#90 (OBED MAGNY)

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Jerry Ratcliffe:

Reducing crime features, conversations with influential thinkers in the police service and leading crime and policing researchers.

With a background as a Sacramento police officer and as a co-founder of the American Society of Evidence-Based Policing, Dr. Obed Magny is now a coach helping agencies with emotional intelligence and organizational culture over a coffee. We discuss these topics and a whole lot more.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I am your host Jerry Ratcliffe, and this is Reducing Crime. Good fun, this episode because I got to chat to my old mate, Obed Magny. Obed spent 17 years with the Sacramento Police Department working everything from frontline policing to professional standards. During his time with Sacramento, he caught the evidence-based policing bug becoming a co-founding member of the American Society of Evidence-Based Policing. Since then, Dr. Magny has become a leading voice on organizational leadership, police culture, and emotional intelligence. He's also a policing fellow at the National Policing Institute where he contributed to the Council on Policing reforms and Race.

He has a doctorate in organizational leadership from the University of La Verne focusing on police officer job satisfaction, and he's an author of the forthcoming book to be published by Routledge, "From Vision to Action". I wanted to catch up with Obed and chat about emotional intelligence in part because of his 2021 Journal article co-authored with the wonderful Natalie Todak titled Emotional Intelligence and Policing, A State-of-the-Art Review, as it won the Emerald Publishing Literati Award. We chatted during the recent IACP conference in Denver where I was hanging out at the Hotel Teatro. I'd had quite a few meetings at the hotel coffee shop, and as you join us, I'm chatting with the delightful barista, lamenting that Obed didn't even fit in the stylish coffee shop chairs.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Do you see that, Ma'am? We had to move from those chairs because the chair's not big enough for this mother's shoulders. [laughter]

Obed Magny:

I was feeling a little entrapped. I was like, Hey man, this is straight jacket. This, this ain't working you. [laughter]

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Let's go to that corner. This chair isn't big enough for you, is it?

Obed Magny:

I'm over here. Hold on. How much time do you spend in the gym? Come on, man. You know you got to work them shoulders, man. Come on now.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Oh dear God.

Obed Magny:

Alright, chicks, dig the big shoulders. You can spread out your great big ghost.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I just spread my wings. Sit over that side. There you go. Which time do you spend in the gym? That depends. Being physically healthy makes a big difference.

Obed Magny:

Yeah. I'm just trying to get like you man, trying to get on that 0% body fat. I know.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Look at you. Best physical state, best mental state. You're all one with the universe now, aren't you, mate?

Obed Magny:

You got to, man. If you're not taking care of your mental health, your physical health, man, you're just dying, working out. I've been doing this since high school, college, working out almost like second nature.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Is it like stress relief for you?

Obed Magny:

Man, it's stress relief. It's therapy, it's everything. Sometimes it's kind of like a cheat cold, right? If I'm listening to a podcast and I'm working out now I'm giving myself some information upstairs while I'm working on the rest of the body downstairs.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I'm feeling the auras coming off you, my friend. Or maybe it's this pumpkin latte. Shelly recommended this.

Obed Magny:

What was a pumpkin? What?

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Pumpkin latte. A pumpkin latte. Don't judge me. I'm trying it because I'm following the Arnold Bax rule. A man should try everything once except incest and folk dancing, so I'm trying it. Listen man, it's a bit weird,

Obed Magny:

But when you're drinking coffee, it's got to be black, period. End of discussion.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

We're still talking coffee right now.

Obed Magny:

We're talking coffee. Yes. Yes, we're talking coffee. Yeah, that too.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I was at a function last night and Chuck Ramsey, former Philly police commissioner, a legend in policing, was telling me that he drinks black coffee and the reason he drinks black coffee, he used to take it with cream and sugar, but when he worked the roughest part of Chicago as a young cop, they were going to the equivalent of a seven 11 or the corner store is the only place that they could get coffee 24 7, and they would actually bet on whether the milk or the cream would curdle when it hit the coffee or not. He said it was so bad he just started drinking black coffee and to this day because of that, he drinks black coffee.

Obed Magny:

Oh man, There you go.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Where did you grow up? So how did you get into law enforcement?

Obed Magny:

So here's the origin story. I was born in Miami, Florida, and my parents shortly after I was born, moved to Boston, Massachusetts.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That must have been a shock.

