**Operational Stress Control (OSC)**

Plan of the Day (POD) Notes

January 2020

**Stress Continuum Model**

**Day #1** - The Stress Continuum is a spectrum of stress responses categorized in four zones as a means of identifying an individual’s response to stress: Green (Ready), Yellow (Reacting), Orange (Injured), and Red (Ill). The Stress Continuum is a valuable tool for individuals at all levels to use so they can ***identify***, ***engage***, and ***intervene*** when stress reactions or injuries are present.

**Day #2** - The Stress Continuum **Green “Ready” Zone** indicates individuals and commands that are well trained, fit and focused, in control, effectively manage stress and remain resilient and functional. Effective training and good leadership at every level are the foundation for building the tools needed to deal with stress effectively. ***Are you in the green zone?***

**Day #3** - The Stress Continuum **Yellow “Reacting” Zone** is the state in which individuals operate when they have experienced mild and temporary distress or loss of normal functioning because of stress. The **Yellow “Reacting” Zone** stressors tend to be the commonplace annoyances, irritations, conflicts, worries, and other challenges that everyone experiences every day. The goal is to identify the Yellow “Reacting” Zone symptoms and take steps to reduce stress and return to the Green “Ready” Zone. ***What stressors are you reacting to? Are you sleeping and eating well?***

**Day #4**- The Stress Continuum **“Orange” Injured Zone** is characterized by moderate to severe distress or changes in functioning that persist to some extent even after sources of stress are removed. Orange Zone stress injuries have four different sources, 1) Wear & Tear, 2) Inner Conflict, 3) Loss 4) and Life Threat

* Wear & Tear **–** A fatigue injury, accumulation of all stress over time, depression and anxiety
* Inner Conflict – An ethical, moral, betrayal injury, Violation of deeply held beliefs, anger, shame, revenge and guilt
* Loss – A grief injury, loss of cherished people or things, guilt, sadness, longing
* Life Threat – A life-threat stress injury, close brush with death, terror, horror, helplessness - ***Are you or any of your shipmates in the Orange Zone?***

**Day #5** - The Stress Continuum **Red “Ill” Zone** is the most serious of all four zones. Chronic problems associated with sleep, eating, substance abuse, work, concentration, fear, anxiety, depression, guilt, shame. The symptoms are severe indicators of psychological stress that require professional help for returning to a healthy condition. ***If you are in the red zone, have you sought help?***

**Resilience**

**Day #1 - What is resilience?** Resilience is the ability to withstand, recover, grow and function competently in the face of stressors, adversity and changing demands. Resilience is not a fixed state, but can be strengthened and taught to help a person weather the storms of life, be they large or small. ***Are you resilient? If so, what personal characteristics do you rely upon when things get rough?***

**Day #2 - Resilience factors:** Resilience focuses on cognitive behavioral principles that address the concepts of values, attitudes/ beliefs, and behaviors. Individuals can build their resilience by practicing optimism, flexible thinking, self-control, positive coping and problem solving.

**Day #3 - Why does being resilient matter?** Resilient Sailors are more productive and less likely to engage in detrimental behaviors that undermine and impair mission readiness. Improving the mind, body, spirit and social fitness encompasses a holistic approach to well-being and readiness. A total force that has achieved total fitness is healthy, ready and resilient -- capable of meeting challenges and surviving threats. ***Does being resilient matter to you?***

**Day #4 - Why is resilience important?** Resilience is associated with maintaining

a balanced and healthy lifestyle. When disrupted one becomes less resilient and more

vulnerable to the negative effects of stress.

**Day #5 -** Values, they mean something! Your values are the foundation upon which your individual resilience rest. Value formation takes place throughout life and are influenced by other people and life experiences. ***Are your values truly in line with healthy behaviors that positively impact self, others, and community?***

**Day #6** - The flexible thinking aspect of resilience - Includes the ability to consider other alternatives, refrain from rigid beliefs, and attach meaning to difficult situations. It includes putting situations or experiences into perspective and thinking about them more positively and rationally. ***Are you a flexible thinker?***

**Day #7** - The optimism aspect of resilience - includes having positive thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, emotions and expectations regarding life and being flexible about change. It includes developing hope and positive expectations when under periods of stress. An important aspect of optimism is trying to maintain a sense of humor and recognizing that difficult situations are temporary. ***How optimistic are you?***

**Resilience**

**Day #8 -** The behavior control aspect of resilience - Involves the process of regulating one’s thoughts, emotions and behaviors. Behavior control skills allow us to react in an

appropriate and productive manner to any situation. In order to regulate one’s thoughts, emotions and ultimately behaviors, relaxation techniques truly work and

can be integrated into a daily practice!

