

# **An Introduction to Counseling**

**For Chaplains and  
Counseling Coaches  
in the Fleet**



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## REFERENCES

SECNAVINST 1730.7D Religious Ministry within the Department of the Navy

SECNAVINST 1730.9 Confidential Communications to Chaplains

SECNAVINST 1730.10 Chaplain Advisement and Liaison

SECNAVINST 5351.1 Professional Naval Chaplaincy

OPNAVINST 1730.1E Religious Ministry in the Navy

COMUSFLTFORCOM/COMPACFLTINST 1730.1 Religious Ministry in the Fleet

COMUSFLTFORCOM/COMPACFLTINST 5351.1 Standards and Protocols for Leadership, Supervision, and Mentoring of Members of RMTs

NWP 1-05 Religious Ministry in the Fleet

NTTP 1-05.2 Cooperative Religious Ministry

“The Art of Naval Chaplaincy” Chief of Navy Chaplains letter April 2015

# PREFACE

Sailors form the foundation of the Navy's readiness (OPNAVINST 1739.1E). Thus, warfighting readiness is contingent upon warfighter readiness. Warfighters are people. They live in a network of relationships and personally experience the ups and downs of life in the military, coping and thriving to the best of their abilities. Religious ministry helps our people learn how to cope and thrive effectively by focusing on and valuing the whole person. One of the ways it does so is through chaplain counseling.

Counseling as conducted by chaplains starts with profound respect for the human person. It strives to help the person in need achieve meaningful results. While individual chaplains' temperaments may lead them toward particular approaches, the goal of counseling is to help counselees cope more effectively with Navy life and whatever is troubling or challenging them.

This introductory guide shares ways in which chaplain counselors and the Religious Program Specialists who manage command religious programs can properly prepare, stay focused on results, and avoid the pitfalls of counseling. It is reflective of chaplains' experiences as well as the insights of a Navy Medical Service Corps officer who is a licensed clinical social worker. Chapter One discusses the basis of counseling in policy and naval chaplaincy. Chapter Two describes proper preparation based on the Fleet Professional Naval Chaplaincy Code of Practice and the approach of Navy doctrine (NTTP 1-05.2 Cooperative Religious Ministry). Chapter Three addresses counseling topics, tactics, and techniques. Chapter Four discusses obstacles and pitfalls. Chapter Five describes how coaching can enhance counseling effectiveness.

SECNAVINST 5351.1 Enclosure 1, Professional Standards for PNC, states that all persons serving under the auspices of Professional Naval Chaplaincy abide by DON regulations and expectations governing professional and personal conduct. That includes abiding by policies governing fraternization, confidentiality, and the maintenance of professional boundaries generally. In support of that requirement, this guide also encourages the use of a counseling coach, and discusses what that might entail.

It is hoped that as members of the professional community which delivers religious ministry, chaplains will use this guide to improve the quality of counseling and essential advice they deliver, and that supervisors and peers will use this guide to help those they coach become better counselors.

## CHAPTER 1. THE CONTEXT OF CHAPLAIN COUNSELING

SECNAVINST 1730.7D, Section 1, states that chaplains are “advocates of spiritual, moral, and ethical maturity and resiliency,” and “essential to the DON’s effort to assist Service members, their families, and other authorized personnel in coping with military life.”

One of the ways chaplains deliver that assistance is through what is commonly referred to as counseling. Chaplains have the opportunity to counsel because they are present with Sailors in the midst of their Navy experience. Sailors turn to chaplains because of this shared experience and all that goes along with it. Sailors trust chaplains to maintain confidence and to have insights into the ways in which Sailors can cope and thrive in a challenging profession. Whether the topic is adjustment, stress, anger, relationships, professional concerns, grievances, suicide, sexual assault, domestic violence, or substance abuse, chaplains should be prepared to offer sound advice and counsel, together with accurate and useful information, to those in need.

### 1.1 Chaplain Counseling and Professional Naval Chaplaincy

Though implicit in the work of chaplains for generations, Professional Naval Chaplaincy (PNC) is defined explicitly for the first time in SECNAVINST 1730.7D:

The field of endeavor in which Navy chaplains deliver to the Sea Services and authorized recipients religious ministry characterized by cooperation, tolerance, mutual respect and respect for diversity. It is further characterized by an understanding of both the pluralistic nature of the environment and the processes and structures of the organizations and institutions served. PNC includes the full range of responsibilities inherent in positions of leadership and authority in the Navy, as well as the standards and codes of behavior established for chaplains by the DON and those found in civilian religious professional life. Implicit in PNC is the expectation that chaplains will not compromise the standards of their RO.

SECNAVINST 5351.1 uses the terms and phrases of this definition to present the professional standards for PNC. The instruction begins by applying the terms cooperation, tolerance, mutual respect, and respect for diversity. It goes on to elaborate the meaning of each of the remaining phrases of the definition and how they represent the standard for PNC. Counseling is conducted according to PNC standards.

### 1.2 What is Chaplain Counseling?

Chaplain counseling can be broken down into two distinct categories of content: pastoral counseling and something else. Pastoral counseling, as defined in SECNAVINST 1730.7D, is that which is delivered according to the tenets of the chaplain’s religious organization. The “something else” is also defined in the instruction, under the discussion of the care capability, one of the ways in which religious ministry addresses the challenges of military life:

Chaplains are uniquely qualified to deliver specific institutional care, counseling, and coaching, which attend to personal and relational needs outside of a faith group-specific context. This includes relational counseling by chaplains which is motivated by their proximity and immediate presence, distinguished by confidentiality (per reference (e)) [SECNAVINST 1730.9], and imbued with professional wisdom and genuine respect for human beings. Such counseling is most effective when based on strong relationships developed in the context of shared life in

the same unit. Some examples of care include deck plate ministry, counseling, coaching on military life....

SECNAVINST 1730.10 further elaborates the two categories of counseling content:

When requested, they [chaplains] provide faith-based counseling, mentoring and spiritual direction based on theologically derived truths. They also deliver relational counseling which is based on the trust gained through a shared experience of military service and characterized by confidentiality and mutual respect. This relational counseling is designed to develop and strengthen core values and personal responsibility in people whether or not they profess a particular faith perspective.

It should be understood that pastoral counseling is distinct in terms of content. Standards of conduct are established under the authority of Navy policy. Thus, the minimum standard for conduct set in SECNAVINST 5351.1 and COMUSFLTFORCOM/COMPACFLTINST 5351.1 applies to all fleet chaplains in all counseling cases. For pastoral counseling, the Navy's standards of conduct apply, and the religious organization's principles for content apply. In the case of other counseling, the Navy's standards for conduct and content apply. The Navy's standards for conduct are found in SECNAVINST 5351.1 and COMUSFLTFORCOM/COMPACFLTINST 5351.1. The Navy's standards for content are inherent in and implied by the definition of the care capability: humanity-affirming advice which is bounded by policy and doctrine, driven by compassion, drawing on the chaplain's learning, training, maturity, wisdom and experience of military life and life in general, delivered for the benefit of the individual receiving the assistance in a spirit of caring.

## **CHAPTER 2. GETTING STARTED**

As with all other actions carried out by Religious Ministry Teams (RMTs) as part of the Command Religious Program (CRP), counseling begins with planning, and planning starts with policy and doctrine. The Fleet Professional Naval Chaplaincy Code of Practice (COMUSFLTFORCOM/COMPACFLTINST 5351.1 Enclosure 2) describes the behaviors which are inherent in PNC. They should also serve as the foundation of chaplain counseling. The Code is further elaborated in NTTP 1-05.2 COOPERATIVE RELIGIOUS MINISTRY, which begins with a list of qualities that a duty chaplain should cultivate in him or herself. This can be a great place to start in challenging oneself as to the state of one's counseling skills and their development. It can also be a framework for coaching those who have the significant responsibility of delivering counseling to valued personnel.

### **2.1 That for which We Stand**

*“Realize that as a chaplain, he/she represents the CHC, the Navy, and the nation with one side of the collar, and God with the other, in responding to the person/s in need.”* (NTTP 1-05.2)

Whatever Sailors believe or do not believe, they tend to view RMTs as representatives of something greater than the individuals who themselves make up the RMT. This perception places a significant responsibility on the RMT to behave in a way which reinforces Sailors' confidence and meets or exceeds their expectations.

Each chaplain has a pastoral identity which was formed before commissioning as a Navy chaplain. That identity tends to inform the chaplain's approach to the challenges of this work. But that should not be all that informs the approach. It should also be shaped by federal law, DOD and DON policies, regulations, and doctrine. The thoughtful navigation of these influences is a necessary part of the work of chaplaincy, and a process which can be accomplished by a chaplain who is clear in his or her own identity, understands the nature of the pluralistic environment in which chaplains serve, and can listen carefully and encourage articulately when discussing counseling issues.

### **2.2 Preparation**

*“Do the preparatory work necessary to be knowledgeable and able to deliver useful service that adheres to the processes and procedures delineated in policy.”* (NTTP 1-05.2)

An important element of being prepared to do the work of counseling is familiarity with the policies which guide counseling, particularly SECNAVINST 5351.1 and COMUSFLTFORCOM/COMPACFLTINST 5351.1 and their enclosures. In addition, chaplains and Religious Program Specialists (RPs) should be familiar with policy which can have a significant bearing on the actions which may be discussed in counseling, such as MILPERSMAN articles and other policy on emergency leave, victim protection, humanitarian transfer, and hardship discharge. Thorough knowledge of policies regarding tone and health of force issues is also essential.

Part of being a professional is the motivation to improve one's effectiveness and advance one's skills. As with the art of chaplaincy generally, continued study of counseling is highly recommended. The Veterans' Administration, the Clinical Pastoral Education community, and the Chaplain Corps Communities of Interest are all sources which can be of use to chaplains as they work to be more effective counselors. On-line courses, books on various forms of counseling, and colleagues can also be

good resources. No chaplain should remain satisfied with his or her current level of knowledge about counseling. Such an attitude would not reflect faithful stewardship of one's gifts.

Chaplains should remain informed about emerging issues in the population they are serving. The Navy is a dynamic environment: the ebb and flow of promotion opportunities, transfers, and generation of new processes and procedures are but a few examples. Change is a source of stress, and can lead to personal crises. Chaplains should be aware of what is happening that could influence their people and lead them to seek assistance. Certainly, religious ministry preventive programs can only remain relevant if RMTs are attuned to what is happening around them.

### **2.2.1 Understanding Tone and Health of the Force**

*“Be prepared to provide emergent response and support across the range of possible crises.”* (NTTP 1-05.2)

While individual circumstances are unique, the broad categories of problems which people face are often predictable. In fact, the Navy goes to great lengths to monitor those broad categories of problems. Tone of the force and health of the force issues are familiar points of focus for the institution as a whole. RMTs often have specific responsibilities in prevention and response efforts, identified in policy and described in doctrine. These responsibilities are institutional requirements of a technical nature, specifically spelled out in policy. To be prepared to deliver responsive ministry focused on tone or health of the force issues, RMTs should have complete familiarity with the procedures involved for each issue. Whether dealing with sexual assault, suicide, domestic violence, substance abuse, or any other challenge, each member of the RMT should know his or her role, the roles of teammates, other helping agents (legal, medical, Fleet and Family Support Centers, school counselors, etc.), and the various representatives of the command. RMTs should be familiar with such requirements, and be prepared to deliver appropriate ministry, be it counsel, encouragement, information or referral. Part of proper preparation is being knowledgeable about the policies in question. Coaches can contribute to proper preparation by reviewing and discussing policies, doctrine, SOPs, business rules, resources, and principles. The moment of crisis is not the time to be doing the research.