Obed Magny:

Well, I was young when it happened and then subsequently moved to California. The idea of California when you're living on the East Coast is like everything looks like LA and San Diego and like, oh, everybody's at the beach surfing. I was like, I'm going to go to California. So of course I come to California and I go to Sacramento and I'm looking around and I'm like, oh, well hold on here. Is that a guy on a horse?

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You are nowhere near the beach,

Obed Magny:

Right? So I learned the hard way, but I got hired by the Sacramento Police Department when I was,

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I mean, for an inland city, it's quite nice and the area is lovely, but it ain't the beach.

Obed Magny:

Look man, I'm a city slicker. If we don't have tall buildings everywhere blocking out the sunlight, I better be at the beach. And if I'm not at the beach, I'm not happy. I was looking to start a career in law enforcement.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Why?

Obed Magny:

When I was younger, I used to watch TV shows like TJ Hooker. I know some people listen to this.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I remember TJ Hooker, okay, other than Heather Locklear, that was one of the worst shows of all time.

Obed Magny:

Come on, man, you throw, what was it? The baton? And the guy falls down when it hits him in the leg. It's like

Jerry Ratcliffe:

They was so pleased with that. They included that in the opening credits. Come on. It was terrible.

Obed Magny:

We had good TV back in the day.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That was not a show. That was a disaster on film. Come on,

Obed Magny:

Listen man. There was a lot of good TV back then, but no, I wouldn't say TJ HoCo was one of the best shows ever. I always had a in the back of my mind like, hey, getting into policing wouldn't be a bad idea. But it wasn't front of mind. I was kind of undecided.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Even though you're influenced by William Shatner and he's not exactly known being the ultimate thespian.

Obed Magny:

Listen, I just saw the car chasers and I was like, I want to do that. That looks cool. I want to be able to drive to the side and then have the hubcaps fly off. And when we had hubcaps people listening to this hubcaps, what are those? But yeah, so something that I had in the back of my mind, but I was still kind of undecided. So when I got into college, I kind had this interest of just getting into policing and I wanted a job where you're not just making a difference, but you can see the tangibles of doing something good for the community.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So what were you doing in college?

Obed Magny:

Playing football and track and field.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

What position did you play for in football?

Obed Magny:

I was an offensive guard and defensive tackle.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Okay, so this is an audio podcast and I think that tells at least the Americans what size you are then.

Obed Magny:

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm not your skinny guy.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

We just had to move chairs because you're so bloody wide, mate.

Obed Magny:

If y'all see these chairs that we were sitting in, I literally couldn't even spread my shoulders

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Apart. When we're done recording, I'm taking you back to a chair to take a photograph of this right?

Obed Magny:

Deal. These chairs are terrible where we're at right now. It's cool. But no, I was in school. I don't know, I was just looking, just kind of finding my way a little bit. And then again, for one reason or another, the law enforcement policing thing kind of came in and so I decided I was going to major in criminal justice and then that kind of just spearheaded and I started that path down the road of policing. How long were you in the jail? 17 years. I'm like 17 plus years. It feels like 17 days. It just went by so fast.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Highlights?

Obed Magny:

Oh my god, too many. What I really enjoyed the most was meeting people in the streets. You'll talk to officers and they'll say what they loved the most was the people that they worked with, this, that, and I love the people I worked with, but I'm a people person. When I'm in a room with different people from different backgrounds, I feel comfortable just something innate in me. I love to engage people. I like to learn about people where they come from, their backgrounds, good, bad, indifferent, whatever you want to call it. We all have some inherent value that we bring into this world. Even people who I've arrested or I've had to put handcuffs on and things like that.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

What were the low light times in the job?

Obed Magny:

This is going to be trivial. There's almost, I wouldn't say there's too many. I think it's a reframing. Obviously when you work, you don't get to pick your hours and your days, especially when you're a new officer. And as somebody who loves college football, and I love the Miami Hurricanes, shout out to my Kane fans who's listened to this.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That's okay. I will entirely edit that bit out.

Obed Magny:

All good. Not being able to pick your schedule. And I know it's a first world problem, but that was a low light.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I think it can be a big deal, especially even still in 2025, where women are the primary caregivers regardless of when everybody's working. It can impact women's careers because they can't pick their schedule. And so it has career implications,

Obed Magny:

Right? And it's expected if you're a medical doctor or if you're working in the trauma unit, there's going to be some days where you're working overtime if you don't want to work overtime.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You and I first met and we met because you're one of that core group that started the great thing that is now the American Society of Evidence-Based Policing. How did you get into that?