**Day #9** - Relaxation techniques such progressive muscle relaxation, mindfulness mediation, deep breathing teaches you how to remain calm in stressful situations. These techniques, when practiced regularly, can help you think before reacting and stay clam during stressful situations. Also, it can enhance performance, whether you are a sharp shooter that must have incredible focus on his target, a deck seaman during an UNREP or a triage nurse during a mass casualty.

**Day #10-14** - The positive coping aspect of resilience - Involves taking a positive and active approach to managing and decreasing stress and solving problems. It is learning how to utilize healthy and positive coping skills to manage and decrease stress. There are several factors related to positive coping which must be strengthened and maintained to improve the ability to cope with stress and increase our resilience:

1. Physical Health: Are you exercising regularly?  Are you active in recreational sports? Are you maintaining a healthy weight?  Do you have a balanced diet?  Are you getting enough quality sleep?  What else can you do to improve your physical health?
2. Social Support:  Do you have a trusted social support system?  What can you do to strengthen or increase your social support?  Who can you talk to if you need help? This is a critical aspect of being resilient and handling stress.
3. Work/Life Balance: Are you making time for both work and play? When was the last time you did something fun or relaxing?  What can you do that is enjoyable and will help you to reduce stress?

**Day #15** - Building and preserving resilience matters. Individuals high in resilience tend to be more successful in life, handle challenges well and take an active approach to solving their problems.

**Day #16 - Do you have a problem or challenge in your life? What are you doing about it?** Here are some steps to help you figure it out? 1) What is the problem? Be specific and objective. 2) What caused the problem? Try to think of all of the causes that led to this problem, be objective, reasonable and ask others. 3) Which of these causes can I work on? 4) What is my plan for correcting the problem? (Come up with specific plans to address each use of the problem)

**Resilience**

**Day #17 - Strengthening the Body is necessary to remain resilient**

Body factors necessary for effective coping and resilience include the requisite physical skills, strength, endurance, and other attributes needed to mount an effective response and to counter a particular threat.

**Day #18 - Strengthening the Body is necessary to remain resilient**

Physical wellness and fitness are critical for an optimal response to a threat. Conversely, the lack of physical wellness or fitness may significantly detract from an individual’s ability and confidence.

**Day #19 - Strengthening the Mind is crucial to remain resilient**

Strengthening the mind for mounting an effective coping response and maintaining resilience begins with a familiarity with the specific threat situation encountered and the ability to recognize it as familiar.

**Day # 20 - Strengthening the Mind is crucial to remain resilient**

Self-knowledge and self-confidence are keys to mental strength. Psychological wellness is crucial to using mental strength effectively and consistently.

**Day #21 - Strengthening the Spirit by believing in something bigger than you is an important aspect of resilience**

No one possesses limitless resources of courage and perseverance, so everyone needs to augment their internal storehouse of fortitude by continually drawing upon sources beyond themselves that are revered and trusted, such as organizations, leaders, and the Divine.

**Day #22 - Strengthening the Social Factors**

Very much related to the spiritual aspects of resilience are the social factors in the unit or other social support system, such as family or community, which contribute to effective and resilient coping. Being surrounded by buddies or shipmates, who are known and trusted and with whom one has already mastered challenges and endured hardships, is a potent contributor to resilience.

**Combat and Operational Stress First Aid (COSFA)**

**Day #1** – Combat and Operational Stress First Aid (COSFA) is a flexible multi-step process for the timely assessment and preclinical care of psychological stress injuries in individuals or units with the goals to preserve life, prevent further harm, and promote recovery. These strategies address reactions to stress before they become a bigger issue. COSFA is comprised of the 7 Cs: check, coordinate, cover, calm, connect, confidence, and competence.