### **2.2.2 Response and Prevention**

It should go without saying that response and prevention go hand-in-hand. RMTs should be highly attentive to counseling trends, and develop preventive ministry which addresses causal factors. Building wholeness in those served is a continuous process of responding to crisis, identifying causes, and using counseling, coaching, training, and education to equip people to avoid crisis and better cope with life. Preventive ministry on tone and health of the force issues is most effective when delivered skillfully. Simply reading the slides or talking points of a brief is not good enough. RMTs should be familiar enough with the material to deliver it comfortably and compellingly. This almost always requires thorough preparation and practice. Feedback and coaching from peers can be very useful as RMTs hone their craft.

### **2.3 Confidential Communications to Chaplains**

*“Understand the responsibilities and limitations placed upon chaplains by confidentiality generally, and particularly relating to the recording of information and the referral process.”* (NTTP 1-05.2)

Every chaplain should understand confidentiality fully and completely. An important task of peer support and coaching is to thoroughly explore that understanding with the chaplain being coached. This can involve discussing various scenarios that test not just understanding, but commitment to the concept. It is crucial for all chaplains to realize the ramifications of a failure to adhere to the policy. In a very real sense, any time a chaplain fails to keep a confidence, the entire Navy suffers, because some Sailors, commanders, and other leaders lose confidence in all chaplains. This unfortunate tendency to generalize puts the reputation of all chaplains at risk when one chaplain fails to keep a confidence. It is not only a matter of the individual chaplain's conscience. It is also a matter of the effectiveness of all chaplains. The very purpose and usefulness of chaplaincy is put in jeopardy when chaplains fail to manage their counseling activities properly.

Specific permission is necessary when seeking to refer someone to another helping agent. This is another opportunity for the chaplain to communicate concern for the counselee. Even if the chaplain does not believe that he or she can help, he or she should be ready, willing, and able to find someone who can. Because not all helping agents are equal, it is important for the counselee to know that he or she can return to the chaplain for further guidance and referral. The chaplain should not appear to be 'washing his hands' of the counselee when making a referral and the RMT should go to great lengths to ensure that such an impression is not given. Referral and follow up will be discussed later, but it is important to note here how vital they are to communicating care, especially in the event that the chaplain will not be the primary care-giver.

RMTs should also understand how confidentiality applies to RPs. Per SECNAVINST 1730.9, RPs may become aware of confidential communications in the course of their support duties. In that event, RPs are obligated to keep that information confidential and immediately refer the matter to the chaplain.

## **2.4 Credibility and Courageous Concern**

*"Be prepared to respond energetically to all requests for help, delivering face-to-face service as often as possible within the limits of safety and reason."* (NTTP 1-05.2)

The shared experience of service is an important basis of the chaplain's credibility with the crew. Even when chaplains are not part of the same crew, they have the knowledge, experience, vocabulary, and self-assurance to show that they have indeed 'been there and done that.' More importantly, they can communicate empathy for the circumstances in which counselees find themselves. Apathy is not an appropriate response to a Sailor's need. Neither is fear an appropriate response. Fear may manifest itself in a headlong rush to that with which the chaplain is most familiar. It is critical to remember for whom the counseling is being done. It is not the chaplain whose needs are being served. It is the counselee's. The problems at hand belong to the individual presenting them, not to the chaplain. The chaplain's emotional reaction should not dominate the counseling interaction. Coaching can help chaplains recognize when they are allowing their emotions to overtake their proper counseling objectivity.

### **2.4.1 Triage**

A Sailor in need approaches the RMT with a purpose. The RMT's first response should be to discern what that purpose might be, in a friendly and welcoming manner. This screening is the first opportunity to communicate a message of caring. It is also the time to begin to assess whether or not the person is a danger to themselves or others. If that assessment generates concern, rigorous work should be done to

stay with the person and encourage them to access resources for help. Conditions can be identified in the triage process which can guide the efforts to assist the person in need. The individual's purpose could be to seek religious guidance. It could be to discover what resources are available to assist with a problem at hand. It could be for advice about life. Whatever the particular circumstances, the interaction with someone who comes for help should begin with welcome, and an identification of what that person expects from the RMT. This first step helps to determine what kind of assistance the RMT should offer. If the counselee has a religious need, and the chaplain and counselee are of the same religion, then the appropriate faith-specific service can be provided. If the counselee has a religious need and the chaplain is not of the same faith, then the RMT can facilitate so that the counselee gets the support they need. It is important to know what if any faith group affiliation the counselee holds. CRPs should have a system for triage, a way of making an initial evaluation of the individuals coming in for service. At a minimum, that triage should determine how they would characterize their reason for coming in and what if any faith group affiliation they have.

#### **2.4.2 Identifying a Counseling Path**

It is up to the chaplain to elicit further information which may be necessary in order to help the person in need. Once the faith affiliation and problem at hand have been identified, a logical follow on question might be how the person's faith has helped with such a problem in the past, or how their faith informs their approach to problems generally. If no faith is identified, the question still remains how they have dealt with such a problem in the past. This line of discussion can begin the process of reminding the counselee of what he or she knows, and the application of that knowledge to the problem.

#### **2.5 The Human Face of Support**

*"Treat every counselee graciously, with the appropriate attention and concern.... Listen actively and attentively to the concerns expressed."* (NTTP 1-05.2)

##### **2.5.1 Active Listening**

Most seminaries teach active listening as part of a counseling curriculum. If a chaplain did not learn it at seminary, he or she has most certainly heard about it in dealing with the other helping agencies available to Sailors and families. Active listening is the beginning of a proper response to Sailors in need. It is too easy for a counselor to fall into the trap of thinking about what he or she is going to say next rather than listening carefully to what the counselee is saying in the moment. Particularly when adhering to a set script, or when mentally cueing up what he or she tells everyone who comes for counseling, a chaplain can miss important details that a counselee is attempting to communicate, or that are evident to close observation and key to understanding what is really going on with the counselee. Many are reticent, even after coming to the RMT for help, to divulge the details of their situation. Active listening properly practiced draws out the needed information by establishing trust and encouraging disclosure.

##### **2.5.2 Starting with What They Know... But May Have Forgotten**

Most people do not come to the RMT without any personal resources. Everyone has experiences, memories, and feelings. Many have beliefs about a variety of different things. Most people have some form of coping mechanisms, whether they are conscious of them or not. Part of the counseling process can involve reminding people of their own capabilities, their own abilities which can allow them to

effectively cope. Asking what they are doing or have done in the past with such problems can be part of the conversation. Too often people in crisis lose sight of their own ability to influence their situation. They become immobilized by stress, and thus unable to apply what they know and have used in the past. When the stressor is significant, or the number of stressors multiplies, such an emotional reaction is understandable.

### **2.5.3 Self-Assessment**

Related to the lifting up of the counselee's own efficacy is the encouragement of honest self-assessment. Often, crisis reveals deeper underlying patterns of thought and emotion which are holding the person back from reaching full potential. Thus, crisis can be a time of opportunity. One objective of counseling can be to assist the individual in identifying ways in which the crisis can be beneficial. If there are elements in the situation upon which the individual can build to establish a better outlook, make more constructive decisions, more accurately discern friends from others, the chaplain can help the counselee to identify those opportunities.

## **2.6 Making a Difference and Knowing One's Limits**

*"Understand that while many problems cannot be solved immediately, a proper foundation for mitigation can be built."* (NTTP 1-05.2)

Chaplains deliver religious ministry, not therapy. They are not authorized to function as clinical practitioners. In their role as chaplains they offer what might technically be considered subclinical counseling. It is focused on helping people to cope with the challenges of life: managing anger, dealing with stress, processing grief, getting along with co-workers, building fulfilling relationships. Some issues go beyond the scope of chaplain counseling. Part of being an effective chaplain counselor is the ability to recognize one's limitations, and to know to whom to refer those who need longer term, more in-depth care based on specific training and experience. Chaplains should monitor themselves and the counseling process to discern insipient safety concerns, lack of progress in counseling, or lack of knowledge in how to address a person's issues. In that way, a coach or other helping agent can be consulted, and the best referral resource identified. But counseling should be more than just fitting the square peg into the square hole. Chaplains should care about those with whom they serve, especially those whose problems surpass the chaplain's qualifications. By communicating concern, expressing encouragement, bolstering confidence and providing useful information about resources, chaplains can fulfill their role as the ultimate safety valve for the command, while fully living out their calling to serve.

## **2.7 Laying the Groundwork and Proper Follow-up**

*"Follow up with the Sailor, family, or command in order to ensure the best possible support."* (NTTP 1-05.2)

Counselees do not exist in a vacuum. They are part of a work center, a command, and probably a network of family and friends. The chaplain should be mindful of those connections and relationships which influence the counselee's view of the situation. The chaplain should also do the necessary work to know, and to be known, by the people of the command, and by the people with whom the command interacts regularly. The positive impact of follow up is greatly enhanced when the chaplain is a familiar face. Trying to assist a work center in dealing with a personnel crisis is much easier when that is not the

first time the Sailors in the work center have laid eyes on the chaplain. Chaplains should not wait for crises to prepare themselves and those for whom they care to best cope with the challenges of life.

Chaplains do not work in a vacuum either. They are part of an RMT. They are part of a command. They are also part of the larger team of chaplains and RPs working together for the good of the people of the Department of the Navy. All these connections, all these relationships, require cultivation. A unit chaplain may not immediately understand the larger picture. A goal of coaching can be to broaden the chaplain's view of the work.

### **2.7.1 Deckplate Ministry**

Perhaps the most important aspect of preventive ministry is what RM professionals have often referred to as deck plate ministry or ministry of presence. Deck-plate ministry is more than just walking around. It is a way of describing the essential activity of establishing and cultivating relationships which will form the basis for effective preventive actions now and relevant responsive actions in the future. This may sound simple and straight-forward, but it is not. Before setting out to walk the spaces, RMTs should intentionally be prepared to listen, to convey approachability, to be attentive, to be sufficiently adroit as to connect with the people they meet. Some people have such talents naturally. For others, the development of such skills requires study, preparation, and practice. While presence in the spaces may not always be conducive to deep and meaningful conversation, the way the RMT behaves at the time of the visit can go a long way in encouraging those with whom they interact to seek out the RMT in time of need for further and deeper discussion.