Obed Magny:

Renee Mitchell, everybody knows Renee, Dr. Renee Mitchell, I should say

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Former podcast guest, I think episode number 13, way back in the day.

Obed Magny:

Oh, look at that. Lucky 13. Lucky 13. So Renee and I used to work at the Sacramento Police Department, so we were coworkers. So I already got my master's degree.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Your master's degree was in

Obed Magny:

My master's degree was in emergency services administration. And my doctorate's in organizational leadership, I don't recommend you guys do this, but I was in school for five consecutive years while working full-time as a police officer. How I did it, I don't know

Jerry Ratcliffe:

The exhaustion levels, I can't imagine,

Obed Magny:

Man, I had to get up at three in the morning to work out because there would've been no time to do it at any other time. Yeah, yeah. So I'm glad that's behind me. I'm done with it. Me and Renee used to talk all the time about improving policing and she would talk about some other people that guys like Jason Potts and other folks around the country who were thinking the same thing. And we're just like, okay, so it's not just me who thinks this way. Me and Renee, you just talk about this all the time. So a few of us got together down in Southern California. We had a conversation. We had our first conference at Arizona State University,

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Second one I hosted in Philly. And by then it was already growing.

Obed Magny:

Yeah, growing. And so that's how this whole thing started. Why wouldn't you use strategies solutions to solve problems while at the same time doing the least amount of harm to the community?

Jerry Ratcliffe:

It's about making the whole business of policing better.

Obed Magny:

And so we have to have that come to Jesus meeting or come to Jesus moment, so to speak. We know there's some things that just don't work and you see the symptoms of it everywhere. Recruiting and retention. For example, back in my day sound like I'm 99 years old, I'm not 99, but

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I dunno what you have to worry about. I'm so old. When I was a kid, the Dead Sea was only slightly unwell.

Obed Magny:

This guy, this guy we're probably closer than you think in age, but back in my day, I remember when I applied to the Boston Police Department, there was a line coming out the front door out to the sidewalk wrapped around the sidewalk. It was almost like you were going to a concert of your favorite.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Wow. Going to see those days again.

Obed Magny:

But that was a normal thing. It was the same thing with the Massachusetts State police. So when I applied there, obviously I didn't get in with either one of them. And now you can't even get a 16, 17, 18-year-old to even see that as an option

Jerry Ratcliffe:

In many cases, you can't get anybody in their twenties to think about it as an option.

Obed Magny:

And then you compound that with, I've done trainings with police organizations all over, and one of the questions I always ask is like, okay, raise your hand if your kid came to you and said, Hey mom, dad, I want to be a police officer. How many of you guys would encourage your kids to not get into policing? Almost a hundred percent of the hands go up.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That's amazing how much that has changed. You see these generational families of people in policing going back their fathers, their grandfathers, and now they're not recommending it now.

Obed Magny:

Yeah, this isn't unique thing. So as a doctoral student, when I first got involved with emotional intelligence, getting to understand people engagement, I didn't know that there was an actual terminology for it. So I come across this terminology, emotional intelligence, and I'm like, oh my God, this is it. This is it. We need this training in policing because this is why people say cops are assholes and this, that, and the third.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So I'm sure there's a very academic definition of what emotional intelligence is, but can you give me the policing definition? And what I mean by that is how would you sell it to me as a police officer, why I should learn about this and give a shit about it.

Obed Magny:

It's managing your emotions when you're coming up to a situation where there's a lot of conflict and managing the emotions of other people when they're having a crisis. And it's not necessarily a crisis per se, like something bad is happening. You've heard the expression reading the room. Emotional intelligence is reading people.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Oh, it's something I'm spectacularly bad at. You've seen my sense of humor in public engagements.

Obed Magny:

Yes, dude, this dude man, come on. Now I won't even mention the half that I've seen in your presentations, but with your presentations, you may not be aware of it, but you always display that emotional intelligence when you're doing your presentations, right? You read the audience, you're engaged with the audience, you show pictures, you connect it to the reason why they're in the room in the first place, and then you make it relatable.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Well, I try to And is that the key to it? That's it. So we are very good at teaching police officers policies because we don't want to get sued and we want them to get jammed up. But this is not that. This is, or having police officers just think about themselves and is it their reactions to the incidents that's taking place or is it more than that?

