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## My types of Armor / Protection that I use in Corrections,

### How it affected my family and life by CO Glenn Lang

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## WARNING EMOTIONAL TRIGGERS BELOW !!

I started my Career in Corrections in basic training..... 10 Weeks away from my family. My first day consisted of essentials. Duty Belt, Radio, Duress, Cuffs and Cut down knife. Then started learning the Act's directives, procedures and team work. The physical armour thus commenced.

As the weeks passed, situational awareness and non-reactionary emotions started embedding into the mind (Mental Armour process commenced)

I finally Graduated as a Corrective Services Officer and came home proud of what I completed . . . the start of my new career.

My first day as a Rostered Officer started @ 0400hrs... Try not to make too much noise and wake the family up, get my uniform on and the Mental Armour in preparation for what was to come.

My first day was a wakeup call for the years to come; Code Blue (Medical) within 30 minutes, an hour later a Code Yellow (Officer Requires Assistance) and some ground control for a Non-Compliant prisoner.

By End of shift 3 Code Yellows, 2 Code Blues and 1 Code Red (Fire).

Forgot to have lunch and had too many Coffees.

Shift end . . . Put my Keys, Cuffs, Radio and Cut down knife away, have the block debrief, then depart the Centre.

Finally, my first custodial 12hr Shift was over!!

When my Wife asked, "How was your first day?"

I responded with, "It was long and boring! " I did not want to worry my wife and young Kids with the truth.

**This was the start of the process of holding onto the Mental Armour.**

As different Shifts, Incidents... Insults and abuse from prisoners progressed, this Mental Armour built up more and more to protect me from showing any form of weakness or reaction that could be used against me or my co-workers.

Every day now, I retain more Armour for the next day to shield my family from the “What if’s” and “Oh Shit” moments. I didn’t want them to worry, thinking I was protecting them from the Big Bad World.

Without knowing it, I have started changing how I live life “outside The Wire.”

My circle of Non-custodial friends have stopped coming around or calling but, are replaced by a smaller group of Custodial work mates that understand me and have the same dark sense of humor I have now developed.

### *My Kids wonder*

**Why** Dad now starts searching their room methodically from the left of the door and works his way around to the other side to find that urgent missing toy or homework,

**Why** Dad uses his Work Voice more and more,

**Why** Dad interrogates them over small issues.

**Why** we don’t go to BBQ’s or Party’s as often as we used to.

**Why** we don’t go to Dinners at restaurants or Pub meals.

They start asking less and less for their friends to come over to play and prefer to go to their house.

They go to Mum more and more to ask for help rather than to me.

When their friends come over, they are read the Rules of the House. Or I ask for their Parents to come first in case I recognize their name. Some don’t come back.

My Wife would wonder what’s wrong and ask regularly. I would simply respond with it’s been a long shift or I’m just tired, without revealing the depth of issues effecting me, what was on my mind or the trauma I had been part of that day.

She has always done her best to keep the Kids quiet while I slept after a long night shift, and have a great meal ready when she could.

*But nothing helped to take the armour off.*

When we went to a Shopping centre as a Family, I would always walk behind my wife and Kids so if an EX Prisoner noticed me, I would indicate for them to go into the nearest shop as if they were not with me.

Constantly looking around for possible risks and distrusting everyone.

After my First Serious Assault by a prisoner, my main thought was how do I down play this so my wife doesn't worry? Even while being taken to hospital for Burns from a Bayne Marie tray of boiling hot baked beans being thrown at me.

Thankfully, other Officers attended my home to reassure my wife that I was OK.

Armour appears more in different forms over the Shifts but never comes off even during holidays. The Armour stays on.

As a first responder to medical emergencies, fires, assaults and self-harm within the centre the exposure to severe trauma increases, I treated everyone as the need required even though the room maybe contaminated with body fluids to the extreme or the offender doesn't want help and is combative.

The ones that we cannot save dwell on the mind what if I had seen it sooner or they called for help quicker even years down the track.

I become more and more distrusting of everyone, and show less empathy for family and friends' issues.

I cannot handle large crowds without being overwhelmed, (hyper vigilance) and if I don't get out in time, anxiety increases to a physical reaction that forces an exit strategy not usually appropriate to society standards... *Penny is helping to calm or prompt me to get out.*

I spend too... much time in front of the TV just zoning out trying to decompress from work and end up stress eating junk food just to settle the mind... *Playing with Penny helps break the cycle.*

In the End sleeping is the only time the mind rests, until... the nightmares enter and breaks into that sacred time, with sweating, tense muscles, heart palpitations and vivid recollection of events that I just cannot forget... *Penny is helping a lot.*

I find myself dwelling on the worse case scenarios for most life situations, instead of allowing life to play out.

All too soon, the Kids have grown up and I have missed the majority of key life milestones with them and the enjoyable moments and memories for myself.

The Most important lessons I have now learned in my Corrections Career are:

- 1) Don't be afraid to share your feelings with those that love you, no matter how disturbing the issues.
- 2) You are never weak to ask for help.
- 3) You can get your Emotional life back and start caring by sharing with Family, Friends and counselors.
- 4) The smallest things in Life can make a difference. "Penny" (My Service Dog)
- 5) You don't need to face things either alone or in Silence.
- 6) There is always somebody who has had a similar experience.
- 7) Remember you are not alone.

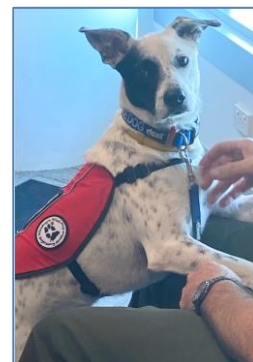
If you were able to reflect on this please visit the Organization that is supporting me with my service dog.

If you feel like helping Penny <https://gofund.me/cf246f1b>

<https://whiskeywish.org.au/>



"Penny"



[Support and counselling - Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment](#)  
<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/mental-health-helplines>