When walking the spaces, the RMT should be prepared to offer something relevant in conversation. Though commiseration can be a useful starting point, merely sharing in the common complaints of Sailors is not enough. The RMT can exert a powerful influence on the command climate based on how it interacts with Sailors while conducting deck plate ministry. In some cases, it is a matter of accurately describing the systems which are already in place to receive and respond to Sailor grievances. In others, it is a matter of encouraging Sailors not to be afraid of using those systems. Sometimes it requires facilitative action on the part of the RMT to ensure that the command is aware of perceptions on the deck plates.

Even in the unusual circumstances where Sailors have no complaints, the RMT should be prepared to set a tone, sound a theme, or reinforce a message which builds enthusiasm and esprit. Telling a sea story or communicating an anecdote are ways in which to spark thought or conversation about values, morals, and ethics, and how they do or do not intersect with behavior. But the stories should be relevant.

RMTs can also ask questions which elicit responses from Sailors, such as "why did you join the Service." This allows the Sailors to speak, giving voice to their concerns. It can also help in building camaraderie in the work center, as Sailors hear their co-workers share thought processes that they too have had. Fostering positive connections among the crew is part of the work of the RMT.

### **2.7.2 Coordination and Communication**

*"Coordinate and communicate with other chaplains when services have been provided to personnel within their command.... Coordinate and communicate with the chaplain chain when the situation warrants." (NTTP 1-05.2)*

It might be said that all chaplains and RPs are part of an RMT writ large: the RMT which consists of all chaplains and RPs. In a very real sense, the entire PNC community is a religious ministry team and should behave as such. Part of appropriate community behavior is regular, meaningful, considerate communications. Appropriate community behavior involves discernment of who needs to know what, when. Courtesy, consideration, and attentiveness to detail are necessary elements of good community behavior. Chaplains should not be soloists or lone rangers. They should work together for the benefit of those served. Egos should be checked at the gangway. Peers should be willing to offer to, and receive from, one another, honest feedback and useful coaching.

## **2.8 Information and Referral**

*“Be prepared to accompany those in need to the help they require.... When referring someone to another helping agent, attempt to make personal contact and introduction, accomplishing the highest quality ‘hand-off’ possible.... Offer complete, accurate and useful information.” (NTTP 1-05.2)*

Referral is a key element of how RMTs help those in need. As SECNAVINST 1730.7D states in the definition of PNC, and SECNAVINST 5351.1 Enclosure (1) Professional Standards for PNC elaborates, chaplains must understand the processes and structures of the organizations and institutions served. They must do so in order to properly advise those in need as to the resources available to them, and how best to navigate the system in which they are working. Part of referral is follow up. Follow up also applies to those situations in which the RMT delivers the care.

Chaplains should not forsake those in need. If they do not have the necessary expertise, or believe they are unsuited to assist a particular individual, they should see to it that the individual gets help from other resources. They accomplish this process while communicating their caring concern for the individual, and without presuming to pass judgment on them. In some cases, they may disagree with the moral, religious or behavioral choices being made by the person requesting assistance. They should not allow that to prevent them from assisting the one in need.

A great virtue of chaplaincy is the commitment to treating everyone with respect, regardless of belief or non-belief. While the chaplain may not agree with the individual’s way of seeing things, the chaplain should always affirm the humanity of the person coming for help, seek common ground and ways to offer guidance, and see to it that the individual has recourse to other helping resources, while conducting himself or herself in a properly professional and respectful manner.

Referral by an RMT should not be impersonal, cold, or perfunctory. It should be caring, attentive, and robust. Effective referral involves a wide range of information and knowledge about other helping agencies: their locations, how to get in touch with them, and the kind of help they provide. It involves ongoing efforts to establish and cultivate relationships with the helping agents themselves, so that a personal introduction is possible.

## **2.9 The Professional Community of Religious Ministry**

*“Do all of the above in a spirit of cooperation, dedication to service, and professionalism.” (NTTP 1-05.2)*

### **2.9.1 Professionalism**

“Professionalism” is sometimes a problematic term for religious leaders. It is important to note that whether or not one’s religious organization understands religious leadership to be a profession, the Navy expects a naval staff officer to be a professional. Being a profession means that the community formulates and articulates standards and enforces them through a recognizable, rational system of accountability. Being a professional means conducting oneself according to the standards established by the community of professionals of which one is a part. The Chaplain Corps is a professional community. It has articulated standards of conduct and enforces them. Chaplains and RPs are part of the professional naval chaplaincy community. They should behave accordingly.

### **2.9.2 For the Benefit of the Counselee**

Inherent in the role of chaplain are concepts which drive the non-faith-specific content of counseling. Foremost is the concept that counseling is delivered for the benefit of the individual. This may seem obvious, but chaplains should be mindful of the need to dive deeper on this topic. If a chaplain becomes emotionally compromised, or is insufficiently attentive to the needs of the counselee, the counseling activity can become self-serving. If a chaplain does not approach counseling responsibilities professionally, or lacks maturity and self-discipline, counseling can become more about the chaplain’s feelings and needs, and less about the needs of the counselee. SECNAVINST 1730.10 emphasizes the importance of focusing on the needs of the individual who comes to the chaplain for help. The chaplain’s role should be that of service to the other rather than service to one’s self. To avoid this trap, chaplains should be aware of their emotional state, and of their emotional reactions to counselees. A coaching relationship can serve as a warning system so that the counselor does not become co-dependent with the one who has come for help. Counselors should practice good mental hygiene, becoming aware of their own emotional baggage, prejudices and unfounded assumptions. This is hard work which benefits greatly from the guidance of a coach.

### **2.9.3 The Art of Counseling**

In many respects, counseling may indeed be thought of as an art. The chaplain’s temperament, life experience, theological understanding, and general disposition will influence the way he or she approaches each counselee. That said, there are certain characteristics of chaplain counseling which are derived from the very nature of the role of chaplain. Chaplains affirm the humanity of everyone with whom they deal, to include in times of war, the enemy. Chaplains value people, even and especially when people do not value themselves. Chaplains should not operate on their own program. Their activities are defined in DOD and DON policy and authoritatively described in joint and Navy doctrine. Chaplains have the benefit of graduate education. Chaplains are generally older than those they counsel, with more experience of life. It is expected that such experience has imbued them with some degree of wisdom about life in general. Perhaps most importantly, chaplains should be willing to put themselves in the counselee’s boots. Because they feel empathy, chaplains can communicate that they care. Because they value people, they can validate the humanity of the individual before them.

## **CHAPTER 3. COUNSELING TOPICS, TACTICS, AND TECHNIQUES**

Each counselee is unique, and circumstances vary widely. Yet human existence also encompasses patterns and types. In practical terms, there are best practices and lessons learned exposure to which can empower counselors to become more effective, for the benefit of those who come to them for help. Chaplains and RPs should share and encourage one another in the use of best practices and lessons learned.

In most counseling, it is important to understand the situation of counsees: their perceptions, backgrounds, circumstances, limitations, and aspirations. It is also important to remain focused on the whole person, not just the problem. It is important to know what they think the problem is, but that is rarely the entire story. Chaplains can develop the questioning attitude, the sensitivity to nuances of speech and body language, the ability to identify the common evasions and patterns of resistance and fear, which often prevent an individual from overcoming personal and professional challenges.

### **3.1 Empowerment**

Those who come to the RMT for help are often experiencing feelings of powerlessness. A goal of the chaplain when counseling can be to help the counselee identify those aspects of the situation, and of their reaction to the situation, over which they do have power.

People have varying degrees of influence and control in their lives. Even those with quite a bit of control experience surprises, unanticipated changes, disappointments, unexpected health challenges, and even disasters. Whatever the specific circumstances, generally it can be said that human beings have the power to give meaning to the things which happen in their lives, through the responses they choose. They can give meaning by the lessons they choose to take from events. They can give meaning by the ways they choose to adapt in the face of new circumstances. They can give meaning by simply realizing that the uncontrolled events and forces that impinge on their lives do not define who they are, or what they choose to become.

### **3.2 Resisting Victimhood**

Too often young Sailors feel powerless, victimized by those in authority or life in general. Such feelings may be understandable given some of the conditions of military life, but are often counterproductive to progress. It is important to help reframe the counselee's perception of victimization to a more internalized and helpful locus of control. Helping people focus on what they do control in life can reduce these feelings of victimization. Counseling can focus on illustrating how each person is sovereign over his or her inner life. Instead of feeling like a pinball bouncing from one crisis to another, the counselee can set short, medium, and long term goals and have a sense of progress in the direction in which he or she wishes to go. The monitoring of those goals can be the basis of follow up counseling which contracts for constructive thinking. A conversation about such goals, and their verbalization by the counselee, can go a long way toward restoring emotional equanimity. Rather than being a victim of circumstances or puppet of people the counselee does not respect, the counselee can decide to transition from emotional reaction toward rational response.

### **3.3 Moving from Emotional Reaction to Rational Response**

Sometimes those in distress end up being their own worst enemy, reacting emotionally in a way which is detrimental to their future. Bringing the counselee to the realization of this pattern can be an important step in helping him or her break out of the self-fulfilling prophecy. The ability to transition from emotional reaction to rational response is a skill the counselor can highlight. The counselor can help the counselee learn to recognize his or her inner landscape and identify the danger signals that indicate emotion is overcoming rationality. One danger signal can be a willingness to contemplate clearly self-destructive courses of action. Often counselees recognize the destructive behavior after the fact. They can be encouraged to apply that understanding proactively in future situations. Helping them clearly articulate it can assist them in internalizing the knowledge and making it part of their coping strategy.

### **3.4 Asserting Personal Freedom**

Another tell-tale sign that one is behaving as one's own worst enemy is behavior that is reactive to provocation from individuals whom the counselee does not categorize as friends. One way to address this in such a way as to make a long term impression on the counselee is to ask them if they would voluntarily surrender their freedom to the person in question (often someone in positional authority for whom the counselee has little respect and has identified as a source of stress). Put in such stark terms, the counselee has the opportunity to realize how unwise it is to simply react emotionally.

Counselors who have worked with crime and trauma victims can appreciate the intense feelings of victimization they may feel at times. Such feelings can be truly paralyzing, and often long-standing. Much of what helps people in such circumstances is to normalize their reactions (these are normal reactions to abnormal events) but then to help them see the ineffectiveness of their maladaptive coping skills. Thus, it may be appropriate to focus on helping the counselee identify what reactions are helpful and how to replace ineffective reactions and coping strategies with more effective ones.

### **3.5 Dealing with 'Baggage'**

Many of those who come to chaplains for counsel have been impacted by malignant forces. Perhaps it was a dysfunctional home life. Perhaps there was an abusive adult in their childhood. They may have grown up in a harsh or emotionally austere environment. Others may have experienced traumas related to crime, mental illness, or irresponsible behavior on the part of care-givers. Some are bereft of unconditional love.

In such cases, the chaplain can seek to affirm the worth of the individual. But the counselee must choose to believe in his or her own worth as a person. The chaplain can encourage self-esteem by pointing to the positive aspects of the person. Praising good qualities while encouraging honest self-assessment, the chaplain can help the counselee learn mental habits that can assist the individual in achieving and learning to maintain emotional equilibrium. The chaplain can seek to help the counselee break out of the vicious cycle of self-recrimination which produces pervasive feelings of ineffectuality and helplessness and can lead to self-destructive behaviors. Beyond that, help can be given to build the necessary self-awareness to identify unproductive mental habits and replace them with patterns of thinking which support a more positive outlook and healthier living.