Obed Magny:

It's the reaction. But what is the genesis of the reaction? So without making it super long and convoluted,

When you come up to an event, how do you react in those situations? Are you someone who goes over the top, you think the worst or you somebody who's calm, cool, collected? Because you may have seen this before, you may have experienced this before. You have a different read on it. That's what emotional intelligence is. I will give you a specific example. Former officer that I know, tell me an incident where him and his training officer go to a call for service and there's a group of guys at a house or they're just hanging out at something like that. From the trainees perspective, this is a black officer and these are black people who are hanging out at the house. He's in training. So he gets out the car, he is going to go talk to him, his training officer's like, what in the hell are you doing? And he's like, got to

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Talk to people.

Obed Magny:

I'm just going to go talk to these guys. And his training officer's like, Hey man, you need backup. His training officer's perceiving this situation as a DEFCON TWO, big red handle. And he's like, they're just talking.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

There's just a bunch of guys hanging out.

Obed Magny:

And so that situation there got to the point where it was so contentious they had to be split up because a pretty innocuous situation was perceived way more harshly by one person than somebody else.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So is it to some degree an awareness of what am I bringing to this before we even start talking?

Obed Magny:

Well, it's that too. So if I'm going into a community that I'm not familiar with, it is my job to understand the culture, understand the people, the norms, all of those things of that community. Because I'm not familiar with that community. It is not the job of the community to know everything about me as the officer or as the individual. Nobody's going to go visit for our country and say, Hey man, you guys need to start doing this, this, that, and a third because that's how we do it in America.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That tends to be our foreign policy.

Obed Magny:

Well, That's another podcast with another guest. I leave that alone. But that's the thing is we're asking officers to go into these communities and many times we don't even give them the background or adequate training of understanding cultural norms. I'm loud. I have a friend of mine from Jersey. Well, the two of us get together. You would think the two of us would get ready to fight to the untrained eye is somebody from the northeast. Oh, they're just talking. They're just having a conversation. And so emotional intelligence is learning these things like, hey, certain people, certain situations, this is what it is. It is not something else.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

When we've talked in the past, you've discussed this as rather than something that's sort of esoteric and intellectual, you've described it to me as a deescalation tactic. What did you mean by that?

Obed Magny:

I'll give you a specific example. There was a call for service several years ago back. It was a Saturday morning. It was like 7:00 AM. Myself and a couple of patrol officers responded to a burglary in progress. We get there. We quickly found the bad guy, or I wouldn't say a bad guy. The individual who was breaking into the house,

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I think it's okay calling him a bad guy. We're not labeling for the rest of his life. He was doing a burglary.

Obed Magny:

So we catch the guy, we do a records check and we find that he lives around the corner. Now, I'm not the lead officer. I'm not the officer who's in charge. I'm not the prime guy. I'm just helping out with the paperwork. So I have the individual

in the back of my patrol car. He is handcuffed, he's cooperative, no fights or anything like that. We drive around the corner because the lead officer is going to do a probation search of the house 7:00 AM on a Saturday morning. And now he has this yelling and screaming outside of my window. So I look up and this officer is face to face-to-face with who I think was the mom. And you could hear her say, you're not coming into my effing house. You're not coming in to do no search, no nothing. And this officer's like, this isn't a negotiation. We going to do this. So I'm looking at this situation, I'm like, oh no,

Jerry Ratcliffe:
It's about to kick off.

Obed Magny:
Oh no. Oh no. Oh no. Now the good thing is when we talk about emotional intelligence, we were synergistic.

Jerry Ratcliffe:
I get what you mean, but that word is banned from this podcast.

Obed Magny:
It's all good. Thank God. I just resurrected it and it's coming back. At least while I'm on this episode. I get out my car and I beelined straight to that officer and the mom and I'm like, Hey, lemme talk to mom real quick. We have. He's like, Hey, please have at it. So I take mom with me, we walk down the sidewalk for probably the next 10 to 15 minutes. She mfs me up and down, just gives it to me, gives it to me. And all I did was just stood there. I just took it. Didn't argue. I acknowledged it.

Jerry Ratcliffe:
You're still getting paid the same,

Obed Magny:
Right? We're talking about deescalation now. I've already recognized we've got a potential use of force situation. I stepped in and prevented that first. Now we've got another situation where mom is irate, but I know she's not irate. She's like, she hates me as the individual or she hates the officer As the individual, you got five or six patrol cars outside of your house. Your son's in the backseat in one of these cars, you're embarrassed because the neighbors are down looking.

