Beginnings and endings

By Chaplain Corey Thornton

It is that time of year again, where summer will soon come to a close and along with it, the events of the summertime. It seems that, no matter how active we are, no one ever feels that they had enough fun over the summer—never enough trips to the pool or staying up late to watch movies followed by sleeping in. It also seems that children are never ready for summer to end, while parents anticipate it!

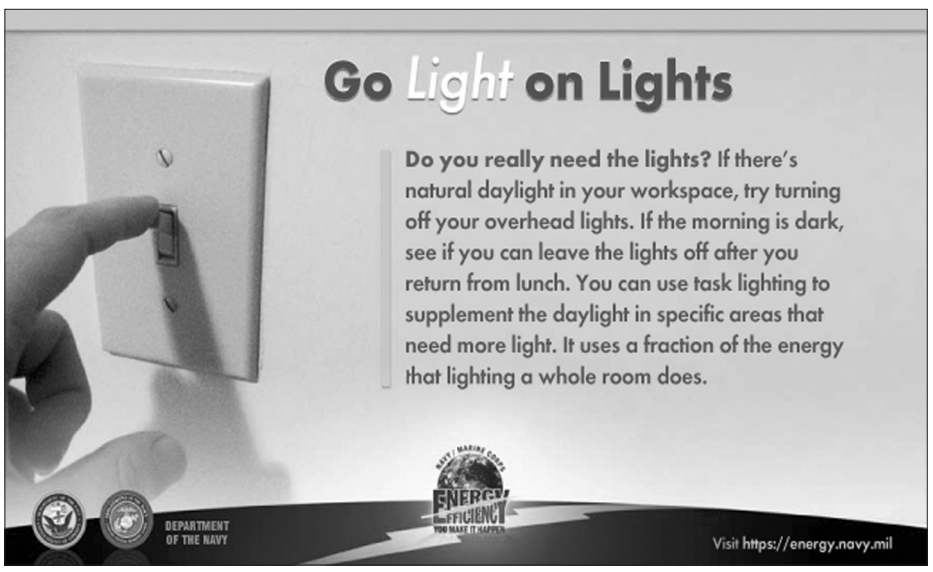
I have been thinking a lot about the seasons of life lately. The author of Ecclesiastes writes, For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven (Eccl 3:1). Although we regularly think of time in a linear conception, there is something to be said for recognizing the cycles of time as well. While we regard every moment as a new and precious gift from God, it can be insightful to look back and compare and contrast the seasons past with the season upon us—to take stock of the course our life has taken and build new hope for the future.

A major milestone for my family in this upcoming season is that our youngest daughter will be entering kindergarten. For my older daughters, school has been a place where they have matured emotionally, intellectually and socially, so that it has become difficult to remember them as babies. Now, as my youngest baby is about to begin that process, I can't help but want to hold on to every last minute of this season.

The desire to hold on to the good things in our past and present is natural. Change is uncomfortable and uncertain. However, there is a skill involved in balancing the remembrance of things past with the hope for the future, in cultivating a healthy nostalgia that allows us to remember even as we move forward with the changing seasons. In fact, an edifying perspective on our past can give us the confidence we need to move into an unknowable future. For me, this means that I have to prepare myself to let go of my perception of my youngest daughter as my baby enough to watch her, and help her, mature. The first time I had to do this, when my oldest went off to kindergarten, the experience was much more intimidating, but I see now how mature she's become. Indeed, I enjoy getting to experience her personality – her thoughts, experiences, her affection – in even more breadth and depth. The same is also true of my middle daughter as she grows up, and this helps me to understand that it will likely be so with my youngest as well. Holding on is natural, letting go is a skill, letting go slowly but never fully is an art.

As we move forward into this new season, as our children begin another year of school, as we say goodbye to friends who are PCSing to other duty stations and greet the new families as they arrive, let us do so with the confidence that there are good things in store for the future.