### **3.6 Self-worth**

Counselees who have been abused, betrayed, or otherwise victimized can be encouraged to assert ownership their own self-esteem. Counselees are often surprised, and respond enthusiastically when it is pointed out to them that the last person they should want to have in charge of their inner life is the person who victimized them. By buying in to the inner narrative of low self-esteem, that is just what they are doing. Encouraging them to take charge of their own inner life is a track worth pursuing vigorously. Squelching the voice of the victimizer in their heads is a way of energizing the process of developing positive self-esteem.

The counselor can validate the worthiness of the individual, setting up a counterpoint to the inner voice of self-loathing which is so often established or magnified by victimization. The counselor can help the counselee become conscious of that inner voice, and identify the specific negative content of it. Then, together they can develop a positive narrative to combat it. That positive narrative emphasizes the person's good qualities and future potential.

### **3.7 Dealing with 'Tunnel Vision'**

People often lose sight of the many positive elements in their lives. Stress can cause a narrowing of viewpoint until all the counselee can see are the problems. Such narrowing cuts the counselee off from those resources one would normally use to work one's way through a troubling situation. It is important for a counselee to understand that such a narrowing of perspective is a natural and normal reaction to stress. Too often the individuals who come to a chaplain for help have convinced themselves that there is something wrong with them rendering them unable to continue to serve in the Navy. Some may be so disturbed as to require help which is beyond the scope of the chaplain's purview. Many, however, simply need encouragement and guidance in navigating the challenges of stress. So the chaplain should be prepared to offer calming and encouraging advice which helps counselees re-engage their own coping skills, and teaches them new ones. Techniques can range from the simple expedient to the life-long habit. Examples of simple methods for coping include counting to ten when faced with provocation, and taking a deep breath and exhaling slowly when experiencing a strong emotional reaction.

### **3.8 Constructive Verbalizing**

Putting words to one's emotions helps place a rational boundary around them. Verbalizing can smooth the transition from emotional reaction to rational response. Too often anger leads to self-defeating actions: intemperate or disrespectful remarks or emails, meanness which hurts or alienates, stubbornness which holds one back and weakens the team. Speaking with a trusted friend, shipmate, relative, or counselor can facilitate the movement from emotional reaction to rational response. The counselor can encourage such safe verbalizing. If the counselee has no one they feel they can trust, journaling is another way of verbalizing, putting into words, the feelings they are having. When people put their feelings into words, they can begin to think about them and understand them better. They can decide how to respond to the situation at hand rather than simply react in a way which may be self-defeating.

### **3.9 Reframing the Problem**

The chaplain can seek to help the counselee articulate the problem which caused them to look for help. Then the chaplain can seek to more fully understand the circumstances with which the counselee is

struggling. This includes everything which is germane to the situation. Often, counsees find themselves trapped in a way of thinking (and, more often, feeling) about the situation which indicates no way ahead, no solution to the problem. Reframing is a technique for helping counsees redefine the meaning of what they are experiencing in a more adaptive and useful way. The ways of reframing are as varied as the situations in which counsees find themselves. But at the very least, any challenging situation can be reframed in a more positive light by considering the wisdom and strength which will result from surviving it. This is merely the baseline. Most situations can be interpreted in such a way as to help counsees identify positive elements, or at least discard irrational or non-factual aspects of their perception of them. Reframing emphasizes realistic assessment, followed by the lifting up of positive meaning.

### **3.10 Worry**

People tend to worry about things over which they have no control. This is a sort of emotional vicious cycle. Mental energy is wasted and the individual feels a sense of paralysis, an inability to escape the suffering in which they perceive themselves to be trapped. Such a feeling can lead to despair, a dangerous mental state. Often, it is useful for someone who is suffering from a circular pattern of worry to step back from what is happening. They can be encouraged to take that energy and apply it to doing what they can do. Eliciting a description of the counselee's inner emotional state, and engaging in a dialogue about expending energy on positive action rather than worry can be of value.

### **3.11 Goal Setting**

A counselee's sense of being trapped, of being unable to move forward, can be challenged by the chaplain. Encouraging the counselee to set short, medium, and long term goals, and reviewing them regularly, is one way of establishing a sense of forward momentum. Asking the counselee to review the reasons why he or she joined the Navy is one way to begin to explore possible goals. Concern for family or loved ones is often a source of stress. Goal setting is one way to remind the counselee that he or she can contribute significantly to the well-being of loved ones by coping with the challenges of Navy life more effectively. A discussion of goal-setting can also help the counselor assess for suicidal thoughts.

### **3.12 Visualization**

Hopelessness is a complaint frequently associated with debilitating stress reactions and suicide-related behaviors. The chaplain can continuously seek ways to remind the counselee to be hopeful. The counselor can seek to bring the counselee to the understanding that, in the final analysis, each person should take ownership of his or her own happiness. Hope is an essential element of the ability to feel happiness. Counsees can be encouraged to cultivate the skill of looking past immediate difficulties in order to be able connect to a brighter future. One technique which a counselee can use to make that connection is visualization. The counselor can ask for detailed descriptions of scenarios in which the counselee imagines that he or she would be happy. When a person visualizes a peaceful, fulfilling scene in great detail (sights, sounds, smells, textures, surroundings, people, etc.), it is possible to enter the mindset of that imagined moment. In this way a person can, in a sense, borrow some joy from that bright future which is out there waiting to help him or her get through the challenging times currently at hand. Good memories can give substance to this technique. If the counselee had a particularly fulfilling memory, one that has the potential to be repeated in the future, then elements of that memory can be projected onto the future event, generating positive anticipation. Where stress narrows one's

viewpoint, visualization can help one broaden it to include hope-generating thoughts. Visualization can be a useful technique for a counselor to use with the person in need.

### **3.13 Emotional Autonomy**

Self-mastery and emotional autonomy are important elements of Navy life, and of adulthood generally. Yet for many young Sailors, and for some not so young, self-mastery is only applicable in the financial and professional arenas. They may not consider the importance of self-mastery in their emotional life. The application of rational thought to the inner life is seldom exercised. Messaging in popular culture often reinforces this tendency to ride the whirlwind of feelings wherever it may take one. Slogans like “Just do it” and “Feed your thirst” emphasize the importance of sensation and impulse. Instant gratification is almost universally recognized as an unrealistic yet pervasive standard of expectation in the society at large. The combination of instant gratification and the emphasis on emotion can produce unhappy and frustrated people without the means to do anything about it. To break this vicious cycle, counselors can encourage those who come to them for help to differentiate between what they want and what they need. Inherent in adulthood, and most certainly inherent in military service, is the requirement that gratification be deferred when necessary. For adults, desire is one element in the decision-making process. An adult cannot merely react to impulse without consideration of consequences. To do so is to forestall progress and court disaster. This is not to say that emotions are bad and must be suppressed. But they are not the be-all and end-all of human existence. Often, chaplains are called upon to communicate this to counselees in order to encourage growth and proper adjustment to Navy life. By recognizing the limits of feelings, many Sailors can get past the emotional impasses in which they often find themselves. Coaches, whether peers or supervisors, can introduce chaplains to these patterns and encourage chaplains to develop effective ways of communicating the need for rationality.

### **3.14 Stress**

Life in the military is often stressful. Stress is the most frequent theme presented by those in need when they come to an RMT for help. RMTs should be prepared to respond effectively to those experiencing negative stress.

#### **3.14.1 Leading Counselees throughout the Stress Continuum**

Chaplains should be encouraged to think about counseling from the perspective of leadership as described in Navy doctrine about Combat and Operational Stress Control (COSC). To help counselees return from the yellow, orange, and red zones to the green zone of the stress continuum, chaplains can use the conceptual framework summarized as Strengthen: training, social cohesion, leadership; Mitigate: conserving physical, mental/emotional, social, religious/spiritual resources; Identify: recognizing stress zones; Treat: combating stigma, rendering first aid; Reintegrate: evaluation of fitness, reducing stigma. **The RMT has a role in each zone of the continuum.**

##### **3.14.1.1 The Green Zone: Ready**

For those in the Green Zone, the RMT delivers training and education which strengthens and enhances coping skills before crises occur. RMTs connect Sailors and families to religious and other resources

which contribute to wholeness. Chaplains deliver divine services and faith-specific training and education which strengthen religious and spiritual discipline and deepen resiliency resources. Chaplains offer advice and counsel to those who are not in crisis, helping them avoid pitfalls and preserve their personal and family readiness. RMTs visit work centers and exert a presence throughout the command, connecting with people so that if and when those people are in need, they know to whom they can turn for help. All this takes place in the green zone.

#### **3.14.1.2 The Yellow Zone: Reacting**

Often the first responders to those who are reacting (as well as to those who are experiencing stress injuries), RMTs are in a position to set the individual on a trajectory back to personal readiness. Life is full of challenges which can produce stress. Some stress is good. It motivates, it encourages improvement, it challenges and invigorates. An old adage states that anyone can take the helm when the seas are calm. The implication is that exceptional people step up when the seas are rough. Part of the counseling process can involve encouraging individuals to perceive their stress in a productive way. This can involve a reframing of the crisis in terms which highlight positive aspects of the situation. It can involve encouraging the counselee to give a positive meaning to the events that have happened in the past and are continuing to shape their perceptions of the present and future. It often involves helping counselees to let go of the baggage of the past, of being defined by things which were done to them, choosing instead to define themselves by the values and goals they set for themselves. Along with counsel and advice, RMTs can lead those who are reacting to a better understanding of the resources which are available to help them cope and thrive. Those resources can be physical, mental, emotional, social, religious and/or spiritual. The RMT should have ready access to information about activities, services, and programs which are available to the counselee to bolster their reservoir of resilience.

#### **3.14.1.3 The Orange Zone: Injured**

RMT response to stress injury involves much of what is offered to those who are reacting. In addition, RMTs may use their extensive knowledge of the system of helping agents to ensure that those who are suffering from stress injuries are aware of the full range of support. Referral is discussed elsewhere in this introductory guide. Referral is not an automatic response to those who seem to be in the orange zone. In these situations it is very important that the chaplain counselor be patient and attentive, listening for clues as to the basis of the crisis. Only then can the chaplain know if referral is called for, and to whom the one in need should be referred. It may be that the experienced chaplain counselor can lead the counselee back to a ready status through on-going counseling and application of the techniques described, as well as coordination with the chain of command, friends, and family of the one in need. A team approach to assisting the counselee can reinforce the counseling messages, and illustrate dramatically to the counselee the extent of those who care about his or her welfare. Any such coordination must be cleared with the counselee first, out of respect for confidentiality.