Jerry Ratcliffe:
The situation's bad for her. It makes her look terrible. So she has to behave in a certain way in some neighborhoods.

Obed Magny:
When you recognize that you see this event from the outside as a hey,

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You have to find some way to give her an out so she can keep some pride and respect in the neighborhood. Yeah, you've got to give her an out

Obed Magny:

Active listening validator feelings. I was like, Hey, if I was in your shoes, yeah, I'd be hot too. And because of all of that, when she was done, she was out of breath.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Being angry is exhausting.

Obed Magny:

And she said, alright, you guys can go and do the search just like that. So I go and do the search. There was nothing in the house. But the point is that when we left the scene, that officer pulled me aside. He was like, bro, thanks for stepping in because it was going to get physical, it was going to go down.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

We've talked about emotional intelligence before. You have told me in the past, it's got the four components and I'm terrible at remembering what they are.

Obed Magny:

Alright, so the four components of emotional intelligence, it starts with self-awareness. Self-awareness is, okay, what are my triggers?

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And I'm aware that I completely forgot what the four components are.

Obed Magny:

Yes. See, that's important. Look at you losing some of that self-awareness right here. So self-awareness is what are my triggers? And again, that could be anything.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

When I get tired, when I get overworked and my to-do list gets longer than the German opera, I start to become very terse with people.

Obed Magny:

So the second part is this is the, okay, now that I have these emotions, how am I managing it? Let's say I'm dealing with a certain event, whether it's domestics or whatever. So it starts to manifest itself when you're starting to interview people or what have you.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So a piece of that is acknowledging the emotions to begin with and recognizing that you have them

Obed Magny:

So you recognize them happening to you first. That's the self-awareness. The self-management is how do you manage it? Do you count to 10? Do you take deep breaths? Do you walk away and come back a minute later so that you gather your thoughts? So and so the third part is the social awareness. And we know that communication is mostly nonverbal and we all know about the thousand yard stare when somebody's getting ready to fight or fly.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Cops recognize it. They know when a punch is coming or somebody's about to leg it.

Obed Magny:

Exactly. That's social awareness. But social awareness is not just a fight or flight thing. Social awareness is like, Hey, I get the example I gave earlier with the woman who's very, very upset. It's like, Hey, she's upset because her world is collapsing around her and she's just lashing out. And then you have relationship management. So with all of that, you bring it all together, Hey, whether it's an adversarial or professional or great relationship, whatever that is, what do I need to do me as the individual to maintain that relationship?

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So an example might be I have my own political views, but my goal is for my students to never know what they are. But I'm not a big fan, the political extremes, but I have friends who are at the political extremes because I can find some common ground to work with 'em. I just slightly adjust my behavior a little bit, but I can still go drinking with them.

Obed Magny:

I don't even know why I'm on this podcast. You just literally defined it right there. That's the perfect example. I don't have to agree with your lifestyle. I don't have to agree with what you're doing. But in order for us to resolve whatever the situation is that we're in right now or whatever the event is, how do we resolve it so that we all walk away and we don't need mandates and trips to the emergency rooms and all this is policing every day, all day 24 7.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

These different aspects of emotional intelligence feels like you need them all

Obed Magny:

Correct. Each component of emotional intelligence compliments the other social awareness and relationship management. Each one of the components is needed for the other components. You can't be great at relationship management without self-awareness, without social awareness and without self-management.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You need them all together.

Obed Magny:

You must have all together. You have to have all together. They all work together.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I think there's a piece to this, which I like about it. We want more diversity in policing, but there's a superficial discussion about diversity being more different races and ethnicities and genders and that kind of stuff. But I also think we all have to understand that there's diversity in skill sets. I know what I was good at as a cop, I wasn't a great cop. And I know the areas where I was strong and I know the areas where, no, somebody else should deal with this. They're way better at this than I am. And I don't think we appreciate that enough.

Obed Magny:

It's diversity of thought. We could talk about skin color and all that stuff. That's one thing. But when we're talking about diversity of thought and skillsets, the difference between EQ or IQ is IQ is a threshold competency. So your IQ, by the time you're like 14, you can't increase your IQ.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Well, it's rather depressing because mine wasn't great to begin with.

Obed Magny:

Yeah. Well you know what, God blesses us in some ways and in other ways not so much. Right.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I got to run real hard just to keep walking. Yeah,

Obed Magny:

Working out, man. It's good for the mind too. I'm trying to tell you, I expect to see you doing some 500 pound dead lifts by next week by,

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Yeah, not happening. Not with my knees, but that's IQ. And we have what we have,

Obed Magny:

Right? And it is what it is. It's not a bad or good thing. It just is what it is.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So when people are improving their iq, what they're really doing is just better learning the tests that help them superficially improve it.

