



MINDLINES

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Deputy Director's Message - Renew your commitment to your well-being

**by Cmdr. Jean Fisak
Deputy Director, NCCOSC**

Spring is recognized as a time for a fresh start and a new beginning. It's considered a time for renewal. As nature renews itself through its blooming plants and flowers, take some time to renew your commitment to your well-being.

Maintaining a healthy mind is essential for maximum psychological force readiness. Many providers, military or civilian, can find themselves under intense pressure either from work, home, or a combination of both. Increased pressure leads to increased stress which leads to overwhelming stress reactions and possible stress injuries. This unwanted pressure has the potential to negatively impact job performance, and patient care.

The Caregiver Occupational Stress Control (CgOSC) program is a Navy Medicine initiative to establish a comprehensive, standardized program to address stress reactions and injuries by breaking the code of silence and foster early intervention. The Naval Center for Combat & Operational Stress Control (NCCOSC) has provided CgOSC instructor training to 420 personnel over 93 military treatment facilities and clinics across Navy Medicine. The ultimate goal of the CgOSC program is to support optimal mental health, increased job satisfaction, higher retention, and increased caregiver preparedness for operational and occupational



SAN DIEGO, Calif - Cmdr. Jean Fisak, deputy director, Naval Center for Combat and Operational Stress Control (NCCOSC), discusses Caregiver Occupational Stress Control (CgOSC) with providers and staff at Naval Medical Center San Diego in January. A team from NCCOSC travels to Navy medicine military treatment facilities and clinics to provide CgOSC instructions to trainers. CgOSC is a Navy Medicine initiative to establish a comprehensive, standardized program to address stress reactions and injuries by breaking the code of silence and foster early intervention. (photo by NCCOSC staff)

demands. With the proper implementation of CgOSC, Navy medicine caregivers can enhance mission readiness through supporting the prevention of stress-related caregiver injury, thus enable caregivers to continue to provide quality patient care. *(Continued on Page 2)*



(Continued from Page 1) Through our initiatives and outreach at NCCOSC, we work to remove the stigma associated with mental health care. The key components of CgOSC promote resilience, identify and intervene with stress injuries, emphasize self-care and utilize buddy-care. It's important to recognize the impact of stress on yourself and on others. Through the concepts of resilience, practicing constructive methods to prevent the effects of stress including optimism (positive expectations, beliefs and reactions); flexible thinking (the ability to find the good in a bad situation and consider other perspectives); behavior control (using relaxation techniques or other methods to regulate your actions and prevent destructive behaviors); and positive coping (facing your fears, actively working toward a constructive solution to a problem, and accepting the emotions that accompany it) can improve your psychological well-being. Equally, a strong social support network and nurturing your spirituality can also help alleviate the effects of stress and bring balance.

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This spring, renew your commitment to your mental health. Practice ridding yourself of unnecessary negative thoughts and emotions and make way for positive experiences that enable you to fully appreciate the people and moments in life that truly matter.

Many experts agree that physical health can in some ways be tied to mental health. Thus, in the spirit of renewal, take a little time to focus and refresh yourself for a clear mind. Do a self-assessment of your current stress level and think about what you can do to optimize good mental health. With proper prevention, treatment, and recovery, individuals can develop stronger resilience and improve their skills to meet the challenges and demands of being a 21st century Sailor or Marine.

REDUCE YOUR STRESS FOR YOUR NEXT PCS

Summer time is around the corner and with summer, comes PCS season. PCS stands for permanent change of station. It's the time where service members and their families move to another duty station per the service member's orders. Moving often can add to the stressors that service members and family members face. Help mitigate your stress when it comes to your next PCS move with some pre-move preparation and organization.

STRESS PREVENTION

At the Naval Center for Combat & Operational Stress Control, we believe in the powerful effects of optimism (positive expectations, beliefs and reactions) and flexible thinking (the ability to find the good in a bad situation and consider other perspectives). Remaining positive through this situation will reflect positively in your experience.

USE RESOURCES ON BASE

Visit your local relocation assistance program specialist. If this is your first move or you have the time, attend a workshop to learn the basic or perhaps be updated on any changes to the military move process.

BE AWARE OF YOUR BENEFITS

You may be entitled to some benefits for your PCS move. Some eligible benefits include travel allowances, per diem, storage of household goods, etc.
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RESILIENCE: WHAT DOES IT REALLY MEAN?