#### **3.14.1.4 The Red Zone: Ill**

For those perceived to be suffering from stress illness, the chaplain should actively seek to lay the groundwork for bringing additional resources to bear on the crisis. The chaplain counselor can do so by building trust, convincing the counselee of the chaplain's commitment to advocacy, explaining the benefits of seeking additional help, and assisting the counselee in calming down enough to identify what is prudent. This approach is particularly applicable to suicidal or homicidal counselees. If such a person has come to the RMT, the chances are that on some level, he or she desires the help. Fear, mistrust, or

other constraints may be holding him or her back from using other resources. In such cases, the chaplain can encourage their desire for help. In such cases the counselee may be on the point of self-harm. The chaplain can reaffirm the worthiness of life, acknowledge the pain it sometimes entails, and encourage the one in need to seek out all possible help for that pain. This would particularly include medical/psychological/psychiatric help. Being able to assure the counselee that the chaplain trusts the doctor, psychologist, or other helping agent as a competent and responsible caregiver is an important element in bringing the one in need to the proper resources. Hearing the chaplain say "I trust Doc Smith" can be decisive in convincing the counselee to seek appropriate support. An underlying goal can be to ensure that the one in need communicates his or her mindset to those who can notify authorities where necessary. As is stated in NTTP 1-05.2 and other doctrine applicable to suicidal and homicidal personnel, they should not be left alone. The RMT should stay with the one in need until others discover the nature of the crisis. If this requires the RMT to escort the counselee wherever he or she goes, then so be it. In the course of training the command on the services available through the CRP, it should be communicated that when one sees a chaplain escorting someone around, it is advisable to inquire of the one being escorted as to why that is happening. While escorting, the RMT can continue to encourage the individual to seek additional help and affirm the value of life.

### **3.14.2 Attacking the Stressors and Replenishing the Stores**

According to Navy COSC doctrine, dealing with operational stress is a two pronged effort: attacking the stressors and replenishing the stores.

#### **3.14.2.1 Attacking the Stressors**

In addition to the techniques previously discussed, attacking the stressors often means breaking bad habits. Those bad habits could be internal and/or external. People have routines and patterns of life to ensure they are physically hygienic and presentable. They can also be encouraged to have internal routines for the maintenance of health and the establishment of constructive relationships. A key to good mental hygiene is a positive self-image based on honest self-assessment and a commitment to self-improvement. Often, alienation from peers and/or the chain of command is the result of a poor, under-developed, or misguided inner life. Counseling can seek to contribute to positive change within, which can have cascading positive effects in the entirety of the counselee's life.

#### **3.14.2.2 Replenishing the Stores**

Replenishing the stores involves revitalizing or establishing healthy habits. Sleep, diet, and exercise are part of that effort. As important are a positive outlook, meaningful connections with others, philanthropy, and an outlook which puts the needs of others ahead of one's own needs. Encouraging counsees to spend less time emotionally fixated on their own problems, and more time helping others can have a very positive affect on their outlook. Just noticing the other's point of view is an important first step. The lack of empathy and an inability to appreciate the other's point of view may be indicative of issues requiring longer term assistance or treatment. Counseling can try to help in developing empathy, dialing down the egocentricity, and gaining a sense of the larger world. Unrealistic expectations can be a constant drain on emotional resources by leading to disappointment as reality does not meet those expectations. One method of replenishment is realistic goal setting for the short, medium, and long term. The counselee can be encouraged to keep track of progress and report back to the counselor. Reporting back can be an important part of the counseling effort, because it establishes

accountability and emphasizes the counselee's role in addressing his or her own issues. If problems persist or worsen, a higher level of intervention and treatment may be in order.

#### **3.14.2.2.1 Physical Training**

Regular physical training (PT) is a requirement for military service. It is also an important element of any stress management strategy. The pattern plays out too often in which a Sailor becomes too busy at work, or gets too tired, and gradually the time set aside for PT falls out of the schedule. It is often useful for the chaplain to remind the counselee that PT is part of healthy living and can serve to mitigate many of the toxic aspects of stress. Focusing attention on the physical well-being of the counselee can help him or her direct effort to something which will pay tangible dividends.

#### **3.14.2.2.2 Sleep**

One of the most influential writers on the experience of military service in war, who has contributed significantly to the military's understanding of post-traumatic stress, has written that the single most important element in the prevention of lingering traumatic reaction is sufficient sleep. Though ship-board routine often impinges dramatically on one's normal sleep cycle, it is nonetheless important for chaplains to encourage those who come to them for help to get a healthy amount of restful sleep. Young Sailors often seek relief from the cares of life in games and other activities which are pursued at the expense of sleep. The chaplain can encourage the counselee to get enough sleep, or at least to take the time allotted for sleep and use it wisely. Sleep problems that remain or worsen may also be an indication of a need for medical assistance to pursue possible physiological issues.

#### **3.14.2.2.3 Diet**

Junk food permeates modern culture. Too often Sailors fall into bad eating habits which negatively impact their health, both physically and emotionally. By encouraging the counselee to eat right, the chaplain is not simply offering sound advice, but also affirming the value of the life of the counselee. Health does not occur by accident. Well-being begins with the basics, to include proper diet. Should lack of appetite be a longstanding concern, it may be indicative of serious conditions requiring referral to medical or psychiatric care.

### **3.15 Anger**

Anger is one of many natural and normal human emotional reactions. It can be useful when it generates energy in support of constructive or corrective goals, but can also be toxic. It can be provoked in any number of ways. The perception of unfairness, injustice, insult, abandonment, failure, or a social slight may cause anger. It may serve to express other emotions, such as fear, frustration, or self-doubt. Under stress, people may be more likely to react with anger. Their anger may become more evident or observable, affecting their professional and personal lives. Anger can also be an indication of inner conflict, or an inability to otherwise express complex feelings and thoughts.

#### **3.15.1 Working in a Chain of Command**

Personnel may come to the chaplain because they perceive that they or someone with whom they have a relationship has a problem with anger. They may arrive at the chaplain's hatch because their chain of command thinks they have an anger problem. They may not have an anger problem at all, but rather

some form of personality conflict with someone in the work center. Often that someone may be an immediate supervisor. Some junior Sailors may be experiencing supervision for the first time in their lives. Certainly most junior Sailors on a ship are experiencing the prolonged truncation of their freedom of movement and expression to a greater extent than ever before in their lives. The sense of the loss of control over one's life can trigger an anger reaction. Educating the one in need about personality differences may help objectify their perceptions so they learn not to take situations so personally.

### **3.15.2 Other Sources of Anger**

Separation from that which was known and familiar can cause anger. Separation from loved ones can trigger an anger reaction. Changes in routine and disappointed expectations are par for the course in the dynamic environment of the Navy. Given the challenges inherent in life in the Navy, at various points in their careers, Sailors tend to experience varying degrees of anger.

Counseling to address an anger issue can seek to shed light on the root causes of the emotion and teach techniques for limiting its effect on the individual's life. If the cause is an interpersonal conflict, the counselor can help the counselee explore the reasons for the conflict.

### **3.15.3 Against Puppet-hood**

One way to emphasize the importance of thinking before one speaks (or hits the send button) is to ask the counselee whether they really want to put their future and their happiness in the hands of another person. Especially if that person is someone with whom they may be in conflict, the answer will probably be no. In fact, the person with whom they are having a conflict, whom they see as the cause of their anger, is probably the last person they would wish to have such power over them. Circumstances may trigger emotion. The challenge for the counselee is to bring thought to bear as well. The counselor might ask what is changed when there is an angry outburst. Is the irritating person going to change because of the angry outburst? Probably not. What if the counselee were to punch the irritating person in the nose? Would the irritating qualities of that person be changed? No. Momentary satisfaction for the angry person will then turn into more aggravation as he or she goes through the disciplinary process. Nothing of enduring value is gained, and much is lost. Helping the counselee think through the consequences of angry reaction can be an important step in setting a new pattern. Many young Sailors have yet to learn to consider the consequences of their actions in a logical way. Because the culture emphasizes emotions rather than rationality, it is important for young Sailors to understand that in the Naval Services, individuals are held accountable for their actions. Actions matter, and consequences can be significant and severe. While this may seem obvious to a thirty-five year old chaplain or senior RP, it may not be so obvious to a nineteen year old whose life has been turned upside down since joining the Navy.

### **3.16 Relationships**

The age groups most predominant in the Navy are strongly influenced by peers. Their social life is of great importance to their self-esteem, values, and coping mechanisms. The people with whom they choose to relate can strongly affect their approach to life. It is therefore important that they make wise choices. A chaplain counselor can be a good source of advice on those choices. A recent report found that leaders and shipmates must exercise heightened vigilance when intimate relationships are ending or are in danger of ending (break-up, separation, divorce, death of loved one). Counselors should be vigilant to the possible danger of suicidal behavior associated with relationship status changes.

### **3.16.1 Choosing Friends Wisely**

The discerning choice of companions, and the ability to identify worthy friends, is essential to a healthy social life. Yet many young Sailors have not enjoyed the opportunity to do so. Either because of isolation or neglect, they have not developed the skill to discern who has their best interests at heart and who does not. The counselor can provide advice on identifying relationships worth cultivating, as well as less worthy relationships. The old adage, “With whichever teacher you sit, those are the lessons you will learn” applies. The counselor can provide a dispassionate, third party point of view, helping the counselee think through the implications of the social choices at hand.

### **3.16.2 Dealing with Loneliness**

Young Sailors are often lonely. That loneliness can make them vulnerable to predatory or manipulative peers and others, and overly sensitive to those in authority. The counselor can help the counselee seek positive, constructive connections through command, professional, social, religious and other networks. Coaches can encourage chaplains to incorporate such approaches in the counseling interaction.

The interpersonal-psychological theory of suicidal behavior (T. E. Joiner, 2005) proposes that an individual will not die by suicide unless he or she has both the desire to die by suicide and the ability to do so; when they: feel a sense of thwarted belongingness (relationship breakup, occupational transition, societal rejection over conduct); feel they are a burden on others (e.g., they'd be better off with me out of the picture, I can't provide for them properly, I just make everyone's lives worse); and acquired capability (exposure to suicide, access to firearms, previous suicide attempts, tolerance for pain, suicide rehearsal). Intense feelings surrounding loneliness should trigger heightened attentiveness from the counselor, and an assessment of danger to self or others.

Many younger people may require additional social skills training. The social media interactions they learned growing up in a media-saturated environment may be very different from face to face interactions. They may need encouragement and help in developing skills related to emotional expression, communication skills, anger management, etc.

One way Sailors may choose to deal with loneliness is through the use of alcohol or drugs. Substance use initiated to overcome social anxiety can too easily become abuse. A counselor can help the person in need to recognize potentially dangerous over-reliance on alcohol and teach or refer the person to develop basic socializing skills, build self-confidence, and achieve independence from alcohol reliance. The Navy's alcohol treatment system is well-developed. RMTs should be fully familiar with treatment options and resources.

