

Cst. Douglas-Hunt's Journey to Resilience

“Empowering Resilience” is this year’s theme of **Victims and Survivors of Crime Week**, taking place across Canada from May 28-June 3, 2017. Resilience is the ability to recover from a set-back and create a new normal in the aftermath of a traumatic event.

This theme of resilience is dramatically portrayed in the story by Victoria Police Officer Cst. Lane Douglas-Hunt. On January 17, 2011, Cst. Douglas-Hunt’s world was turned upside down and her life was altered forever when she responded to what she thought was a routine shoplifting complaint at the downtown 711 store on Douglas Street in Victoria, B.C. As Cst. Douglas-Hunt was leaving the investigation at the store, she held the door open and smiled for a customer who was entering the store. Suddenly and unexpectedly she was stabbed with a knife by this customer. Cst. Douglas-Hunt quickly and courageously fought back, but was stabbed numerous times in the hands, neck and ear as she defended herself. Despite her injuries, Cst. Douglas-Hunt was able to pin the man down, and two bystanders rushed to help her handcuff the attacker. Because of this violent encounter, the attacker Guy Séguin was charged with attempted murder, and sentenced to 10 years in jail.

Cst. Douglas-Hunt suffered physical as well as emotional injuries from this incident, but was able to persevere and demonstrate resiliency to overcome the hardships. According to Cst. Douglas-Hunt, “resiliency is recognizing that you have a new normal and it’s adapting to and embracing that new normal and putting one foot in front of the other regardless.” Several years passed before Cst. Douglas-Hunt began to adjust to her new normal, however it wasn’t a quick or easy journey. In her reminiscences, Cst. Douglas-Hunt confides “... some days you need to accept that you may have a bad day but know that’s okay and be kind to yourself on that day.” According to Hunt, “dealing with the trauma that comes after the incident is foreign and in some situations you have no control in how your body and subconscious mind is going to react to that trauma. It was extremely difficult.” She experienced flashbacks and nightmares after the incident and was diagnosed with PTSD. To escape the trauma, she watched a lot of TV; however she soon realized that it was not productive or healthy.

Cst. Douglas-Hunt has several suggestions that helped her overcome the trauma. She states, “Take a breath. Be easy on yourself, realize that something traumatic has happened, don’t rush to get back to that word normal. Take some time, tell your support system this happened. Let people know what’s going on. Then, start to look at different avenues of therapy, such as peer-to-peer support, counselling, meditation or hypnosis. There’s so many different forms out there. Be patient and find what works for you. Give yourself something to look forward to such as a goal, something that you have always wanted to try, but you’ve never tried, or you have never set the time aside to do it.” Cst. Douglas-Hunt emphasizes that there is not a ‘one size fits all approach,’ and what works for her might not work for everyone.

Cst. Douglas-Hunt embraced her recovery through different methods and by finding a balance in her life. Fitness is one form of therapy that she focuses on. She enjoys exercises such as heavy lifting and high intensity cardio sessions that require a lot of focus. She also believes that “setting goals are important to help you move forward because when you meet a goal you feel good about yourself.” She registered for the World Police and Fire Games and was awarded with the gold medal in August 2011 at The Toughest Competitor Alive event. Also, that same

year, she became the first female in Victoria's history to become a member of the Emergency Response Team (ERT), a dream she had for many years. Cst. Douglas-Hunt believes that it is important to have a mix of activities and hobbies. She demonstrates this by her passion for motorcycling as well as her tropical fish hobby. "I have Hawaii in my dining room. It's great. Its really relaxing."

A book that Cst. Douglas-Hunt found valuable during her recovery was Surviving the Shadows: A Journey of Hope into Post-Traumatic Stress by a former undercover police officer Bob Delaney. This book shares Bob's own experiences of grappling with PTSD as a result of his work and talks about the importance of a person suffering from PTSD to be able to seek someone to talk with who has been through a similar situation for peer-to-peer support which can add hope to the sufferer.

Cst. Douglas-Hunt hopes that by sharing her dramatic story, she can give at least one other victim of crime the support and inner strength that is needed to overcome difficult crime situations.

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