The understanding and application of resilience within the military is an important and essential endeavor. Building and preserving resilience using the mind and body domains of “Total Force Fitness” is an important approach. Equally important, is taking a step back to truly understand the concept of resilience. The word “resilience” has been used frequently both in recent years and in multiple contexts. Unfortunately, we have overused the word resilience, applying the word flippantly and sloppily to the point where it is no longer valued and is being replaced with words like “toughness” (Google toughness and it will lead you right to mental toughness, a true trait), hardiness and grit. These are important traits that are thought to predict resilience but do not completely encompass the construct of resilience. Even more unfortunate, as we move away from the word resilience, we have yet to truly appreciate the value and pertinence of resilience in a military environment.

Generally, resilience is used as a noun to describe the ability to return to a former state or to recover from adversity. It is derived from the Latin word, “resilire” which means to spring back or rebound (Wikipedia).

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At the Naval Center for Combat & Operational Stress Control, we have attempted to expand the concept as it applies to training service members to not only endure and recover from stress but to function competently in all areas of life. *(Continued on page 4)*

REDUCE YOUR STRESS FOR YOUR NEXT PCS

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START PLANNING EARLY

As soon as orders are confirmed, start planning. There are many tools and advice available through Military OneSource and through your local transportation office. Start a checklist of items that need to be done before, during, and after your move.

RESEARCH YOUR NEXT DUTY STATION

Having a sponsor can help mitigate a Sailor or Marine’s stress by providing answers or resources ahead of time about the new duty station. Ask fellow colleagues or acquaintances for advice and recommendations

PREPARE YOUR HOME

Pack or purge as much as you can before you move. Dedicate one area as the “command center”. This will help alleviate stress closer to your move.

TAKE SOME TIME OUT

If you feel stress, take some time out to decompress. Practice your hobby, exercise, meditate, etc. At NCCOSC, we encourage mitigating stress before they become stress injuries.

Moving is part of military life. While it can be stressful, with the proper prevention and management, you can get your stress under control for your next PCS move.

(Continued from page 3) When considering operational definitions of the term “resilience” (and there are many), we have gone back to the roots of early research and promote what appears to capture the essence of the construct: “the individual’s capacity for adapting successfully, and functioning competently despite experiencing chronic adversity, or following exposure to prolonged or severe trauma.” (Masten, Best, and Garmezy, 1990, *Development and Psychopathology*, 2, 425-444). While there are many definitions, most include two elements 1) Exposure to adverse or traumatic situations 2) Successful adaptation following exposure.



SAN DIEGO, Calif - The Naval Center for Combat & Operational Stress Control (NCCOSC) staff members provide training on building and preserving individual resilience. NCCOSC partners and collaborates with many other organizations on the topic of resilience.

Research has identified many risk and protective factors (individual, family/social, and environmental) which interact with one another during development to influence thinking style, emotional reactions, bodily responses, and social interactions. As a result, these ways of functioning influence whether or not a person adapts successfully when stressed or faced with life adversity and functions competently, in other words, displays resilience. Whether one’s life pathway is negative or positive, it can be altered. Individuals on a negative (maladaptive) pathway can change to a positive (adaptive) pathway by exposure to mature, healthy, mentors and role models, effective leaders and by acquiring resilience skills. NCCOSC has developed a comprehensive resilience training program that embraces this expanded meaning of ... (Continued of page 5)

SEMANTICS FROM A PSYCHOLOGIST’S PERSPECTIVE

The terms mental health, psychological health, and behavioral health are often used interchangeably. However, they do not mean the same thing. Each term is associated with a certain degree of stigma, and the use of one of these terms versus another could make a difference in who presents for treatment. Military orientation briefs use the term “behavioral health,” while psychological treatment centers are now being referred to as “behavioral health” clinics, seemingly in an attempt to reduce stigma for their consumers. However, before we jump to rename psychological treatment centers, it is important to consider the potential repercussions.

The replacement of “mental health” clinics with the term “behavioral health” may, in fact, perpetuate stigma. We are spreading the message that “mental health care” is something to be embarrassed about, while “behavioral health care” is more socially acceptable. The term “behavioral” keeps us from being labeled as “crazy,” by others, or by ourselves. It removes the illness or problem from our body, and places it on our behaviors; an external flaw that can be changed.

