Forgiveness

By Chaplain Douglas Vrieland

She spoke with a strong German accent, a clear indication that she was not an American. We met on one of the boats that ferried the family members of the victims of the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center to the site where their loved ones had been killed. I was in New York on that October morning in 2001 to offer chaplain support to these grieving families. The woman I was speaking to was a counselor from Germany who was also there to support the families. On that 20 minute ferry ride from Pier 91 to lower Manhattan she told me the most powerful story of forgiveness I have ever heard in my life.

According to my counselor friend, on the previous day she met an elderly Jewish woman who had immigrated to America soon after the Second World War. Both of her parents had been killed by the Germans in the Holocaust. Now, nearly sixty years later, she was again in grief, this time over the loss of a grandson at the World Trade Center. The counselor remarked on how hard it must have been to lose loved ones in both of those historical atrocities. I was amazed that she could open up with her pain and grief on the loss of her grandson as a result of the actions of some terrorists that hate the Jewish people to this German counselor who comes from the country that executed her parents out of anti-Semitic hatred. Clearly, this elderly Jewish woman had practiced the grace of forgiveness at some point in her life, and it showed in this time of crisis.

Lewis Smedes, in his book Forgive and Forget: Healing the Hurts We Don't Deserve, says that forgiveness is the toughest work of love. Not all forgiveness is difficult. My friend forgets to return a phone call like I asked and apologizes profusely; I naturally forgive him, because that's the kind of nice guy I am. Such social blunders are not the kind of evils that make forgiveness difficult. It is the big violations we experience from others: parents who treated us poorly when we were growing up, an ex-spouse that cheated repeatedly in our marriage, the guy that raped me many years ago. These are the big violations that eat at our very soul, that start to define us, that seem impossible to ever let go of. People who do such things don't deserve to be forgiven—they deserve to suffer, to suffer at least as much as we have suffered from their behavior toward us.

And that is really the point, isn't it? When I forgive someone, I don't treat them according to what they deserve, but show them kindness that they do not deserve. Forgiveness is giving up the right to retaliation, the right to vindication, the right to even the score. Forgiveness is an act of grace.

One of the most difficult sayings of Jesus occurs right after he gave the famous Lord's Prayer. In Matthew's gospel we read, "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins" (Matthew 6:14-15 NIV). The only way we can forgive the big stuff is to realize that we are forgiven people. We can only offer grace to others when we begin to realize that we, too, have a tremendous need for grace in our lives. God respects our integrity. We can choose to live our lives according to the Lex Talonis ("an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth"), or we can live according to grace. God will respect our desire.

Is there anyone that you need to forgive today?

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"We at CFAY Port Ops have a distinguished mission that focuses on the safe arrival and departure of all ships," said Brown.

The visit was then finalized with a CFAY Security working military dog demonstration at the CFAY Security dog kennel area by Master-At-Arms Second Class Zantria White and his dog 'Nick'.

"I was overly impressed with the facilities here in Yokosuka," said Natsume. "I think it is important for us to continue to come to each other's bases and learn more about each other and also learn from one another how to improve overall operational abilities."

Obata took a moment to reflect further upon the relationship between both nations.

"During Operation Tomodachi, a stronger bond was forged by both Japan and the United States, and I personally am very thankful for the friendships we have," said Obata. "We should both do our best to keep that bond as strong as possible indefinitely."

Master Chief Martin emphasized the importance of more of these interactive visits by both respected chain of commands.

"It is always a pleasure to work closely with the JMSDF and the JGSDF, and we definitely look forward to working closely more in the future," said Martin.

Resilience helps Sailors, families navigate through troubled waters

From Navy Personnel Command Public Affairs

MILLINGTON, Tenn. – Navy leadership has implemented the Operational Stress Control (OSC) program to help Sailors and their families recognize and navigate stress, said Navy officials, June 18.

According to Capt. Kurt Scott, director, Navy Behavioral Health, the Navy's goal is to help individuals identify stressors and develop the skills and tools to be resilient and handle the curveballs life may throw.

Deployment work-ups, a sick child, four-section duty, marital trouble can all cause stress levels to rise. Stress is a fact of life but resiliency helps make stress manageable.

"Stress is normal and can help you excel and succeed, but there is a point when stress may impact your ability to meet life's challenges," said Scott.

OSC defines resilience as the capacity to withstand, recover, grow, and adapt in the face of stressors and changing demands.

Scott discussed four skills that can help Sailors and their families improve resilience.

• Maintain your body for its unique optimal performance. Balanced and nutritious meals with moderate portions help fuel the body. Getting enough sleep is critical to physical and emotional well being. Regular exercise helps you physically and improves your mood.

• Develop positive relationships. Nurturing at least one trusted friendship can help individuals achieve personal and professional success.

"A friend can provide support, influence personal growth and provide a source of strength during difficult times," said Scott.

• Manage your finances - Don't let them manage you.

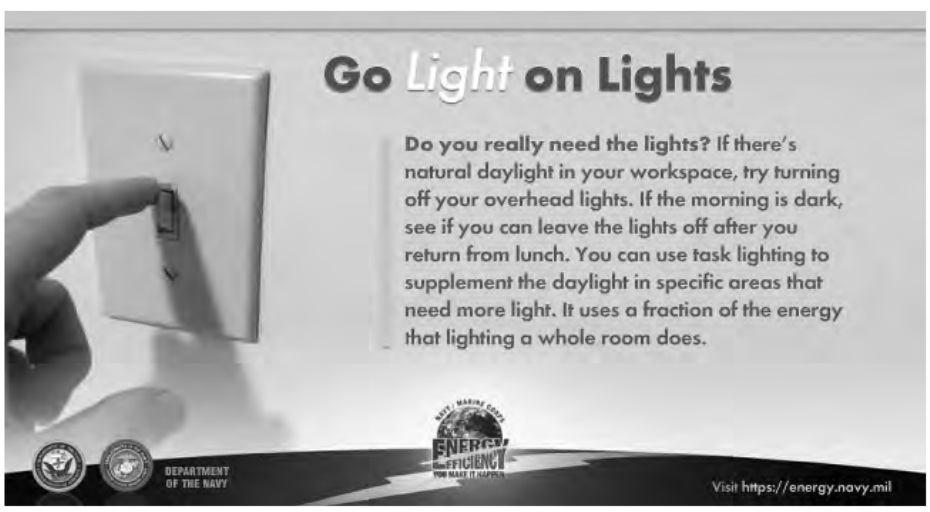
"Financial strain is a top stressor. It can cause personality changes in an individual and has been linked to depression which can impact duty performance and interpersonal relationships," said Scott. Fleet and Family Support Centers, Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society and command financial specialists can help Sailors examine their finances and develop a budget.

• Consider spiritual wellness. "Talking with a mentor, trusted advisor or chaplain can be a great outlet for stress reduction and resiliency.

When stress becomes overbearing to your well-being, ask for assistance.

"Asking for help is a sign of strength and a commitment to yourself to perform at your optimal level," said Scott. "Friends, families and co-workers can be your support network, but there may be times when someone with more experience, knowledge and skill is better suited to provide the help you need."

The OSC Continuum can help individuals determine what level of support is needed. The continuum is a color-coded guide for Sailors and leaders to measure their stress as it relates to one of four color-coded zones: green is ready, yellow is reacting, orange is injured and red is ill.

"The green zone is where we want to be but the green zone is not stress free," said Scott. "It means you have the skills and the tools you need to really be able to manage what life is throwing at you. Learning from life lessons makes you stronger and more resilient - and that is our goal."

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