Obed Magny:

You're gaming a test, you're not getting

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Smarter.

Obed Magny:

How does that help you in the streets when real life punches you in the face? And so with emotional intelligence,

Jerry Ratcliffe:

What does EQ stand for?

Obed Magny:

Fmoional quo intelligence. Quoting. Yeah, you can say EI or EQ.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Okay, so emotional intelligence, your emotional quotient is what we're talking about now.

Obed Magny:

Your emotional quote, you can improve. So if you're somebody who absolutely can't read a room, you don't understand people, you can improve your emotional intelligence. That's the beauty of it.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I've probably been critiqued for not reading the room at times, but I will say when I see people who are really bad at it, they're exhausting. They Are legit exhausting. I'll be kind of so I've got to go. I'm late for a thing and they just keep talking at me. It's like, did you not pick up the words I was saying? Is that what we're talking about?

Obed Magny:

100%. 100%. And whether it's a one-on-one individual thing or if you're talking to a group, it's being present with the group, understanding where people are coming from and being present with them. And in the private sector, they know that there's a premium on emotional intelligence training because when you work in a customer service, you're probably going to get a customer that's going to be hot. When they call you. You can't say shut up customer. That's how you're going to respond. You're going to say, I'm sorry that that happened. They have a script that they follow. But the thing is, is you're not going to engage in a yelling mat with the customer.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

But my counter would be, when I'm on the receiving end of those scripts, I know it's a script. It doesn't feel authentic to me. It's like when I'm on an online chat, you just know that there are these pre-coded response that say, I'm sorry you're feeling this way. Let me see if I can help you with that. And it's almost like word for word what I get on every different website.

Obed Magny:

I don't disagree with you. There's some customer service reps who, the real good ones that you remember, they're the ones who engage with you.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

They go a little bit off script, but they're still on the right plan.

Obed Magny:

And those are the ones that I'm talking about. That's what separates the average to the superior.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So it's a very nuanced difference. Correct. But we all notice it,

Obed Magny:

Right? Think about somebody that you've worked with or worked for in your life when you were at work, it didn't even feel like work. It felt like you were on vacation 40 hours a week.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Well, I'm an academic, so it is kind of like being on vacation 40 hours a week.

Obed Magny:

But if you think about it, it's like those people that you think about, they were either charismatic, trustworthy, they valued the work that you did. They put you in a position to succeed. They just basically made you a better version of yourself and you felt like, hey, they were helping you.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Yes.

Obed Magny:

And then you think about the people who you absolutely hated working for, and it was like you're in survival mode.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You could feel your blood level rise just walking into the office.

Obed Magny:

Those are the people who don't have emotional

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Intelligence. I mean, it almost sounds like especially if you're in leadership roles, your level of eq, emotional quotient or emotional intelligence can drive the department's culture

Obed Magny:

1000%. I just heard on a panel today, IACP chief from Raleigh, and he talked about when he became chief on day one, first thing he did was change the policy so that his officers can work out on duty. It was the biggest thing for the organization because they're like, man, this is somebody who was paying attention to us, who listened to us and drove

action. You'll hear in other organizations, I know one organization, they wanted a ping pong table in the break room. When that happened, you would've thought everybody won a million dollars in that organization. Those little things, when you are the chief and you see people and you understand people and you meet them where they are, and then you actually put some tangibles on the board, they will run through brick walls for you.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So I wonder if what drove the morale? There was not the ping pong table, but just the signal that you had leadership that was engaged with the frontline,

But what is the message that it sent?

Obed Magny:

That's a hundred percent. People want to be valued. It's not about the ping pong table. You know what I'm

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Saying? I'm a bit jammed up right now in an image of you because your arms and your shoulders are actually wider than my apartment in your full tactical gear playing. I can table tennis, but yeah, it's an image I'm going to struggle. I might need AI to generate that image for me just for the entertainment value.

Obed Magny:

Yeah. Well, you know what? Ping pong is not really my thing.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

There you go. Internet, do your thing. It's not

Obed Magny:

Really my thing. Give me a gym and I'm happy in the gym. I'm happy as a clam. But

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Alright, so it works for internal culture. It's something we probably need more of in dealing with the public. So if we can learn it, do we do a good job of training? No. Okay. That was a simple answer.

