Why do we still have scars?

By Chaplain Patrick Sturm, chaplaincare.navy.mil

One of the greatest truths we can know in life is that God is always able and willing to forgive us for our shortcomings.

All we have to do is ask for His forgiveness. And if God is willing, then we too, should forgive ourselves.

Yet one of the greatest ironies concerning forgiveness is that the painful memories the scars of our past remain with us.

We may wonder, "What's the sense in receiving forgiveness if the scars from the painful memory remain?"

Maybe the question should be, "What goes through your mind when you are confronted with the scars of your forgiven past."

The answer to this question is found in Zephaniah 3:17, "The Lord your God is with you; His power gives you victory. The Lord will take delight in you, and in His love He will give you new life. He will sing and be joyful over you." It is God's desire to rejoice over you with pride.

A minister humorously explained it like this: A proud parent always carries a picture of his child in his wallet and when given the opportunity will happily show the picture to anyone.

So it is with God. God loves us so much and is so proud of us that he too, in a sense, carries a picture of us in his wallet and will gladly show it for any angel to see.

I know that it is a funny notion to think that God really carries a wallet, but the minister used this exaggeration to illustrate the fact that God has caring thoughts about us.

Zephaniah takes us a step further and says that when God looks upon us, He is so overcome by joy that He sings over us, the same way a mother sings over her newborn baby.

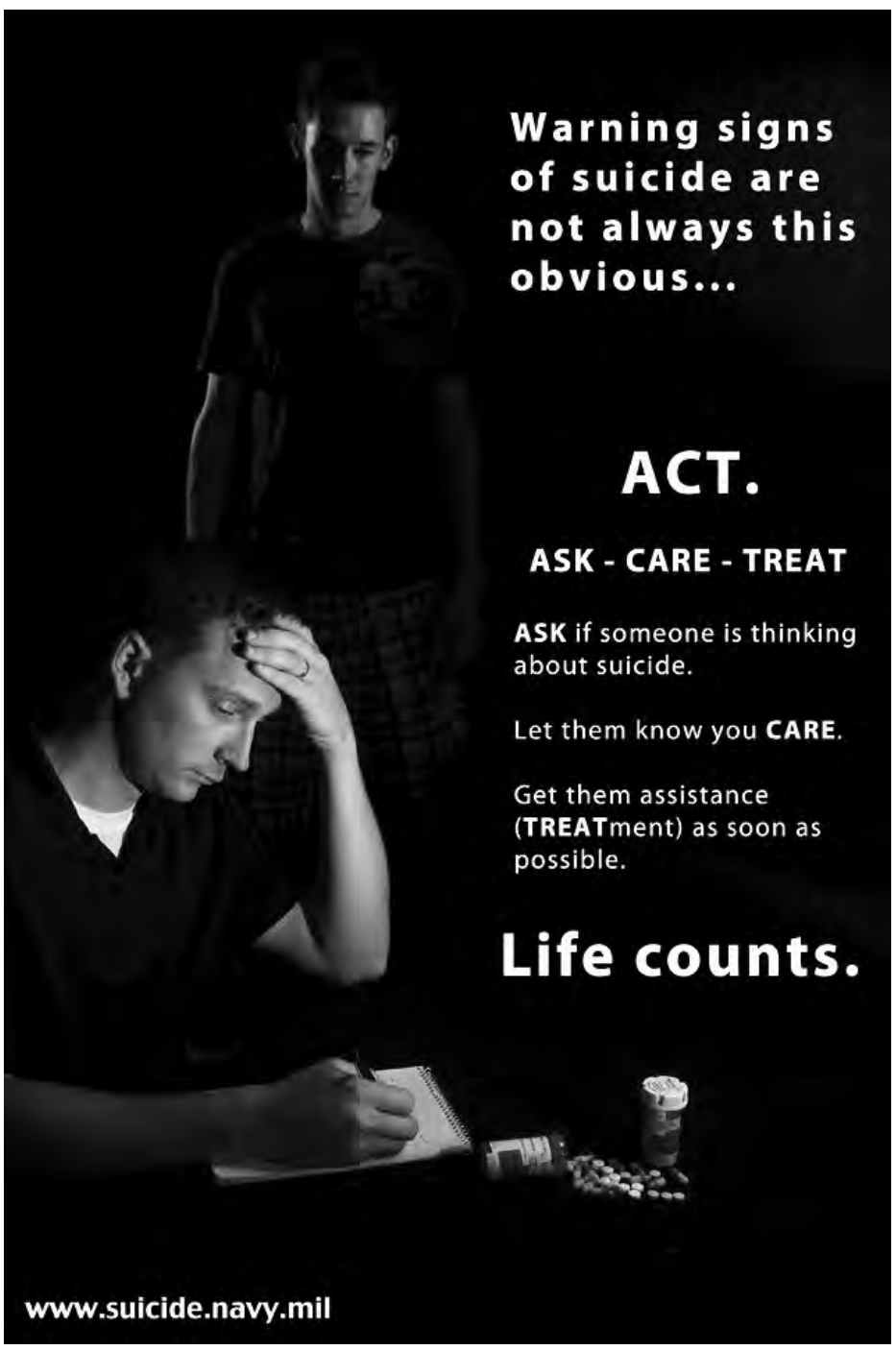
So what goes through your mind when you are confronted by the scars of past mistakes for which you have already received God's forgiveness?

