

What Changed After the Job?

A worksheet for looking at subtle shifts in mood, habits, reactions, and connection since becoming an officer. These changes don't always announce themselves, they tend to arrive quietly, over months or years, until one day something feels a little off. This is a space to slow down and take stock.



Noticing Gradual Changes Over Time

Most shifts don't happen overnight. They accumulate, small adjustments to how you think, react, or move through the world. The challenge is that when change is gradual, it's easy to normalize it without ever consciously choosing it.

Think back to before the job

How would you have described yourself to a friend? What words came naturally, your humor, your patience, your energy level?

Compare that to now

Would those same words still apply? Which ones feel accurate, which ones feel like they belong to a different version of you?

When did you first notice a shift?

Was there a moment, a year, a specific assignment? Or has it been harder to pin down than that?

 There are no right answers here. The goal is honest observation, not judgment.

Mood, Sleep, Stress & Reactions

These are often the first places change shows up, and the easiest to dismiss as just "part of the job." Take a moment to answer honestly for each area.

Patience

How long is your fuse compared to before? Do small things at home set you off in ways they never used to?

Trust

Has your baseline assumption about people shifted? Do you find yourself reading threat into neutral situations?

Sleep

Are you getting enough? Do you wake up alert and ready, or does rest feel like something you just can't get right anymore?

Emotional Reactions

Are you quicker to anger, more numb, or both depending on the day? Do your reactions feel proportionate to what's happening?


Changes in Relationships & Connection

Questions to sit with

- Do the people closest to you feel like they still know you?
- Have you pulled back from friendships outside the job?
- Is it easier to talk to coworkers than family?
- Do you find yourself editing what you share at home?
- Have intimacy or communication patterns shifted with a partner?

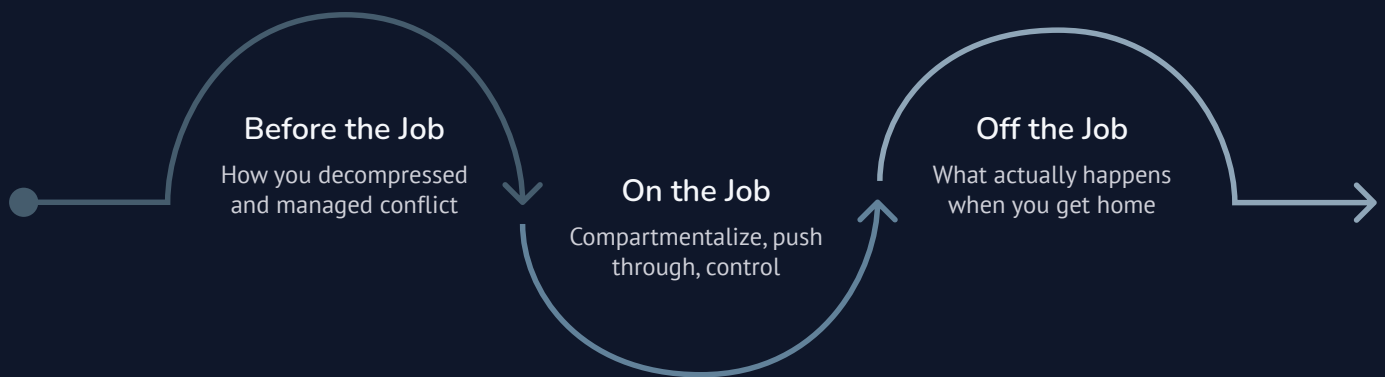
The job creates a kind of shared language that civilians, even close ones, don't always speak. That gap is real, and it can quietly widen over time without anyone intending it to.

Pulling back from connection is often a protection strategy. It works in the short term. Over time, it tends to cost more than it saves.


 Write down one relationship that feels more distant now than it did before you were commissioned. What do you think changed?

How You Handle Stress & Conflict Now

Coping strategies that serve you on the job don't always translate well off it. Take stock of what you're actually doing, not what you think you should be doing.



Many officers find that off-duty stress management defaults to avoidance, overwork, or emotional shutdown, habits that were adaptive under pressure but start to create friction at home. Naming the pattern is the first move toward changing it.

 Ask yourself: Am I managing stress, or just delaying it?

What Still Feels Like You, And What's Next

Not everything has changed. Part of this work is identifying what's still intact, the values, the humor, the habits that feel genuinely yours, and building from there. Awareness isn't the finish line, but it is the only real starting point.

01

Name what's still you

List three qualities, habits, or values that feel unchanged. These are anchors.

02

Name one thing you want back

Something you've noticed slipping, patience, presence, lightness, that you'd like to reclaim.

03

Identify one small step

Not a program or a plan. One thing you could do this week that moves toward the person you want to be off duty.

Noticing the drift is not a failure, it's evidence that you're paying attention. Regaining control starts here, with an honest look at what's changed and a deliberate choice about what comes next.

