

Firefighter Ministries is a non-profit, social services organization that seeks to provide for the spiritual, mental, and physical welfare of emergency workers nationwide. By providing them with a stable and caring support system, we are able to help them better serve their communities.

Firefighter Ministries provides a myriad of services to emergency workers and their families. All three primary facets (Spiritual, Mental, and Physical) of an emergency worker's life are cared for through the various programs offered. In addition to the various programs and projects, Firefighter Ministries provides two separate websites to offer easy access to information on each of the programs as well as being a separate resource unto themselves. The first of these two websites is www.firefighterministries.org which acts as the organization's official website while also housing the Phoenix Project for injured emergency workers, the Health and Fitness Project, and the Corps of Chaplains. The second of these websites is www.fallenfirefighter.com housing the Line of Duty Death Assistance Project and its related resources. The websites are updated on a monthly basis with articles, resources, and information on pertinent topics for emergency service workers. We also provide confidential assistance and referral services through our Corps of Chaplains.



Firefighter Ministries

**Building Healthy and
Happy Families**

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For spouses and children of emergency service workers, family life can sometimes be tough. 911 families typically face issues that most other families will never have to deal with. Twenty-four hour shifts, mandatory over-time, life-threatening situations, traumatic stress, and the suppression of emotions are all things that can plague the dynamics of a 911 family.

However, along with the challenges come opportunities to strengthen and nurture our most valuable and cherished loved ones. We can increase the care available for each family member and the family unit as a whole. Through specific actions and considerations we can not only strengthen our families but increase our ability to rebound from stress.



How does one make a 911 family stronger and more resilient? Here are some tips to keep in mind to build a healthy and happy family:

- 1) Make sure that there is a family structure with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
- 2) Learn about conflict resolution and problem solving skills. Define common triggers of conflict within the family and come up with steps on how to deal with that conflict. Knowing what conflicts occur most often and coming up with solutions, in advanced, can make resolution a little easier.
- 3) Communicate with family members and make them aware of the stress that comes from working or volunteering in the emergency services. Teach older members of the family to recognize signs of stress.
- 4) Build a social support system that can provide care and encouragement during difficult times. Such social support systems include friends, church, social groups, and other family members of emergency workers.
- 5) Know what organizational support systems are available.

These include peer support teams, chaplaincy programs, support groups, mental health benefits, and Critical Incident Stress programs.

For those who are married, here are some tips on keeping this relationship strong:

- 1) Communication is the key. It is crucial and vital to the relationship to keep a line of communication always open. Being non-judgmental or reactionary to issues that are discussed will provide a safe and comfortable mode for conversation and communication to take place.
- 2) Spend time alone with each other at least once a week. Make this time sacred by keeping distractions to a minimum and free of interruptions. Set up child-care in advance; turn the pager off, turn the cell phone off.
- 3) Don't make your work or your volunteer duties more important than your spouse or children.
- 4) Allow for open emotions. This includes grief, controlled anger, frustration, and stress. Don't be judgmental about these emotions. They are all normal and they all need to be released. As long as individuals express these emotions in ways that will not hurt another, know that it is important to be able to express them.
- 5) Be willing to seek professional help if needed.

Building strong and healthy families takes patience, hard work, understanding, communication, and a whole lot of love.