### **3.17 Grief**

Grief has many causes, and manifests in many forms. The discerning counselor should be on the lookout as to how a particular situation may be influenced by the counselee's sense of loss, whether it be due to bereavement, the loss of health, opportunity, relationship, or some other perceived loss. Those associated with people who have died by suicide, those who are victims of sexual assault or domestic violence, or suffering from substance abuse, have the potential for grief reactions. The emotions associated with grief are well-documented. Counselors should read widely and discuss with peers and coaches in order to better understand the spectrum of emotions and how they might manifest in those

experiencing grief. Counselors can seek to help the grieving to recognize their emotional reactions as normal, understandable, and amenable to reframing and the application of productive meanings.

### **3.17.1 Bereavement**

One of the most solemn and important duties of an RMT is the processing of American Red Cross messages and other communications involving the notification of death. Ahead of time, the RMT should ensure that all leaders in the command have an understanding of the process. Insensitive or inept delivery of such serious news can traumatize the recipient and the one delivering the news. The RMT's role should include proper preparation of the chain of command, support for the leader delivering the message, and support of the individual receiving the news. That support can be expressed through counseling, facilitation of Navy Marine Corps Relief Society aid, and follow up. Operational circumstances may affect the command's response to the news. Chaplains should be prepared to address the ramifications. This introductory guide includes an appendix on notification.

The chaplain should be prepared to help the bereaved process the emotions associated with grief, as well as the emotional response to the situation at hand. Honoring the memory of the dead, being inspired by that person's life, learning from the mistakes of the one who has died, all of these are possibilities, depending on the circumstances. Understanding the background, and assisting in the assignment of positive meanings can be a key to assisting the bereaved in growing through the grief experience.

The question of leave may be of particular importance. If the operational situation is such that emergency leave cannot be granted, there could be emotional repercussions. If the Sailor decides not to take leave, he or she may later feel that the immediate chain of command should have insisted that he or she do so. If leave is granted and taken, the situation at home could have any number of impacts on the Sailor going forward upon return from leave. These are but a few of a myriad of possibilities. Follow up to determine the state of mind of the bereaved is often critical.

### **3.17.2 Grief over Professional Issues**

Grief is commonly associated with bereavement. But that is not the only source of grief. Professional issues can generate profound grief reactions. Failure to promote, disciplinary actions resulting in loss of pay, rank, or future advancement opportunity, and competitive set backs are some examples of possible triggers of grief reactions. Coaches should encourage counselors to be attentive to the possible grief-related emotional responses in such situations, to include the full range of possibilities: anger, denial, bargaining, etc.

### **3.17.3 Grief Associated with Other Trauma**

Victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, or other crimes may experience grief. This can be due to a sense of the loss of safety, security, and trust. This reaction can have a profound effect on the victim's willingness to trust, to enter into close relationships, or to remain connected in any way to the circumstances surrounding the violation. Counselors should be prepared to help victims recognize the grief reaction and its associated emotions. Recognition can be an important step toward developing a coping strategy.

## **4. OBSTACLES AND PITFALLS**

### **4.1 Fraternization**

Chaplains are often people with a strong sense of empathy. Understanding someone emotionally is an important element in helping them find ways forward and solutions to their problems. It is also the case that the Navy is a hierarchical organization with a challenging and important mission. Good order and discipline are essential to the well-being of the organization and its ability to accomplish that mission. Fraternization undermines good order and discipline and is forbidden by Navy Regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. It is forbidden in the context of a counseling relationship by Navy and Fleet policies (see references).

A key action by which chaplains can seek to avoid the pitfall of fraternization is by having a counseling coach. The coach can help with accountability, provide beneficial advice, and can discern indications of impropriety or danger. To make the best use of the coaching relationship, coach and chaplain should, in addition to hypotheticals, from time to time discuss actual cases. Without using names, or otherwise violating confidentiality, chaplains can discuss approaches and techniques, how they apply to various circumstances, and the importance of maintaining professional boundaries.

SECNAVINST 5351.1 and COMUSFLTFORCOM/COMPACFLTINST 5351.1 clearly delineate the boundaries which must be maintained in the counseling relationship. That information should be reviewed regularly by all chaplain counselors. Scenarios which might threaten those boundaries, and circumstances which might tempt one to cross those boundaries, should be discussed thoroughly with a coach.

### **4.2 Couselee Vulnerability**

When people come to a chaplain for help, they are usually suffering, or are otherwise emotionally compromised. They are vulnerable. In opening up and sharing their concerns, they make themselves more vulnerable. Their willingness to listen to, and take to heart, the advice and counsel of the chaplain makes them even more vulnerable. It is imperative that the chaplain cherish the trust represented by the counselee's decision to come for help, share their problems, and seek guidance. Chaplains should cherish that trust by respecting the personhood of the one seeking help. They should respect their right to believe (or not believe) what they wish. They should respect counselees' freedom to do as they think best. They should not abuse the trust by seeing it as an opportunity to pass judgment. They should not abuse the trust by determining to project their own beliefs, agendas, perceptions, or feelings onto the one seeking help. In the course of counseling, the sharing of beliefs and other thoughts is a natural and normal development. But that sharing should occur after the clearly articulated consent of the vulnerable party (the one seeking help). Presenting one's own theology, or the beliefs of one's religious organization, when invited and requested to do so by the counselee is a wonderful opportunity. Approaching the sharing of faith carefully, so as not to exploit the vulnerability of the counselee or the position of authority of the chaplain, contributes to having such opportunities in the future.

### **4.3 Dehumanization**

Counselors who are busy run the risk of losing the important strong sense of the humanity of those who come to them for help. This section reviews circumstances which may negatively impact the counselor's ability to approach each counselee in the proper caring spirit.

#### **4.3.1 Compassion Fatigue**

Compassion fatigue is a phenomenon which is amenable to coaching. The review of counseling approaches, sharing of perceptions and reactions, and discussion of counseling content (anonymously so as to avoid the violation of confidentiality) tend to reveal any latent compassion fatigue. Just like a counselee, when the chaplain puts into words the feelings elicited by a counseling session, he or she has the opportunity to think about their significance. Listening to the advice he or she gives, counselors should maintain healthy habits in support of self-care. The coach can help with that process.

#### **4.3.2 Jumping to Conclusions**

Another manifestation of dehumanization is the creeping assumption that this one's problem is the same as the last ten. In high volume counseling, or in the response to an event which has affected a large number of people, it is easy to fall into the trap of anticipating the nature of the problem prematurely. When the counselee starts to describe the problem, the counselor mentally jumps to conclusions regarding the nature of the issue. He or she then assumes to know the solution. All this happens without really listening to the one in need. Though there are recognizable patterns, it is very easy to miss critically important details if the counselor jumps too quickly to conclusions. Though it may be convenient for the counselor, such a jump does not serve the needs of the counselee. In the coaching relationship, light can be shed on such unproductive trends. It does not take much to remind a chaplain that he or she is dealing with unique individuals.

#### **4.4 Focusing on the Problem rather than the Person**

Most chaplains are problem-solvers. One of the reasons they serve is because they believe they have a calling to help. It is natural, then, that they should tend to focus on whatever problem has brought the counselee to them for help. But such a focus can sometimes be misleading. It can prevent the counseling process from getting to the heart of the matter and discovering the true causes of the trouble. Lasting change in the direction of coping and thriving is usually derived from counseling that addresses not just the problem area, but the whole person. Taking the time to learn the counselee's history, studying the facial expressions, body posture, and gestures, and listening with intent concentration, can reveal insights which can be decisive in gaining the confidence of the counselee and providing the most meaningful advice.

#### **4.5 Making the Session about the Counselor's life, issues, or feelings**

Everyone has some emotional baggage which they bring to their work. Some counselors come to the work with heavy emotional baggage. It is important to know one's limitations, vulnerabilities, and strong predispositions. These can distract from truly listening to the counselee. If something the counselee says resonates deeply, it can trigger emotions and thoughts which have meaning to the counselor, but are not relevant to the one in need. The purpose of counseling is not to make the counselor feel better, but to help the counselee cope with life more effectively. This may seem self-evident, but without constant vigilance and good coaching, the focus of effort can shift from the counselee to the counselor.

##### **4.5.1 Disciplined Counseling**

Chaplains usually want to help. Being useful is a strong motivator. But it can distract the counselor from the proper focus on the counselee. Instead of intently listening, the counselor can be distracted by

thinking about what he or she is going to say next. In a rush to help, the chaplain can fail to take the necessary time to listen carefully and patiently, as the story unwinds. Many chaplains like to talk. Sitting attentively in near silence is an exercise in self-control which takes determined effort. Some chaplains are strongly opinionated. Forgoing the opportunity to interrupt with a pithy comment requires self-control. Patience and attentiveness can lay the groundwork for rapport, establish the authentic concern of the counselor, and make the counselee more amenable to advice.

#### **4.5.2 Bridging the Gulf**

The problem presented may not lie within the chaplain's comfort zone. The behavior discussed may lie well beyond the chaplain's understanding of what is proper, moral, and right. But counseling should not be about the chaplain's comfort. Nor should it be about the chaplain's sense of propriety, morality, or ethics. Counseling should be about the counselee. The chaplain should seek to help the counselee cope more effectively with life. The chaplain may believe that drastic changes in beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes are necessary in order for the counselee to deal with his or her problems. But the counseling session should not start from there. It should start from where the counselee is in his or her beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes. A wise man once said that one must meet the people where they are. Chaplain counselors should not be constrained by their own attitudes to the detriment of those they are there to help. If there is no ground upon which they can meet, if the gulf between outlook and attitudes is simply too great to bridge, then the chaplain should seek to establish enough rapport to guide the one in need to someone who might be better suited to help.

#### **4.6 Becoming Stale or Arrogant**

Over the course of time, counselors can fall into the pitfall of assuming that they have heard it all, or that they have the answers for every problem. Such assumptions can cause counselors to become stale. They can also cause them to fail to prepare properly: reviewing the intake form, maintaining contacts with other helping professionals, maintaining current knowledge of regulations, policies, and resources. Coaching can be a great way to stay fresh, discussing trends, new insights, and emerging problem sets.

Perhaps the mirror image of staleness is an over-reliance on cleverness. Counseling should not be about making a clever point with a counselee. The counselor should not be out to satisfy himself or herself by proving something to the counselee or tricking the counselee into thinking or doing things a particular way. Counseling is not brainwashing. It should be about helping a person discover the understanding and resources to cope better. The counselor should be working continuously to expand his or her knowledge and skills. Wit may be useful, but is usually not enough.

#### **4.7 Lack of Confidence or Fear of Vulnerability**

If the counselor lacks confidence or fears becoming vulnerable, this can undermine the counseling effort. Feeling this way, a counselor may avoid making a commitment to counsees, instead sending them elsewhere for care without making sufficient effort to help. Another avoidance behavior is for the chaplain to jump immediately to a religious answer, without listening and seeking insight into what the counselee believes. The coaching process can help build the counselor's confidence and courage.

#### **4.8 Timewarp**

There is a story about a chaplain who was asked by his commanding officer for a program or solution that would ensure that Sailors behaved “properly.” The chaplain answered that he had the program ready to execute. The commanding officer was surprised and asked for details. The chaplain answered that the program would take about thirty years to execute, since that is about how long it takes for a nineteen year old to grow up to be, and learn how to behave like, a fifty year old. One moral of the story is that a counselor cannot assume that a nineteen year old can process emotions and think like someone with greater maturity. This does not mean that the counselor should behave in a condescending manner. Rather, it requires a more direct and clear statement of advice which accounts for differences in life experience, maturity and wisdom. Another moral is that support for leaders can sometimes involve offering advice which challenges basic assumptions.