Obed Magny:

Yeah. Well look man, we ain't going to waste no time. I could go on forever and ever and ever. But my emotional intelligence is telling me I should probably get straight to the point.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Is it because we do training but it's not good quality because it's really sort of social interaction training, isn't it? Or is it just we don't do it at all.

Obed Magny:

It's both. Alright. So here's one of the issues I got with training, especially in police training. So we go to this training, whatever it is, you get a certificate, you put it up on the wall or whatever it is or in your background, and then that's it. Where's the follow up? How do we know you retain the information? How did you apply it? And this is one of the reasons why I got into evidence-based policing is because, hey, it's great that you learned hotspots policing. We'll just use that as an example. Where did you apply it? How often did you apply it? What were the results? If you're not measuring it, then it's not important to you, number one. Number two, there was a study that came out 2021 that showed that of all police academies, they spent about, I think it was like 633 hours total on all training. So that's firearms, evoc, all that kind of stuff. Less than 20 of those hours was spent on soft skills. 3.21%,

Jerry Ratcliffe:

3.21% of police training is spent on soft skills,

Obed Magny:

Learning how to talk to people, talking people down off the ledge. Literally a figuratively speaking.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That's pretty fucking small.

Obed Magny:

That comes out to about less than 20 hours in a six month academy.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Good grief.

Obed Magny:

What is 99% of the time when somebody's calling 9 1 1 and the officers show up, you are managing emotions.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

The vast majority of police officers during their career will never pull that trigger.

Obed Magny:

Correct.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

But we do tons of training in that area. They will all deal with people who are in emotional states.

Obed Magny:

I'll even go step further. Dr. Natalie Todak. So shout out to Dr. Todak.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Oh, very well known in the field. Very good evidence-based policing scholar.

Obed Magny:

So we wrote a paper in 2021. It's funny when I say it out loud because it's like this is for real, for real.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Yeah. Congratulations. You're an academic. Yeah.

Obed Magny:

Yeah. So we wrote a paper. We did a study where we were looking at emotional intelligence training and police departments. So we do this search and I'm like, I must be doing something wrong. There's only a handful, like eight or nine studies in the United States related to emotional intelligence of policing, what works and so on and so forth.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And yet it's a core skill that we really want everybody to have.

Obed Magny:

Correct. If you are an officer and you're running up on a scene, or if you're coming up on a scene that's contentious and so on and so forth, are you sophisticated enough to read and then manage that situation? One of the things I used to do whenever I would go to a domestic situation,

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Everybody's favorite.

Obed Magny:

Yes. Yes. Totally my favorite. And I say that sarcastically. This is something that's not taught in any books. It's not taught in any training videos or anything like that. This is something that I would do. They see you, they continue arguing. Yeah.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Sorry, was this a mini mouse and Mickey Mouse domestic?

Obed Magny:

Was it? You know what? I was going to try to reenact it and I was like, let me pull that back. You know what I'm saying? This is a Walt Disney domestic get on my house. I don't even no more. That kind of stuff. So you show up. You would think obviously, that somebody sees people in uniform and then they go talk to the police about what's going on. Well, on many occasions, that's not how that works.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

No. You just walk in and you're now with a neutral fly on the wall while they continue.

Obed Magny:

Correct. They look at you anyways, they go back to the arguing. I'll just grab the remote and I'll just start watching tv.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Oh, fantastic.

Obed Magny:

Grab. And then they would stop mid whatever they're doing, and they would focus on me. Did you just turn the tv? And I'd be like, okay, now I got your attention. And they forget what they were arguing about.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That's great.

Obed Magny:

You know what I'm saying? Or sometimes I'll go in their fridge, they'll argue, I'll be like, Hey man, what's up in this fridge, man? What we got in here? I mean, listen, that's an emotional intelligence tactic

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Because it just shifts the narrative of what's going on

Obed Magny:

Because they forgot what they were even arguing about. So now you can have a conversation with them. They're like, you got the audacity to pick up the remote. I was like, cool. Now I got your attention. Now you focus on me because I put it on some college football or something.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Oh, you could actually drag your attention away from the college football.

Obed Magny:

Well, yeah, I'd prefer to watch the college football. But the point then is that now the guy's looking at me and now we're talking. He's so distracted. I can refocus him on the why we're there in the first place. You got to find a distraction. You can't just run in there and jump in the middle and say, Hey, shut up. The police are here. You going to listen to submit to my authority.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

But you have to read the room. Like everything. It's not going to work every single time. It may only work once or twice, but to know when it might work is reading the room to figure out what's going on.

