

# HeartMath's Coherence Advantage™ Helping Colorado Police Force In Its Mission: Serve Community With 'Character, Competence and Cooperation'

John Quinn of the Glendale Police Department in Colorado was reading an article in ESPN's online magazine when he first learned about HeartMath. "They mentioned HeartMath, and specifically mentioned the kicker at the time for the Baltimore Ravens, Billy Cundiff, that he was using (HeartMath techniques and technology) before games to kind of psych his mindset."



## HeartMath Joins Police Force

Quinn's introduction to HeartMath was in March 2012, when he was a sergeant with the Glendale Police Department. Now, nearly a year and a half and a big promotion later, Lt. John Quinn has a lot more responsibility in the department and knows much more about HeartMath. So does the police force of Glendale, an urban community nestled in the heart of the Denver metropolitan area and completely surrounded by the city of Denver.



After reading the ESPN article and researching HeartMath, Quinn connected up with Institute of HeartMath Director of Sales and Marketing Brian Kabaker and soon became a Qualified Instructor for the Coherence Advantage® training program for law enforcement and other first responders.

In addition to the duties and rigors of his new command, Quinn took on the responsibility of training the police department's 30 sworn officers in HeartMath's methods. He says it's paying off.

**Prep, Sustain and Reset** is a tool that includes what HeartMath calls *the three keys to building resiliency*:

- **Prep** to become more coherent and reduce stress reactions before upcoming events or going on duty.
- **Sustain** your coherence throughout the day by establishing regular practices and remembering to refresh your composure in between activities.
- **Reset** by shifting to a coherent state as soon as possible after a stress reaction so you minimize the energy drains.

"I think we're just coming up on a year. ... I was instructed in late July (2012)," he said. "I've noticed changes more inside the department than I'd say outside the department, and that's just officers' demeanors, being able to work better with co-workers."

## HeartMath Tools Offer a Steadying Hand

"We have in our patrol manual ... the phrase *Prep, Sustain and Reset* and we use that on a regular basis." Quinn said, "When the department's shift supervisors see that officers are getting a little amped on a call, they'll use the term reset to bring them back into focus. Heart-Focused Breathing has been employed effectively in a number of police operations."

"I have detectives that use the Coherence Advantage techniques before interviews and they say it helps them maintain the calm that they need to focus on the questions at hand and build rapport."



## HeartMath Tools Integrated Into Police Department's Active Shooter Program

"Since Columbine in 2001," Glendale, Colo., Police Department Lt. John Quinn said, "the way that law enforcement trains for active shooters has changed drastically. We realized that SWAT teams aren't the best to handle those situations when they're moving so fast, and we needed to train first responders and patrol officers to basically deal with what SWAT used to deal with."

In Glendale's case, that led to the Active Shooter program. "The training is rigorous and stressful," he said, "with officers being placed in scenarios that raise their heart rates and adrenaline, frequently resulting in officers being overwhelmed with what was being thrown at them."

"I have noted," Quinn said, "in the time since I came back (from Coherence Advantage training) and instructed all my officers in Heart-Focused Breathing and the HeartMath techniques and had an Active Shooter scenario day, the officers were able to maintain calm better, were able to make quicker, better decisions, thinking on their feet."

"They were actually getting ahead of the instructors, which had never happened before. I think it was very vital that HeartMath tools were working for them and they were able to stay calm and to stay focused on the tasks."

He says it's helped one of his detectives a lot, when he goes into an interview, to stay calm and stay focused on the questions, and to be able to react better to what the suspect is saying and then go into that follow-up question.

Quinn said the detective's use of Heart-Focused Breathing before interviews has produced another important benefit. The ability to remain calm has transferred over to the suspects and actually been able to calm them down as well and increase their vulnerability.

In another example, he said, "One of our officers has a little anxiety when it comes to firearms qualifications, and one of the things I really work with my firearms instructor on is to go into Heart-Focused Breathing before they qualify the officers. We have noticed an improvement in the officer's scores, through the Heart-Focused Breathing, and performance anxieties prior to qualification."

## Glendale Lieutenant's Personal Perspective

Lt. Quinn can cite numerous occasions when the Coherence Advantage training has made a difference in Glendale police officers' performance, but it has affected him personally in many ways as well.

### A Horrific Scene

"There was a really bad call that we went through last October in which there was a fire inside of a bar where three gentlemen were accused of brutally stabbing and killing five people inside the bar and then setting the bar on fire to cover their tracks. (*One suspect faces the death penalty and is awaiting trial. The other two pleaded guilty, with one receiving a 70-year prison term and the other expected to be sentenced to life in prison.*)

"I was the second officer on the scene. I used the HeartMath training and was able to stay calm, gather my thoughts and try to make entry into the bar. I was then pulled out when the fire department got there." The scene Quinn witnessed was horrific, but he said he was thankful his HeartMath training helped him prepare for and then, efficiently deal with the situation in the moment and its aftermath.

