



How to be One of the Good Guys

Special Online Heroes Edition



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The "Good Guys"

Police officers -- the "Good Guys"? OK, so there are some bad cops out there. But this is not about those guys. This is the story of the "Good Guys" -- the overwhelming majority of the men and women who wear a badge. While they don't wear white hats like the "Good Guys" of popular legend, police officers do their fair share of riding to the rescue and rounding up the "Bad Guys."

For most police officers its the role of a lifetime --to perform heroic deeds and make a real difference in the lives of people in their community.

On the pages that follow, you will learn qualities that elevate the exceptional cop to the status of "One of the Good Guys". Along the way take stock of yourself -- find out if you are on the right track to becoming a "Good Guy" -- whether you wear a badge or not.

Introducing the "Good Guys"

Compassion

"To be a great police officer, you have to care about people. Compassion is often an underrated quality. You have to want to help people. The majority of the people you come in contact with are calling for help and have been victimized somehow. The last thing those people want or need is some cop who is acting like he's just going through the motion and not caring about them and willing to do everything he can do to help them. Compassion is absolutely essential.

Officer Jim Adams, Hanford Police Dept., Hanford, CA

"One of the most important skills law enforcement officers need is people skills. If you don't have good people skills, you cannot interact with the community and serve their needs. "

Officer Mitchell Garcia, Houston Police Department

"If you don't have compassion you are going to become very cynical. Most of the people - even if they are some of our less well off people in society - need compassion. If you don't have compassion for them you are going to come across as being very arrogant and authoritative. That style doesn't work. Someone who is compassionate can get responses."

Officer Daren Matteson, Hanford Police Dept., Hanford, CA

Compassion





A sense of humor may seem like an unlikely choice -- but ask any law enforcement officer and they'll tell you that it is essential for dealing with the absurdities and tragedies that dominate a law enforcer's career. Learning to cope -- decently and without rancor -- is your best hope for making it all the way to retirement.

"A sense of humor is essential to coping with the realities of a law enforcement career. This job is a tough job, and you've got to have your priorities in order" Det. Staha added that along with humor, learning to leave the stresses of police work at the office, and a strong religious faith keeps your life in balance.

Det. Howard Staha, Austin Police Dept., Austin, TX,

A Sense of Humor



"Maturity is important. And not necessarily in age. A lot of times we get kids right out of college and they lack maturity and will make childish mistakes. A mental maturity is important. Every day in this job you will be required to conduct yourself in a professional way --- many times under stressful situations. That requires maturity, usually beyond your years."
Officer Mitchell Garcia, Houston Police Dept., Houston, TX

"You have to think in terms of the enormous authority that the police officer has. You're carrying a gun. You have power to do things to people. Peoples' lives are in your hands in certain situations. Maturity is absolutely essential."

Officer Jim Adams, Hanford Police Dept., Hanford, CA



"I was only 20 years old when I first put on a uniform. At the time I thought I was very mature. For a police officer though, I wasn't – and I learned that very quickly. You have to be mature and have some life experience. You won't be able to relate to the good and bad in our society if you don't have some true-life experiences."

Officer Daren Matteson, Hanford Police Dept., Hanford, CA

Maturity



Integrity

A thief believes everybody steals. An honest person knows that is not true. As a police officer this is your core value - it's called integrity and there's no on/off switch.

"I think integrity is important with this job. There are so many things that can happen. If you lack integrity, you can fall off that thin line and go astray. In our local Junior Police Academy we teach that integrity is not something you have a little bit of -- you've either got it or you don't. I find that when integrity is the top priority -- all the other character traits fall into place."

Sgt. Tom Long, Herkimer Police Department, Herkimer, Ny

"Needless to say, if you can't abide by the law, you should not enforce the law. Law enforcement officers are presented with many opportunities to cross the line or break the law. There have been many times when I've gone to a business in the middle of the night and could have taken something. Chances are no one would know. That's the difference between a criminal and an officer of the law – not succumbing to the temptation to cross the line. The law is like a line in the sand – you're on one side or another. You either abide by the law, or break it. It all ties back to integrity. If you cannot be trusted as a person, you cannot be trusted to enforce the law. If you are not willing to tell the truth, no matter what the consequences are, there is no room for you in law enforcement. "

Officer Jim Adams, Hanford Police Dept., Hanford, CA

"If you aren't ethical and you are sliding the rules, people are going to pick up on it. If I bend the rules at school it would be hard for me to explain to the kids. Your credibility with the public and with fellow officers is very important. You have to stay out of trouble. If you tend to be a bar hopper, you are not going to be respected or have the authority to be arresting people for doing the same thing you are doing. The citizens are going to pick up on that and sooner or later your credibility is going to be shot."