## **5. COACHING CHAPLAIN COUNSELORS**

### **5.1 The Coaching Approach**

Coaching is one of the activities enumerated by SECNAVINST 1730.7D in the description of the care capability. Coaching can also be viewed as an aspect of leadership, and integral to cooperation among chaplains as defined in SECNAVINST 5351.1. Coaching can be an example of chaplains working together to meet the needs of all authorized persons. SECNAVINST 5351.1 goes on to describe the responsibilities inherent in positions of leadership and authority in the Navy, and how chaplains and RPs share those responsibilities. Leadership, supervision, mentoring, and coaching are part of those responsibilities. In Enclosure (3), the instruction describes the PNC professional expectation that chaplains and RPs will use the full range of their abilities and authority to care for those they serve. The development of those abilities and the understanding of that authority are goals of coaching. A reasonable goal of coaching on the topic of counseling is to teach, train, encourage, correct (where necessary) and reinforce each chaplain's commitment to the standards of PNC. This chapter describes how chaplains can coach subordinates and peers who deliver counseling and advice.

### **5.2 The Coaching Context**

Fleet RM personnel are led, supervised, and mentored according to Navy and Fleet policy. Leadership, to include supervision, mentoring, and coaching, occurs throughout the Optimized Fleet Response Plan (OFRP) and at all echelons. Every RMT has an immediate superior RMT from which it should receive appropriate guidance. That guidance can be further clarified by considering the following as three aspects of leadership:

**Supervision:** to supervise is to use rank and/or positional authority to communicate official standards. This occurs through training, inspections, and professional counseling as described in COMUSFLTFORCOM/COMPACFLTINST 5351.1.

**Mentoring:** mentoring refers to the time spent in support of the professional development of the individual, to include, for RM personnel, negotiating the intricacies of the CHC and the Navy.

**Coaching:** coaching involves advice and encouragement that is based less on authority and more on experience and wisdom. It is more individualized and flexible than supervision in that respect, but less individualized than mentoring in that it draws on more than the mentor's experience. Coaching draws on the community's sense of shared history, culture, and understanding of what it means to be a worker in the field of religious ministry. Coaching involves the teaching of principles as well as the application of standards. It can be delivered by supervisors and/or peers.

Coaching is something that can be done in conjunction with leadership, supervision, and mentoring. It is also a distinctive activity which can be done with co-workers and peers, and can contribute significantly to the quality of religious ministry delivered as well as the health of the community which delivers it.

Coaching is a dialogue, as is counseling. Both require excellent listening skills, astute discernment, empathy, and a love of humanity with all its highs and lows.

Every chaplain conducting counseling should seek a counseling coach. A prospective coach should be a more experienced chaplain whom they respect and trust. Experienced chaplains should be prepared and

willing to serve as counseling coaches. This requires a degree of thoughtfulness and intentionality with regard to counseling principles and techniques, and a thorough knowledge of standards. Policy establishes the standards. Doctrine describes them authoritatively (see the quotes in Chapter 2). This introductory guide is a resource in regard to principles and techniques.

### **5.3 Fleet Standards for Coaching Counselors**

Enclosure 1 of COMUSFLTFORCOM/COMPACFLTINST 5351.1 establishes the Fleet minimum standards for the delivery of support to individuals through advisement and counseling. Each of the following topics is listed there, and is amenable to coaching.

#### **5.3.1 Good Order and Discipline**

The minimum standards for advice and counsel are established to preserve good order and discipline, and are a subset of the professional standards of PNC. Coaches help chaplains fully and completely understand those standards.

#### **5.3.2 Couselee Safety**

According to the Fleet standard, RMTs are required to be attentive at all times to the vulnerability of those who come for help, honoring physical, emotional and religious boundaries, and establishing a safe counseling environment. Associated with this responsibility is the need to assess for physical and psychological safety. Is the counselee a danger to himself, herself, or others? Such assessment goes on throughout the interaction and beyond, as the chaplain guards confidentiality and advocates for the counselee. Coaches encourage chaplains to maintain constant vigilance with regard to the safety of those counseled.

#### **5.3.3 Authorities**

Coaches should ensure that chaplains understand under what authorities counseling is conducted. Chaplains are authorized to advise and counsel only under the authority conveyed to them by the Navy in their role as chaplains. The knowledge gained by chaplains in their work to earn other credentials, such as certifications or licenses, may inform a chaplain's delivery of religious ministry, but the standard for accountability is that established by the Navy for chaplain activities. In counseling, chaplains are not authorized to use techniques which require external certification (for example, hypnotism, or Rorschach tests). There is a procedure for resolving perceived conflicts of interest, described in COMUSFLTFORCOM/COMPACFLTINST 5351.1.

#### **5.3.4 Professional Behavior**

Coaches model and encourage professional behavior. Implicit in the principles of counseling and explicit in the standards for counseling delineated in policy is the requirement to maintain clear boundaries in the area of self-disclosure, intimacy, and sexuality. Given the power inherent in the counseling relationship, chaplains and RPs must be on guard against sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, or sexual assault in relationships with those served. Coaches help maintain that vigilance.

There are practical considerations which support the principles and policy concerning boundaries, which should be regularly reviewed with a coach. Rooms where scheduled counseling takes place are required

to have a window per OPNAVINST 1730.1E. Whenever possible, an RP should be in close proximity when counseling occurs. Chaplains should beware of physical contact with counselees. Per policy, touching of any kind should be limited to hand-shakes or the equivalent.

### **5.3.5 Frequency and Duration**

Frequency and duration of counseling sessions are normally at the discretion of the chaplain and counselee. But it should be remembered, and coaches should reinforce, that the type of counseling done by chaplains is by its nature not long-term. While circumstances will drive the number of counseling sessions which are necessary, results-oriented counseling should probably not last longer than a deployment, or take place more than once or twice a week. If there is a need for longer term counseling, the chaplain should learn to recognize that need and make the appropriate referral. Coaches can help chaplains develop a sense for the effectiveness of ongoing counseling. Referral is an important aspect of counseling, to be conducted according to the professional standard established in policy and described in doctrine.

### **5.3.6 Record Keeping**

Coaches can help chaplains establish efficient and effective processes for managing counseling. A coach's review of the RMT's procedures can be a healthy and productive exercise. Any note-taking in support of counseling, such as intake forms or case notes, must be kept secure and destroyed when no longer needed, in compliance with SECNAVINST 1730.9.

## **5.4 Art in the Service of Life**

The art of chaplaincy encompasses the art of counseling and the art of coaching. All three are undergirded by the principles embodied in the ethos of PNC and the standards articulated in RM policy and doctrine. Dedicated chaplains and RPs can have a profoundly positive impact on the individuals and the organization they serve. To do so, they should be committed to the development of their knowledge and skills, and to execution of the religious ministry mission with energy and insight. Learning from one another, making use of all available resources, and holding each other to the highest standard of professionalism, chaplains and RPs can continue to serve the people of the Department of the Navy with honor, courage and commitment.

## APPENDIX A: Checklist of Healthy Counseling Habits

1. Have ready access to supportive information (instructions, SOPs, resource contacts)
2. Have a triage system in place which allows your RP to effectively support the effort.
3. Take time to study the intake form.
4. Focus on the counselee as a person, not just the problem.
5. Note the uniqueness of the counselee.
6. Take time to listen, really.
7. Don't jump to conclusions.
8. Without violating confidentiality, where pertinent consult:
  - a. Your RP
  - b. The counselee's friends, peers, co-workers, supervisors
  - c. Other helping agents
9. Help counselees connect to all their resources, internal and external.
10. Give the counselee a self-help assignment, and a follow-up appointment to report progress.
11. Make some notes for counselor follow up.
12. Take a break between counseling sessions.
13. Have a moment of prayer.
14. Have a counseling coach.
15. Maintain healthy routines of self-care

## **APPENDIX B: “Coping Card”**

This pocket guide in support of coping and thriving can be distributed by the RMT. It can be reproduced on the back of business cards. It can be reproduced on the back of a list of helping agencies and their contact information. It can serve as a reminder to the chaplain conducting counseling of how important it is to validate the humanity of the counselee. It can also serve as a reminder of common pitfalls of personal problem solving.

### **KEYS TO COPING**

You are a VALUABLE, worthwhile person  
YOU are the boss of your own head and heart  
You have the power to set your personal goals  
You have the ability to achieve your goals  
Do not be your own worst enemy  
Do not simply react emotionally  
Do not let others run your inner life  
Do not let others’ meanness touch your heart  
You can only do what you CAN do  
You cannot fix everything  
Do what you CAN do  
DO NOT WORRY about what you cannot do  
Do not let worry stop you from doing what you CAN DO  
Do have a broad perspective on things  
Do have friends and stay connected to them  
Do respect others  
Do put the needs of others ahead of your needs  
Do take a deep breath when angry  
Do count to 10, or, if necessary, 100  
THINK before you speak  
THINK before you act  
Do count the cost of speaking and acting out  
Do talk to someone BEFORE you lose it  
You aren’t perfect; work on your deficiencies  
You ARE the only one of you in the whole universe  
RESPECT YOURSELF  
VISUALIZE SUCCESS in all its details  
BORROW SOME JOY from your bright future for today  
TAKE PRIDE in what you are doing  
BE PROUD of yourself

## APPENDIX C: AMCROSS NOTIFICATION

### Things for the Person delivering the Message to Know:

A chaplain is available to assist the one delivering the message and the one who receives the message. Navy Marine Corps Relief Society can assist in emergency leave and other situations.

As a leader delivering bad news, it is important to be compassionate in speech, attitude and bearing. The Sailor will be apprehensive and fearful from the moment they suspect what is happening. The leader delivering the news may also have strong emotions, or may be nervous. A calm voice and a caring demeanor will help both the Sailor and the leader get through this experience. People deal with grief in different ways, and leaders should be prepared for that. Experience shows it best if a notification of death or injury is revealed in increments. Giving the truth in pieces to the Sailor is preferable to hitting him/her with it all at once.

Some increments a leader might use:

- **State why you're seeing them.** "We have received a Red Cross message from your home, family, wife, friend, etc., state the name of the sender."
- **Characterize the news and confirm the relationship.** "I'm sorry to say there is serious news about your father/mother/brother/sister/fiancée/friend STATE THE NAME."
- **Broadly tell what happened.** "He was in a car accident." "She has had a stroke."
- **Finally, tell them the bottom line, or the present condition, in a clear and unambiguous way.** "She has died." "He is in intensive care in critical condition."