## Aurora Movie Theater Mass Shooting

On July 20, 2012, just one week before Quinn's Coherence Advantage training, the mass shooting at an Aurora, Colo. movie theater occurred during a midnight screening. He was not one of the Glendale officers who responded to that scene and wasn't even in the state at the time of the incident, in which 12 people were killed and 70 others injured. Nevertheless, it affected him very personally.

Quinn, his wife and two teenage daughters were on vacation in San Diego, Calif. at the time of the movie theater shootings, but if the family had stayed home, that is precisely where the girls would have been that night.

"Had we been in Colorado, both my daughters would have been there because their varsity lacrosse team ... went that night to see the movie. So, they would have been in that theater. It was very close to home. I've talked to several of the kids that were inside the theater that night, about how they dealt with it and tried to help them."

"That night," Quinn said, "we ended up sending about 50 percent of our force to respond to that incident. I hadn't had the opportunity to work with the officers who responded to that incident before I got trained."

Quinn is confident, however, his coherence training would have helped.

"In the aftermath, absolutely," he said. "It was such a chaotic scene when they got there. They weren't responding inside the theaters, but they were dealing with the people that were outside. It was very traumatic for them, and it took them quite a while to get a handle on it, where they were able to deal with the situations they saw. Having this training would have definitely benefited them in being able to deal with the aftermath."

## The Coherence Advantage

Training for law enforcement, firefighters, emergency medical services personnel and other first responders, focuses on skills critical to effective performance and well-being in these often highly charged and stressful professions:

- Leveraging the ability to think clearly under pressure and discern appropriate solutions to problems.
- Increasing ability to maintain situational awareness.
- Diminishing symptoms of operational stress such as sleep disturbance and fatigue.
- Improving reaction times and coordination.
- Increasing personal resilience and stress tolerance.



## **A Police Lieutenant's Thoughts About HeartMath**

*In his own words, here are some thoughts Lt. John Quinn had during a recent interview about how HeartMath has impacted his professional and personal life.*

**HeartMath on Day 1** – “I’m a former Marine, went through eight years in the Marine Corps and then started my law enforcement career, and I wish this was Day 1, Class 1 training in boot camp and Day 1, Class 1 training in the police academy and Day 1 Class 1 training when I first got hired at the Glendale Police Department.

“I think it’s that important. I think we give our officers every tool they need to survive, except the important one, which is how to survive the career, and I think this training that we had and being able to utilize these skills have definitely given us tools to deal with the stresses that we face in this career.

“It can be overwhelming. It really can swallow you up if you’re not prepared for it, and I think with the HeartMath tools, it gives our officers a better edge to handle the pressures and the stressors of this job.”

**HeartMath and the Big Promotion** – “It’s very easy in Law enforcement to take the pressures home with you. And what I have noticed since using HeartMath is that on the drive home, by using a coherence technique I am able to leave the pressures of work at work. I arrive home calmer, more relaxed and really enjoy family time. In addition, the coherence techniques have helped me in my transition to my new position as lieutenant. Along with my promotion come more potential stressors. The extra energy I get from keeping my balance allows me to focus on what’s really important at work.”

**HeartMath at Meetings** – “I have noticed in meetings, my co-workers will say ... you were getting a little bit – not upset – but that I was starting to rise a little bit, and then I noticed that you started your Heart-Focused Breathing and it calmed you back to where you were when the meeting started. You can look over at somebody and go, ‘Oh, they really are focusing on their coherence.’”

**HeartMath and the Chief of Police** – Quinn said Glendale Police Chief William Haskins is right there with the rest of the force.

“(Chief Haskins) has been on board since the beginning. ... He loved it. He was in my first training class. He uses the techniques. He’s even downloaded apps onto his smart phone, so he has breathing techniques on his phone. He’s very much into it.”

**HeartMath on the Home front** – One of my daughters is a pitcher, the younger of the two, and it didn’t go very well for her last season. She kind of got beat up on a little bit. We really worked on her composure with Heart-Focused Breathing and being able to just stay focused on the mound when she got the ball back (from the catcher). She just kind of gets in her rhythms and it’s really helped her focus on her pitching.

“My other daughter has struggled at the plate a lot, and she’s been able to use this and stay focused on the ball. She’s in the on-deck circle, getting ready to go up to the plate and she starts her Heart-Focused Breathing to maintain her calm and be able to focus a little better and not be anxious at the plate.”

**To discuss your specific needs, call Brian at 831-818-2354 or email [bkabaker@heartmath.org](mailto:bkabaker@heartmath.org)  
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