**Day #2** - COSFA **continuous first aid** actions include **check** and **coordinate** which are used often and repeatedly by leaders, shipmates and family members to identify who is at risk and who needs peer intervention, or other care and referral resources***. Do you ask your co-workers how they are doing? Can you tell when one of your co-workers is having a bad day or dealing with unwanted stress?***

**Day #3** - COSFA **primary first aid actions** include **cover** and **calm.** These two actions can be taken by anyone in almost any situation. Cover and calm should also be considered first when responding to a stress injury in another person or in oneself and are typically only used briefly in situations of intense distress or losses of function. ***Have you ever had to “calm” a co-worker due to increased stress, traumatic incident or a loss?***

**Day #4** - COSFA **secondary first aid actions** include **connect, competence**, and **confidence.** These actions are more the responsibility of military leaders, chaplains, and medical support personnel. These actions tend to be needed over a longer period of time during the process form recovering from a stress illness. Sailors tend to “heal” faster when they stay with command and have peer support. ***Do*** ***you include others in your work area to feel a part of the unit?***

**Core Leader Functions**

**Day #1** - The Core Leader Functions is one of the elements of the CgOSC Program and reinforces a leader’s commitment to Sailors and Marines, and overall command psychological health. Leaders must build resilience, preserve force readiness and maintain individual health & well-being in all aspects of Sailors’ lives and effectively manage the environment using the Core Leader Functions of - **Strengthen, Mitigate, Identify, Treat, and Reintegrate.**

**Day #2** -**The first of the Core Leader Functions is to Strengthen Sailors and Marines.** An ounce of strengthening prevention is worth more than a pound of treatment and reintegration cure. Of all the actions leaders can take to manage the stress of their Sailors and Marines, strengthening them before exposure to Combat and Occupational Stress has the greatest potential to actually prevent stress injuries and illnesses. Tough realistic training is important to prepare our members for the daily challenges of their job and the unexpected events throughout their career - intense surprise can be the worst enemy of psychological health.

**Day #3 -** The single most protective factor against occupational and combat stress is **UNIT COHESION**! Unit cohesion promotes effective performance and strengthens unit members. Unit cohesion is made of mutual trust and support among Shipmates. It is developed through sharing of adversity and is an important protective factor against combat and occupational stressors.

**Day # 4 - The second of the Core Leader Functions is to Mitigate or reduce stress of Sailors and Marines.** Strengthening and mitigation are a leader’s tools for primary prevention. Both are essential to build and to maintain resilience. The first and most obvious way to mitigate stress is to completely or partially eliminate the challenges that cause stress problems in Sailors, Marines and family members.

**Day #5 - The third of the Core Leader Functions is Identify when Sailors or Marines are reacting to stressors and their environment.** One of the most critical functions of occupational stress control is to IDENTIFY Sailors and families having problems that affect personal readiness. This must be done as early as possible, before problems become overwhelming. Optimum identification requires peers and leaders to monitor stressors, know crew stress load, understand strengths and weaknesses of individuals and to have the ability to recognize reactions, injuries, illnesses.

**Core Leader Functions**

**Day #6 - The fourth of the Core Leader Functions is to Treat a Sailor or Marine when they are reacting to stressors. Stress mitigation is a leadership issue.** In the past, some leaders believed they had little responsibility for managing Sailors with stress related problems, or the treatment of significant psychological problems experienced by their unit and family members. To treat does not always mean medical or mental health; it can be as simple as ensuring peer support, command support, and availability of resources. Early intervention and treatment increase confidence in unit leadership and reduce the stigma of asking for help. Waiting until problems escalate reduces the probability of successful resolution and increases the risks of injury, illness, or suicide.

**Day #7 - The fifth of the Core Leader Functions is to Reintegrate and return Sailors and Marines to full duty after recovering from a stress injury or illness.** The primary goal of reintegration is to prevent the Navy units from losing valuable personnel. Additional goals are to ensure psychological readiness, prevent unnecessary loss of personnel, restore a sense of honor to the psychologically wounded and reduce the stigma associated with treatment. Every Sailor and Marine is an investment that must be conserved and protected as much as possible. Reintegration requires consideration and changing whatever attitudes in members of military units that might get in the way of accepting these individuals back in the unit.

**Buddy-Care and Unit Assessment**

**Day #1** – Buddy-care and Unit Assessment are intervention tools used to assess individuals and or units during times of stress. Buddy-care uses peers who are trained to provide social and emotional assistance and to create a safe and trusting environment. A Unit Assessment is used as a foundation for providing actionable recommendations for leaders to a unit that has been exposed to accident or traumatic event.

**Stress-O-Meter**

**Day #1**- The Stress-O-Meter is a web-based resource for Commands to use in conjunction with wellness programs such as the E-OSC. This tool was developed to provide a confidential real- time “snapshot’ of the stress level for command personnel. The Stress-O-Meter collects subjective information based on the Stress Continuum and creates a “dashboard” for command leadership. This “dashboard” illustrates the “temperature” of the command to assist leaders with understanding personnel stress levels and to determine if there is a need for CRT or E-OSC intervention.