The leader should use the names as indicated in order to confirm delivery of the message to the correct Sailor. Make sure the Sailor is seated, that communications resources are available (aboard ship this means an off-ship phone line, and that the leader knows the code; the leader may have to dial for the Sailor), and that tissues are available. A Sailor may feel sick. Have someone available to accompany the Sailor to the head if needed. Do not leave the Sailor alone immediately after giving him or her serious news. If the Sailor has a good friend in the department, it would be useful to have that person available. Having more than one member of the chain of command present can communicate the chain's concern.

### *Example dialogue*

- Airman Smith, please have a seat.
- We've received a Red Cross message from your mom, Mrs. Jane Smith, in New York.
- Unfortunately, it's not good news.
- It is about your father, Mr. Bill Smith.
- He was involved in an automobile accident yesterday.
- He was very seriously injured and I'm sorry to report, he died as a result of his injuries.

### **Reactions**

There will of course be shock. Remember that each person is unique. It is reasonable to expect Sailors may respond to the news differently. Sometimes people express anger or denial. Often tears and mournful wails will punctuate the notification. Sometimes a person will jump up and leave the room. Sometimes, there will seem to be no reaction at all. One can be assured that some kind of reaction is happening.

### **What to do**

The leader should remain patient and composed. Do not invalidate their grief by giving unrealistic assurances. Do not attempt to stop an emotional outburst. In such situations, simply allow the Sailor to express whatever they need to express without any interference, unless it begins to appear that someone might get hurt. Stay with the Sailor. When the initial emotional wave passes, explain to the Sailor what can be done in response to the news (call home, if appropriate request emergency leave). Remind them they are not alone in this crisis; that the work center and the chain of command care about the Sailor. The leader can process his or her emotions and reactions afterwards. As long as the leader is with the Sailor, he or she represents the Command, and should maintain a professional demeanor.

### **Follow Up**

A message must be transmitted confirming receipt and delivery of the AMCROSS message, along with any additional action to be taken. After a few days, check with the Sailor in private conversation. See how he/she is managing the grief. Encourage them to express their thoughts. Offer them information and advice to help them deal with the grieving process. Check with the friends and co-workers of the Sailor. Recognize that people process grief differently. The chaplains are available to support the grieving process through individual counseling. They may also teach a life skills course on dealing with grief. Other resources are also available.

### **AMCROSS Notification Dos and Don'ts**

#### **Do**

- Be completely familiar with the contents of the message before meeting with the Sailor.
- Be familiar with command emergency leave policy before notification.
- Keep your description of circumstances brief and accurate.
- Be prepared for a wide range of reactions, some of which will be very strong.
- Make a phone line available to the Sailor to call home or wherever he/she needs to call.
- Express sympathy for the Sailor's situation or loss.
- Where emergency leave is likely to be granted, advise the Sailor of plane ticket loan assistance available from Navy Relief.
- Generate a message acknowledging receipt and delivery of the AMCROSS

#### **Do Not**

- Do not delay delivery of the message.
- Do not make the notification abruptly without preparing the Sailor for it.
- Do not leave the Sailor alone after notification.
- Do not tell the Sailor we (the command) will take care of everything. You might say "we will help you get through this" but the Sailor must understand operational limitations.
- Do not promise emergency leave. That is a command decision.
- Do not be defensive if the Sailor blames the Navy; just listen and continue to offer support.
- Do not allow your experiences of bereavement to overshadow your job at hand.
- Do not assume they will feel the same way you did when you lost someone.
- Do not notify the Sailor of the message contents by handing it to him/her to read.
- Do not discuss the contents of the message with others except in the course of taking appropriate action. Respect Sailors' privacy as much as possible.
- Do not make assumptions about circumstances or relationships.
- Do not assume the Sailor has the same religious views as you.

## APPENDIX D: ONLINE RESOURCES FOR CONTINUING STUDY

- The Defense Center of Excellence has a myriad of resources, to include brochures, assessment tools, workshops, and literature on a wide variety of related topics: <http://afterdeployment.dcoe.mil/>
- The Naval Center for Combat & Operational Stress Control has developed extensive Navy and Marine Corps tools, videos, and other supporting materials:  
<http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcsd/nccosc/Pages/welcome.aspx>
- Navy Personnel Command's well-populated resource page can be found at: [www.suicide.navy.mil](http://www.suicide.navy.mil)
- The official blog of the Navy Operational Stress Control Program is: <https://navstress.wordpress.com>
- The Center for Deployment Psychology site contains resources for helping professionals focused on military personnel: <http://deploymentpsych.org>
- The Navy Marine Corps Public Health Center has extensive links and resources:  
<http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/Pages/Home.aspx>
- This NMCPHC site specifically focuses on resources to reduce stress, improve relaxation skills and optimize performance:  
[http://www.nmcphc.med.navy.mil/healthy\\_living/relaxrelax-jgj/information.html](http://www.nmcphc.med.navy.mil/healthy_living/relaxrelax-jgj/information.html)
- The Navy Leader's Guide for Managing Sailors in Distress helps leaders recognize distress related behaviors, provide support to Sailors within the unit, and collaborate with Navy helping agencies to meet the needs of distressed individuals (the Navy Leader's Guide app is now available for download on iTunes and Google Play and can also be accessed from both the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center and T2 websites):  
<http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/Documents/LGuide/index.aspx>

## APPENDIX E: THE STRESS CONTINUUM



### The Stress Continuum

**The Stress Continuum is a model that identifies how you and your Sailors are reacting under stressful situations.**

It is based on scientific research and identifies the entire spectrum of stress responses and outcomes in Sailors. Its four stages - called zones - are color coded:

- **Green Zone is the good-to-go zone.** Not stress free, but coping with stress in a healthy way.
  
- **Yellow Zone is the stress reaction zone.** Includes common irritations, annoyances and worries that are usually mild and reversible and require little, if any, intervention. If not managed, though, the stressors can add up and lead to more serious problems.
  
- **Orange Zone is the stress injury zone.** More severe and persistent stress that can include loss of function, nightmares, feelings of guilt or shame, and panic or rage attacks. Much less common than stress reactions in the Yellow Zone, these injuries typically are caused by life threats, loss (such as the death of a buddy or a relationship breakup), inner conflicts and continued wear-and-tear.
  
- **Red Zone is the stress illness zone.** It includes clinical medical disorders that *can only be diagnosed by health professionals*. Stress illnesses are stress injuries that persist, get worse, or get better and then get worse. These illnesses include:
  - post-traumatic stress
  - major depression
  - certain anxiety disorders
  - alcohol or drug dependence.

**APPENDIX F: COLUMBIA-SUICIDE SEVERITY RATING SCALE**

<b>SUICIDE IDEATION DEFINITIONS AND PROMPTS</b>	<b>Past month</b>	
<b>Ask questions that are bolded and <u>underlined</u>.</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Ask Questions 1 and 2</b>		
<p><b>1) Wish to be Dead:</b>            Person endorses thoughts about a wish to be dead or not alive anymore, or wish to fall asleep and not wake up.</p> <p><b><u>Have you wished you were dead or wished you could go to sleep and not wake up?</u></b></p>		
<p><b>2) Suicidal Thoughts:</b>            General non-specific thoughts of wanting to end one's life/commit suicide, "<i>I've thought about killing myself</i>" without general thoughts of ways to kill oneself/associated methods, intent, or plan.</p> <p><b><u>Have you actually had any thoughts of killing yourself?</u></b></p>		
<b>If YES to 2, ask questions 3, 4, 5, and 6. If NO to 2, go directly to question 6.</b>		
<p><b>3) Suicidal Thoughts with Method (without Specific Plan or Intent to Act):</b>            Person endorses thoughts of suicide and has thought of a least one method during the assessment period. This is different than a specific plan with time, place or method details worked out. "<i>I thought about taking an overdose but I never made a specific plan as to when where or how I would actually do it...and I would never go through with it.</i>"</p> <p><b><u>Have you been thinking about how you might kill yourself?</u></b></p>		
<p><b>4) Suicidal Intent (without Specific Plan):</b>            Active suicidal thoughts of killing oneself and patient reports having <u>some intent to act on such thoughts</u>, as opposed to "<i>I have the thoughts but I definitely will not do anything about them.</i>"</p> <p><b><u>Have you had these thoughts and had some intention of acting on them?</u></b></p>		
<p><b>5) Suicide Intent with Specific Plan:</b>            Thoughts of killing oneself with details of plan fully or partially worked out and person has some intent to carry it out.</p> <p><b><u>Have you started to work out or worked out the details of how to kill yourself? Do you intend to carry out this plan?</u></b></p>		
<p><b>6) Suicide Behavior Question:</b></p> <p><b><u>Have you ever done anything, started to do anything, or prepared to do anything to end your life?</u></b></p> <p>Examples: Collected pills, obtained a gun, gave away valuables, wrote a will or suicide note, took out pills but didn't swallow any, held a gun but changed your mind or it was grabbed from your hand, went to the roof but didn't jump; or actually took pills, tried to shoot yourself, cut yourself, tried to hang yourself, etc.</p> <p><b><u>If YES, ask: How long ago did you do any of these?</u></b></p> <p>•Over a year ago? •Between three months and a year ago? •Within the last three months?</p>		

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## APPENDIX G: THOUGHTS ON ADVOCATING FOR SAILORS

1. Our Sailors come into the military often with very little life experience. The majority have never held a full-time paying job until they joined. Their perception of what is fair or unfair is deeply rooted in their cultural and social experience as a child and teenager. The values learned in American society often do not match the higher standards expected within the military culture.

Sailors may come to the chaplain with legitimate cases of unfair treatment. They genuinely need someone with confidentiality and the ability to intercede at multiple levels of the command structure to help gain resolution.

Others persons may, out of immaturity, think that all firm and disciplined leadership is too harsh. Even if it is completely appropriate under the circumstances. They present themselves as the "underdogs" and victims, when they are actually just being expected to pull their weight and shoulder responsibility more than they've ever previously experienced.

Then there are those who actually got themselves in trouble and remain in the unpleasant spotlight as an underperformer or troublemaker and who do need to be carefully monitored... at least for a while. That carries a heavy weight on the individual. The weight of their own actions feels "unfair". These are ones who often come to the chaplain looking for someone to "save them" from their "oppressors".

2. All three types require advocacy skills from the chaplain. A good chaplain must learn to differentiate between these three, then take action which is best able to help both the Sailor and the command.

\*\*The institution needs chaplains who can identify genuinely unfair treatment by leaders, supervisors, and peers. Chaplains who can insert themselves and interrupt such mistreatment with a goal of also helping the leader understand the negative impact of their actions and learn appropriate ways of completing their assigned tasks while being responsible for the well-being of their subordinates.

\*\*The institution needs chaplains who can guide and mentor Sailors toward responsible behavior even when it is difficult and unpleasant. Much of this depends on the chaplain's ability to help the individual see their circumstances from a different perspective, then teach effective skills to build endurance.

\*\*The institution needs chaplains who can perceive those who are manipulating them for personal advantage. Chaplains who can hold an unswerving standard of the Navy's values and expect all to respect and uphold that standard.

3. The greatest challenge, then, is for chaplains to carefully weigh what they see and hear, and balance their response between support of the command and the needs of the individual. Failure to do this well and accurately can result in the chaplain being discredited and discarded.