



"When feeling particularly stressed, I end my day by going home, sitting in my favorite chair and create a neutral sanctuary in my mind."

Denver police Detective Danny Veith

Aurora Police Officer Tom Abbott, along with others in law enforcement, closes his eyes and unwinds during a stress-management training class Thursday morning at the Wheat Ridge Police Department.

Photos by Andy Cross. The Denver Post

# Stress class helps cops cope

By Felisa Cardona The Denver Post

Wheat Ridge police Detective Cheri Ells isn't sure whether she's stressed out.

But with a motorcycle crash and a collection of crimes-against-children cases under her belt, it's not shocking to think she could have post-traumatic stress.

"Sometimes it's bothersome, but maybe I don't realize I am stressed out," she said.

Ells, 42, took in deep breaths, visualized her stressors dissolving and created a sanctuary inside her mind during a training seminar held at the Police Department last Thursday.

"I may not have been as jumpy if I did this," Ells said in thinking back to her motorcycle accident. "I could have gotten right back in the saddle."

The department hired Lisa Wimberger, owner of Trance Personnel Consulting Group, a company that also is providing stress-management training to the Denver, Lafayette and Westminster police departments.

Wimberger used to only conduct training for corporations but decided to help police officers with their stress when one of her family members in law enforcement was having trouble cop-



Lisa Wimberger, founder and chief executive of Trance Personnel Consulting Group, teaches a class on stress management Thursday morning to members of law enforcement. "There is no end to what the cops deal with," she said.

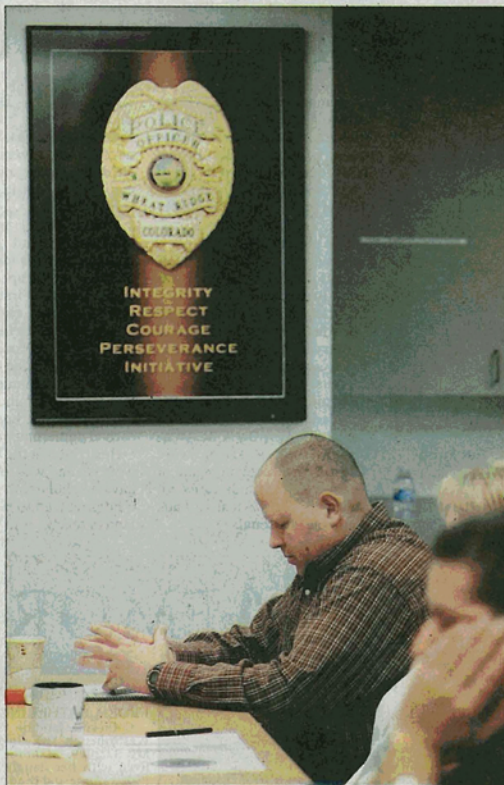
ing at home.

"There is no end to what the cops deal with," she said. "They have that day-to-day stress and pervasive feeling of, 'I could be potentially involved in some kind of incident or die,' she

said.

Wimberger told the class in Wheat Ridge that when officers are first hired, they are picked because they are more psychologically fit than

STRESS » 5B



Wheat Ridge Police Officer Dwayne Baker, background, relaxes during a stress-relief class Thursday at the department. Some officers use a "grounding" technique for coping. *Andy Cross, The Denver Post*

## STRESS: More support systems needed for cops, consultant says

◀◀ FROM 1B

But more officers die of suicide nationwide each year than in the line of duty, she said.

"They are doing a great job at survival and street training and that is where the money and time is going," Wimberger said. "There isn't enough time and money going into support systems."

A half-day of Wimberger's training costs about \$1,000, but the price does not have a cap of how many officers can attend the class.

Ells said that while she may use some of the stress-reduction techniques, she is a more "concrete" learner and had some difficulty getting into the exercise.

"It was hard to visualize stuff," she said.

Denver police Detective Danny Veith said the training has helped him cope, particularly after difficult encounters with suspects.

Veith uses a "grounding" technique, where a person visualizes there is a connection from the base of the spine to the center of the Earth and then pictures the stress being dumped down the connection into the Earth.

"When feeling particularly stressed, I end my day by going home, sitting in my favorite chair and create a neutral sanctuary in my mind," he said. "I customize my visualization by incorporating prayer. Spending 20 minutes in the prayerful sanctuary I create in my mind, followed by 30 minutes of aerobic exercise, eliminates my need to self-medicate with alcohol."

Wimberger says some officers engage in self-destructive behavior because they may not know there are other methods to rid themselves of stress.

*Felisa Cardona: 303-954-1219  
or fcardona@denverpost.com*