Instead of becoming sad and condemning yourself, take it as an opportunity to rejoice in the fact that God has forgiven you.

Allow the scars of life to remind you that God is indeed rejoicing over you and is willing to empower you to live a life of joy and forgiveness.

Allow the scars of your forgiven past to remind you that you are now the "apple of God's eye."

Allow the scars of your past to be a spring board for you to rejoice in what God wants to do with your life in the here and now. And if you will listen closely enough, you will hear Him joyfully sing over you.



Log on to NFAAS as part of disaster preparedness

By Bruce Moody, Commander, Navy Installations Command, Fleet and Family Support

WASHINGTON - Sailors and Navy families are reminded to become familiar with the Navy Family Accountability and Assessment System (NFAAS) - and to update personal information now.

If a Navy community is evacuated because of a disaster, natural or otherwise, the Navy will use NFAAS to account for evacuated Sailors, Navy families and Depratment of Defense employees.

The Navy will also use NFAAS to find out if Sailors and families are okay, where they are and how to reach them if they need help. NFAAS is also used to manage and monitor their well-being and recovery process.

The Navy calls an area affected by a disaster a geographic area of interest (GAOI). After a disaster, all Navy personnel and their families residing, deployed to or working within a GAOI are required to check in at the first available opportunity.

There are three options available to check in.

Sailors can check in directly with their commands and provide their family's status and whereabouts. This is the primary way to account.

Commands will then upload the information into NFAAS.

If they unable to reach their command, Sailors can muster on NFAAS at https://navyfamily.navy.mil.

If unsuccessful, the third option is to account by phone through the Navy Emergency Coordination Center at 1-877-414-5358 or 1-866-827-5672 (TDD 1-866-297-1971).

After mustering, it is equally important that Sailors complete a needs assessment in NFAAS if they are impacted by the event.

If a Sailor or Navy family need help following a declared disaster, the Navy has resources that can support them during the emergency.

NFAAS has a user-friendly assessment tool to coordinate and prioritize disaster-related needs.

The system allows families to assess their needs in 19 categories including, medical, missing family locator, transportation, housing and personal property, financial, employment, child care, education, legal services, counseling and mortuary and funeral assistance.

Once disaster-related needs are identified, a case manager from a Fleet and Family Support Center is assigned.

The case manager will contact the Navy family member to assist them with support that ranges from the urgent to the informational.

Access to the assessment information is restricted. Details of the assessment will not be provided to anyone outside the case management team without the provider's approval.

"This is the ideal time to log on," said Pam McClelland, the Navy Family Emergency Response and Preparedness manager. "It's calm; no flooding or winds. Nobody is stressed from having to evacuate their home. People can log on, have a look at the site and see where they'll check in their family, where they'll conduct their needs assessment. It's also a good idea to see if their contact information needs updating."

It is an official source of current storm information, and it is an official source of base evacuation announcements. The site also provides a significant amount of information about how to prepare for a disaster.

NFAAS was developed by Task Force Navy Family following the major hurricane season of 2005.

The task force identified the need for a single reporting system for Navy family members to inform the Navy regarding their status after a declared emergency or catastrophic event.