Why faith?

By Chaplain Michael W. Anderson

I often times hear, "Chaps, why do I need faith anyway? Organized religion is oppressive and religious people are weird and judgmental." It's easy – and lazy – to label an entire faith. How do we feel when we hear "all Sailors are …" or "the American military is …" or "all Americans are …" with some negative stereotype finishing the sentence? We feel attacked. We feel marginalized. We are saddened by negative perceptions of such positive aspects of our collective identity.

Organized religion, especially the three Abrahamic religions (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam), are easy targets for similar uninformed generalities and stereotypes. Media outlets rarely highlight good things people of faith do every day. As the media, in particular cable news channels, push their fear-and-consumption agenda, they focus in radical subgroups, criminals, hypocrites, and abusive/extremist rhetoric. Adhering to one's faith tradition used to be positive in mainstream culture, now, in many circles, it's negative. So, given this prevailing social stigma, why should you seek a faith tradition? Why go against cultural norms?

Within my Christian faith tradition, scripture speaks of our relationship with God as essential – as life-giving – when Jesus says "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." – John 6:35

Faith spiritually feeds us. There is no substitute for a relationship with a higher power, and faith is indeed the "bread of life." This bread comforts us when we're nervous. This bread consoles us in times of sadness, grief, and loss. This bread calms our spirit and centers us when a vortex of stress, chaos, and deteriorating values seem to make our heads spin uncontrollably. This bread is life-giving emotional strength, hope, and rejuvenation when we're frazzled, overwhelmed, and drained. This "bread" is true unconditional love.

Once you work past years of negative social conditioning, having faith in a higher power is a calming, peaceful endeavor. People of faith generally see purpose in life, find meaning, and know who they truly are in the grand scheme of things. The faithful tend to be more successful and healthy. When you're well fed and in a stable supportive relationship, you're not worried about going hungry or being abandoned. Spiritual sustenance provides the same calm, satisfied feeling.

When you take it a step further and organize your faith, then you get the community, social support, healthy activities, and neighbor love that many of us miss when we PCS overseas. Most people of faith aren't the scary judgmental perverted extremists TV makes them out to be. They're people like you who had the courage to seek a relationship with something beyond the here and now. They're people you can trust.

This fall, as school starts, the fiscal year rolls over, and you're thinking of ways to improve your family's life, take a look at faith. Eternal benefits await!

"INSURV" cont. from pg. 4

George Washington, while keeping a high standard for maintenance and operational readiness, has been in an INSURV mindset since November 2010 when the ship sent several of their senior leaders to the *USS Carl Vinson* (CVN 70) to observe the aircraft carrier's previous INSURV. *George Washington* leaders were able to study the depth and thoroughness of *Carl Vinson*'s INSURV, allowing *George Washington*'s crew to prepare accordingly.

"Something that we took away from *Carl Vinson* was the fact that the entire ship was well coordinated and in perfect sync," said Master Chief Engineman Mike Piazza, from Haskell, N.J., leading chief petty officer of *George Washington*'s Engineering Department. "The synchronization between each department helped their preparations and that was something that was important for us during our INSURV."

George Washington Sailors, while regularly maintaining each piece of equipment, worked long hours at a breakneck pace to ensure that their spaces and equipment were INSURV ready, whether they were fixing minor INSURV infractions or working on major equipment flaws.

"One of INSURV's biggest criteria is ensuring the systems work and if not, what are we doing to correct the deficiency," said Culinary Specialist 2nd Class Clinton Drewery, from Moberly, Mo. "If a watertight door is damaged, is there a work request put in? If a piece is missing from a system, do we have that piece on order with supply? Things happen on ships that we can't foresee, so the main concern is what we are doing to make the issues right."

A standout division aboard *George Washington* during INSURV was Weapons Department G-4 Division, a team of engineers and aviation ordnancemen who work together to run the nine weapons elevators that move ordnance from the weapons magazines to the hangar bay and flight deck.

"We're always working on our elevators, whether we're performing preservation on the elevators or performing maintenance," said Aviation Ordnanceman 1st Class Jason Seligson, from New York. "We did the best we could to identify our issues and spent a lot of long hours addressing the issues in order to keep our elevators in good shape. I'm proud of the work that my guys have done to get us to this point, yet there's still a lot of work for us to do. We can't get lazy just because INSURV is over."

George Washington finished INSURV with the highest grade of satisfactory.

"We worked around the clock and slept three hours a night preparing for INSURV, and it's great to see that we did as well as we did," said Seaman Pardeep Sondhi, from Wheatland, Calif. "This was a huge team effort on everyone's part and everyone's hard work paid off. If you're ready for INSURV, you're ready for anything."

George Washington took away several lessons learned from the inspection and will continue its efforts to keep the ship in top shape.

"There is always room for improvement," said Piazza. "INSURV is not the end; the ship has a lifespan of 50 years and we need to keep the entire ship maintained so it will live out its total lifespan completely battle ready."

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The "dietary ingredients" in these products may include: vitamins, minerals, herbs or other botanicals, amino acids, and substances such as enzymes, organ tissues, glandulars, and metabolites. Dietary supplements can also be extracts or concentrates, and may be found in many forms such as tablets, capsules, softgels, gelcaps, liquids, or powders. They can also be in other forms, such as a bar, but if they are, information on their label must not represent the product as a conventional food or a sole item of a meal or diet.

Whatever their form may be, DSHEA places dietary supplements in a special category under the general umbrella of "foods," not drugs, and requires that every supplement be labeled a dietary supplement.

Walking into a GNC or various other health food stores can be an overwhelming experience. The task to find the proper dietary and nutritional supplement can be overbearing. The average store usually has thousands of items to choose from, ranging from vitamins and minerals to weight loss pills, to weight gain powders and energy boosters.

It is important that sailors and their families understand that the main purpose of supplements is to help enhance a diet, not completely take the place of a healthy diet.

So what exactly can you take?

"Supplement use is quite frankly tricky in use," said U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka Health Promotions Department Head Rhea Daniels. "The best ultimatum is if you choose to use anything, you definitely should follow the instructions on the packaging."

Even still, the American Dietary Association acknowledges the fact that for some people, supplements are required because the vitamins they may need may be hard to obtain in adequate amounts in their diets. These groups of people include Pregnant women, Nursing mothers, strict vegetarians, people with food allergies or intolerances, senior citizens and those with diseases such as cancer, or kidney, cardiovascular, or bone disease.

Another group that can be possibly affected by a lack of a proper diet would be deployed Sailors and Marines.

"Supplements are good in the sense that for Sailors and Marines on deployment for example, there will be times that they will not be able to eat a full balanced meal due to duty commitments," said Daniels. "This is where I feel that use would be important, but I feel that people over do it and buy stuff that they really don't need."

Even still, according to several health reports, people continue to purchase supplements. Amongst the most popular are multi-vitamins, meal replacements like Slim Fast and Ensure, and also sports nutrition supplements used to boost performance and provide more energy like nitric oxide boosters; to gain weight for muscle mass by use of whey protein and creatine monohydrate and even loose weight with Hydroxycut. Some of these products, when taken improperly, can combine and cause potentially life-threatening results.

"Hydroxycut for example, is one such product that could possibly harm you when taken improperly," said Health Technician and Certified Personal Trainer, Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Christopher Louis. "If one chooses to use that product, they must stay hydrated because it acts as a diuretic due to the large amounts of caffeine in it. However as a trainer, I try to encourage people to not use it."

For more information, please contact the Health Promotion office in the Fleet Recreational Center at 243-9776.