel this class was beneficial to many in the class, just not for me. 4) There were multiple speakers in the class that I have no clue as to why they benefited the class, i.e.: Jack, Doc. Same, if not a little depressed after hearing the sad stories for 2 days.”

“Excellent class! I can’t imagine how it could be improved upon. I feel a 30+ year weight was lifted. I was very sketchy of how it was going to go, I know my 2 years of counseling have helped, but this – between peers and group interaction. I left the EMDR a different person. I wonder what my life would have been like had this been around back then, when I first had the fatal fire – maybe I wouldn’t have had the anger issues, alcohol, seclusion, etc. Tomorrow is my new day. Thank you!”

“Very helpful to hear everyone’s story – though many are very heart breaking – it does make you realize you are not alone – not the only one with problems – always someone with a worse story. I think the men were more apt to open up on this setting after seeing others willing to share. Really helped put some things in perspective. I think we will be more open to more communication – more apt to realize we just can’t always be in control.”

“I entered this course with a closed mind and when I left I am so much more open than I ever have been. I now can talk to my spouse about what happened. I think that I have become more open with my feelings than when I first entered the course. I feel that I can talk to my spouse more open. I needed that. I will be able to move on. Very helpful course. I will suggest this to anyone having problems.”

“I feel this training was very beneficial for a spouse as myself. My husband works a very stressful job with very sensitive information and very long hours. I feel this program has been able to give us even more tools as a couple to help with communication and a better understanding for each other. I would like to thank all the speakers, peers and sponsors for helping bring this program to Ohio. I feel this is an extremely vital part of the training for any LEO family. One of the biggest shifts was a realization and a better appreciation for my

husband's job. It also has been wonderful for helping and giving me tools to better communicate with him after difficult days at work.”

“Great program – very beneficial and I can see how it can be life changing. Thank you to everyone involved in this conference/program! I came to the program thinking this was more of a formality (partner was going to be a peer) but I was surprised at how involved this was. I actually received help about another incident that happened to my daughter that I wasn't expecting. I feel more at peace after this – small group was amazing. I feel I've made connections that will continue on.”

“Program was therapeutic and reinforced the importance of communication and asking for help. Even though I didn't feel “broken” when I got here, I soon discovered I had some deep-rooted issues with anger and hurt feelings. Just talking with others helped to diminish some of the emotions I have held onto for years. Great program! Continue the good work!”

“1) Outstanding! 2) This class has brought to light the stresses that I felt and the ways I wasn't dealing with it. 3) The PCIS group was fantastic. At no one time did I feel that I was left out or isolated. 4) The weight of feeling “weird” about my shooting was gone. I am normal for the way I handled a non-normal event. I feel liberated that I am not alone that I can handle my stress and realize I am still me. I feel I saw how I was being stressed at work and home, but just wasn't dealing with it in a proper way.”

“My husband's shooting happened almost 15 years ago. Since we've had a great marriage and a great support system (family, church, friends), I've always thought we had pretty much dealt with it. He was asked to go, and asked me to go along. This was very therapeutic to both of us. He was able to resolve the unresolved conflict and I not only learned of it, but also how to better help him. This is so beneficial no matter how long ago your incident occurred. As a spouse, I was greatly encouraged by the time I was able to spend with other spouses, and by hearing from other men who've walked in my husband's shoes.”

“PCIS really helped to pull me from a dark place in my life. Without PCIS I'm not really sure where my career, life and mental health were headed. Thankfully PCIS was offered to me at a time I needed it. Listening to everyone's story truly helped to show me that I wasn't alone in this. The PCIS peer support was amazing! Prior to Post Critical Incident Seminar I was in a dark place with a host of cumulative critical incidents in my twenty years as a law enforcement officer and I had no real direction of where to go for help. While I knew I was in definite need for help, there was nothing offered outside of an agency debrief and a visit to an agency paid psychologist. Law enforcement officers are scared to admit they need help, due to agency criticism or peer ridiculing. From the academy, LEO's are taught to not allow critical incidents to affect them. However, that couldn't be farther from what should actually be taught. LEO's need this to maintain a safe, healthy and proactive career. With that said, I now know I desperately needed PCIS. Now I know how to help my brothers and sisters in blue in the event of a future critical incident.”

“Thank you for facilitating this seminar. We won't know the fullness and beneficiality of what we've gone through. As a LEO we accept the risk of our lives, but we train to reduce the

chances of it happening to us. The same should go towards our personal survival as well. We gotta be able to identify those matters that really do “matter!” Identify the problem site area (PSI). (We invest more resources for a blown stop sign!) Post Critical Incident is a personal PSI. The PSI concept applied. [What changed was] my perspective when viewing something that was very painful. I didn’t know it but I was preventing myself from mourning the loss of things I held dear to me. I was prevented from or I allowed them to control my grieving! Not an option anymore! Breaking down walls! Release! Freedom to heal now. Thank you.”

“Going into this, I was uncertain how this would benefit me. After going through this program, I am in complete disbelief how beneficial it truly has been. Small group was one of the best parts of this program. More time with that group could not hurt. Small group is where it’s at for me! Hearing from other spouses was so impactful. I wish I could have heard the discussions in the spouses’ small groups or comments from them (even something to consider would be comment cards from spouses in general, to cops... what they go through and what we need to do better.) I look forward to pursuing and pushing this program in Ohio, as well going through the process of being a peer in the future. I really appreciate the spiritual part of this program too. Before attending, I was bearing all the responsibility, stress, and weight of this job on my shoulders. I assumed complete and total responsibility for feeling inadequate in what I was not able to control. I stressed over not working hard enough, putting in enough time, or being productive enough. But after attending, I feel more at ease in knowing I cannot control anything except myself. I also have a more focused realization that I do not need to give away all of myself to my job, but rather be a little selfish and take care of myself, so that I can give my best to my job and then later to my family. At the speed I was going, I can easily see how burned out I would have gotten quickly! Now, I know that in order to give my best to everyone and everything else, I need to take care of myself too.”

“The absolute most beneficial training I have ever received. The staff/cadre/peers were extremely trustworthy, compassionate and had the ability to understand. It is so unfortunate this program is just beginning for first responders. \*LIFE CHANGING! Met new lifelong friends! I have never been this encouraged, not even at Academy Graduation! I wished I knew many years ago what my career would do to my family, friends and me. If I’d known then what I know today and if first responders knew or were trained in this there would be no need for town halls with groups protesting LEO’s. Now to answer what changed for me – not sure yet. .... But what I do know is I feel “light,” I can’t wait to see my wife and son and apologize for isolating them. I also can’t wait to make my post “a family” – let them learn through my pain so maybe they won’t catch this “blue flu.” I will be screaming from the mountain tops the true, sincere benefit of this program. We must take away the taboo of the pain and suffering of mental health. We need leaders with compassion for the men and women of the gray, blue, green uniforms. Examples: Heidi Marshal, Lt. Click, Rick Fambro, Paul Pride. They cared enough to change the Division. These are people of character, morality, compassion! They serve!!! They are not served! This is the key to the future of OSHP. We must learn from our past. Choose leaders who inspire and love their people like those mentioned above. Leaders are people of character and principle, not “activity hounds.” Thank you from my very core for this gift called PCIS! This is the future of a healthy, vibrant, serving, relevant Highway Patrol.”