Obed Magny:

It's the same thing as the gym. If I don't go to the gym for five years, I'm going to look like I ain't been to the gym in five years. It's one of those perishable skills. You don't hit a zenith and then that's the end of it. You have to work on it.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

It is. I get what you mean. I mean, I lift a little bit. I can deadlift one and a half times more body weight, which is the goal I was going for, but its okay just to get myself up there.

Obed Magny:

Yeah.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Are there ways, if somebody wants to apply that same approach to emotional intelligence, if you want to work on it yourself, if your department doesn't have any training, how might I go about doing that?

Obed Magny:

Oh, glad you answered that question. You can reach out to me if you're looking for an executive coach or if you're looking for an emotional intelligence coach. This is something that I do. Yes. I have no problem with shameless plugs, by the way.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That's all right. I have no problem editing it out.

Obed Magny:

Yeah, there are tons of videos. You can look this up on YouTube and everything, but the thing with emotional intelligence is you can take self-assessment tests. The thing is, you're not going to know where your improvements are needed until you have somebody who's evaluating you. So I can take an emotional intelligence test and a self-assessment test. Something I need to work on is social awareness. There's four things. So it's self-awareness, social awareness, relationship management. My lowest score is in the self-management. What that means is I'm emotional and I scream and yell before I calm down.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Oh, I've been in relationships with that. Yeah.

Obed Magny:

So I know I need to work on that. Well, how do I know I'm going to improve on that? Who's going to hold me accountable to that? That's why it's important. And I keep overemphasizing, especially in policing. You got to have a coach.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That makes it tricky in policing though, because it's a rank oriented system and people bring their egos with them because what you're really talking about is helping training people and actually identifying some of their social interactions, weaknesses. And if you're a sergeant, like a bull in a China shop, other people score you. They're going to score you kind of low. Is that easy to manage in terms of managing people's egos to say you have this really negative impact on the rest of your team and it's driving a poor culture on your shift? Or as a lieutenant,

Obed Magny:

Hey, you said you want to be a lieutenant. Well, unless you improve this area right here, it ain't happening. So now you incentivize it.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I can see people take this really to heart though, because we're talking about our core personality.

Obed Magny:

Yes. But the thing is, is we all have our weak areas. This is again, where the reframing is so, so important.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So it's less of this is what's wrong with you, but more frame it as, here's a great new skill that would help you.

Obed Magny:

Correct. Correct. We keep saying good or bad. It's like, no, it's not a bad, it's like, Hey, here's a needs improvement area, and here's how it can benefit you, not just in the short term, but the medium and the long term. If you want to be a police chief, if you want to drive the culture of an organization, how do I improve my social awareness? Let me hang out with different people from different backgrounds and I can learn something. So now I know. And some Asian cultures not making eye contact is a form of respect. And now I'm not looking at it as, Hey, you're being deceitful.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

It also strikes me along with procedural justice, emotional intelligence sounds like a really fantastic skillset for a detective doing investigations because you can't bring your emotions to the party.

Obed Magny:

But here's the thing, you can bring your emotions into it. When I was working in patrol, it was nothing for me to dance in front of somebody's ring camera. They had loud music playing in the background. I'd be like, oh, okay. Three six mafia, go ahead. They come to the door, they see me. They don't know what to do. Like, you're an officer in uniform. Are you dancing? You are a real person. It's like, yeah, when I tell you, defenses fall down left. And so even when people are angry or upset with you, they're like, oh, okay. I'll talk to you,

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Man. You're doing good work and you're bringing something unusual, which clearly is really important. I think especially in this new generation of police officers are coming forward. I think it's even more important for them. So you're teaching some of us old dogs new tricks, so maybe you found your purpose, and I appreciate you, man.

Obed Magny:

No, I appreciate you more, man. Thank you.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That was episode 90 of Reducing Crime Record in October, 2025 in Denver, Colorado, where I got out of puff just running up to the front of the PERF town hall. Definitely more cardio needed.

Reducing crime.com has episode transcripts, and if you are an instructor, DM me for multiple choice questions. For every episode, subscribe at Spotify, SoundCloud, apple, or wherever, pod. Otherwise, Obed will shake your hand and you will lose the feeling in your fingers.

Be safe and best of luck.