It is also important to recognize that psychological services treat much more than just behavior. The basic tenet of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT; an evidence-based therapy commonly used by psychologists today), maintains that thoughts lead to emotions, and emotions lead to behaviors, a process that occurs simultaneously to affect our mood for better or worse. Use of the term “behavioral health” not only externalizes the “problem,” but neglects the fact that psychological treatment involves thoughts and emotions as well. In fact, many times, behaviors need not even be changed, as altering thoughts and emotions may be sufficient to relieve the symptoms. Treatments for autism and smoking cessation purely aim to change behaviors and represent a more appropriate use of the term “behavioral health.”

The term “mental health” has probably been the most stigmatized of these three phrases, and is frequently the term that is replaced by “behavioral health.” When people hear the term “mental health,” they often associate it with mental illness and perhaps, even with being “crazy.” (Continued on page 5)



(Continued from page 4) the term and links several associated psychological and behavioral theories and skills (i.e. Cognitive-Behavioral Theory (CBT), effective social skills, values clarification, goal-setting, cognitive flexibility, proactive coping, and optimism etc.)

“Generally, resilience is used as a noun to describe the ability to return to a former state or to recover from adversity. It is derived from the Latin word, “resilire” which means to spring back or rebound.

The persistent practice of such concepts and resilience skills will increase the probability of self-competent functioning such as accurate reality appraisal, rational/logical thinking, sound judgment, emotional stability and positive relationships that in turn promote mental toughness, hardiness and grit! It is important to keep in mind that resilience and self-competent functioning are not static or fixed once achieved, resilience requires constant maintenance. (Continued on page 6)

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Yet, the definition of the word “mental” is simply “of or relating to the mind.” We all have brains, just as we all have hearts, livers, and other organs in our bodies. We go to a cardiologist when we have a problem with our heart, so what is it that keeps people from going to mental health professionals when something is awry with their brain?

On the other hand, the term “psychological health” encompasses the entire spectrum, from mental health, to mental illness, and is perhaps the most accurate term for clinics treating people with psychological concerns. It is important to recognize that psychologists not only treat “mental illness,” but also work with healthy, fully functioning individuals looking to increase their sense of meaning in life, to improve their quality of life, to increase engagement and productivity, and to improve satisfaction with relationships. In order for anyone to maintain psychological health, preventative measures must be taken to mitigate the effects of daily life stress. A branch of psychology called positive psychology focuses specifically on increasing happiness, wellbeing, and overall resilience. Some positive psychology interventions include journaling, meditation, and mindfulness, which have been shown by research to increase happiness and decrease symptoms of depression. Considering that everyone experiences stress, psychological health treatments that mitigate the effects of stress and increase resilience and performance are ideal for anyone; not only people who are sick or “mentally ill.” Hopefully, this less stigmatizing view of psychological services can be adopted by more people as they are educated about what psychologists really do.

While changing the name of mental health clinics to “behavioral health” clinics helps to externalize the “problem,” and ease the minds of hesitant patients, we simultaneously perpetuate the negative connotation of mental health. People need to be informed about positive psychology, and its relevance to everyone. A visit to the “shrink” does not mean that you are weak, sick, or crazy; it means that you are human. Additionally, there is a difference between the terms “mental health,” “psychological health,” and “behavioral health,” and each should be used accordingly. The interchangeable use of these terms is not only inaccurate, but also serves to perpetuate stigma. We need to change our idea of seeking psychological treatment from one of stigma, to one of simple maintenance of wellbeing that is pertinent to everyone.

(Continued from Page 5) As we expose ourselves to the variety of daily stressors that life offers, we can move between being vulnerable and being resilient in either direction, a continuum so to speak. The vulnerability - resilience continuum is dependent upon the relationship of risk to protective factors. In general, as we develop competence we create opportunity for greater competence. As an individual acquires competent functioning, other related concepts strengthen such as "grit" - persistence in pursuing life goals, and "hardiness" - characterized by a sense of purpose in life (Commitment), a sense of personal control over the situation (Control) and a welcoming attitude towards change (Challenge) are developed. These three "Cs" of hardiness (Kobasa, Maddi, and Zola, 1983) promote physical wellness. In addition, the capacity for problem-solving increases and represents a key protective factor for adaptive functioning, (Cicchetti and Luthar, 2015, in press). Hardiness further supports feelings of satisfaction and pleasure derived from personal control and accomplishments (Masten, et al., 1995) and self-efficacy, or perceived personal effectiveness (Bandura, 1997). Underlying all the concepts related to the construct of resilience and competent functioning is the clear and consistent application of sound values. This includes values to self, other, community, and spiritual values that act as an internal compass to guide an individual through the inevitable stresses and strains that life presents.

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