In the season to come, as a person of faith, I take with me the hope of Jeremiah for the people of God: This is what the Lord says: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a future full of hope. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. (Jer 29:10-12)



Understanding infant crying

From militaryonesource.com

Having a new baby in the house can be exciting -- and a little overwhelming. As a parent, you want to make your baby happy. When she cries, you want to fix whatever is wrong.

In many cases, you can console your baby by holding her or feeding her. But there may be times when you cannot soothe your baby. It can be difficult for parents to understand that crying is a normal, healthy part of infant development. Knowing how to cope with your baby's crying will make your life as a parent more rewarding.

Crying is normal. One reason crying is so frustrating is because many new parents don't know what to expect.

Some parents often ask: How much should my baby cry? Am I doing something wrong? Although inconsolable crying in young infants is frustrating, it is also normal. Healthy babies cry — and some babies cry for long periods of time. Understanding what is normal won't make your baby stop crying, but it can make you feel better about yourself and your baby.

New research is helping parents understand that patterns of crying in young infants are a normal part of development. The "Period of 'PURPLE' Crying" is used to describe the inconsolable crying that some parents experience when their infant is between about two weeks and four months of age. The letters in the PURPLE acronym describe those normal circumstances:

P: "Peak of Crying." Babies may cry more each week. The most at two month, then less at 3-5months.

U: "Unexpected." Crying can come and go and parents don't know why.

R: "Resists soothing." Babies may not stop crying no matter what you try.

P: "Pain-like face." Crying babies may look like they are in pain, even when they are not.

L: "Long Lasting." Crying can last as much as five hours a day, or more.

E: "Evening." Babies may cry more in the late afternoon and evening.

The word "Period" is used to let parents know that this experience of increased frustrating crying eventually comes to an end. Please contact the National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome toll free at www.dontshake.org for more information.

How much should my baby cry? Although your baby may cry more than you expected, long bouts of infant crying are normal, especially in the evening. Each baby is different, but some infants may cry up to three hours a day. The periods of crying can last as long as 30 to 40 minutes.

How long will it last? Fortunately, the long episodes of crying won't last forever. For most infants, crying peaks at about two months. After that, it tends to taper off. Developing strategies to cope with your infant's crying will help you get through this challenging time.

What to do when your baby is crying?

When your baby is crying, you want to do everything you can to calm him. Here are some suggestions to help soothe your baby. Keep in mind that what one baby finds soothing may cause another to cry even more. And there may be times when you will not be able to console your baby.

Check and make sure your baby is comfortable. Make sure his clothes aren't pinching him or he's not lying on a toy. Is he too hot or too cold? Is he hungry?

Is your baby sick? Check his temperature. Rule out any problem needing a physician's care. If your infant is sick or has a fever, you will want to get in touch with your pediatrician or primary care provider.

Try a pacifier. Sometimes a crying baby will be soothed with a pacifier. Although some parents are concerned about pacifiers, experts agree that the benefits of using a pacifier with an infant outweigh any risks.

Try soothing movements or sounds. Put your baby in a stroller and go for a walk. Or put him in a car seat for a ride in the car. You can also try a baby swing, which can calm a crying baby. Sometimes babies can be soothed by the hum of a vacuum cleaner or music on the stereo.

Remember, it's OK for your baby to cry. Sometimes, no matter how much you console your baby and care for him, he won't stop crying. If you can't soothe your baby, it's easy to feel frustrated and overwhelmed. If you've done everything you can to make sure he is comfortable and his needs are met, put him in a safe place (such as his crib) and close the door. You can still check on him every five or ten minutes. Take some time to take care of yourself: Call a good friend. Listen to music. Exercise. Read a magazine.

Remember that the crying will come to an end.

Realize that sometimes, no matter how much soothing you do and care you take, your baby may not stop crying for some time.

Never shake your baby. No matter how frustrated you get, don't take it out on your baby. Shaking a baby will not make him stop crying and it can cause serious, permanent harm.

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