How we deal with change

By Chaplain Allen Vaughan

If you have ever lost your car keys, the following may be an all-too-familiar scenario: As you are heading out the door on your way to work or to a very important appointment, you suddenly discover that you cannot find your car keys. You were leaving on time with only a few minutes to spare, but you assumed it would be a normal day with normal traffic, and now the absence of your car keys is quickly becoming an unexpected stressor.

Likely, your first reaction is disbelief. "I just had my keys a little while ago, didn't I? Normally, I put them in my pocket or hang them on a hook. I can't believe I could have lost them. Now, where are they?"

As you become increasingly aware that the few spare minutes you allowed yourself are quickly ticking away, your heart starts to beat a little faster and disbelief turns into a frantic, frustrated, and possibly angry search for those "(fill in your own creative words here) keys."

From this point, you may go from anger to desperation. "What am I going to do? I'm going to be late. I'm going to get in trouble with my boss. The whole world is going to fall apart if I don't find my car keys!" You may even utter a prayer, "God, if you help me find my keys, I'll never use the words that I just used a few minutes ago when I was angry."

If you still cannot find your keys, then hopefully you'll eventually regain your composure and start to think of other options. "I'll see if I can get a ride from a friend who hasn't left yet. Or, I'll take the bus or train in, and make a phone call explaining why I'll be late. Later, I'll make a more thorough search or find some way to get a spare set." You move on and adjust to the new set of circumstances caused by the loss of your car keys.

This is only one, small example from an everyday experience to which most of us can relate to. It illustrates how each of us might deal with unexpected change. The change may be as significant as the death of a loved one, the loss and devastation caused by a natural disaster, or leaving the familiarity and comfort of home and family behind.

Now, at this point, please know that I am not placing the loss of one's car keys on the same order of magnitude as what many folks here in Japan have gone through in the wake of the recent earthquake, tsunami and nuclear crisis. However, when any unexpected change or disruption in our lives occurs, I believe we cycle through a similar emotional process as described in the paragraphs above, regardless of how big or small the change might be.

Possible emotions you, or someone you know, might experience are disbelief, frustration, anger, desperation, or peacefulness and adaptation. Some people move through the cycle of emotions at a different pace, while others can get stuck in one place for a period of time. There could also be a mixing up or recurrence of emotions that come out at unexpected times and surprise you.

Please be aware that others may not be in the same place you are. Already, the news media in the United States is reporting on other stories, and Japan is not always in the headlines. Your friends on Facebook are posting pictures and comments about the vacation from which they've just returned. And you may be asking, "How can others be so unaware or insensitive to what is going on all around us here in Japan?"

Now, we have to be concerned about the safety of our air, food and water. We have to deal with long lines at the gasoline pump. We have to adapt to loved ones being far away. Our community has changed, Japan has changed and our families have had to change all because of the unexpected loss, devastation and disruption which occurred March 11, 2011.

Life goes on in the face of change, because that is how the creator ordered the creation. We cycle through the range of human emotions, because that's how we are created. I encourage you to be patient with your emotions and those of your neighbors. Turn to your neighbors, especially our Japanese neighbors, and offer a compassionate hand and a kind word, no matter what emotional state you may be in at the moment. We all may be experiencing this change in different ways, but we all share our common humanity and we are in this together. God bless the people of Japan and the community which we share.

CFAY residents assist animal shelter P.A.W.S. by fostering pets

Heather Jackson, president of Pets Are Worth Saving (P.A.W.S.), animal shelter on board CFAY, introduces a two-year-old cat named Skid to a family interested in fostering the animal March 23. P.A.W.S. operated at extended hours to put these animals with new families after a voluntary military assisted departure was authorized.

Story and photo by MC3 Mikey Mulcare,
Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

Service members, Japanese civilians and Department of Defense contractors have been joining together to provide homes for displaced animals at Fleet Activities Yokosuka's Pets Are Worth Saving (P.A.W.S.) animal shelter.

The majority of the animals have been displaced following a voluntary military assisted departure resulting from a 9.0 magnitude earthquake and ensuing tsunami that devastated the north eastern region of Japan.

"We just reopened this morning after being closed since the authorization to depart was issued and we're already having animals being brought in," said Denise Montoye, P.A.W.S. Yokosuka vice president. "Sadly, we expect to take in more animals in the future, but on a positive note we're receiving a lot of outreach from the community in terms of help and volunteers."

P.A.W.S., which originally only had the maximum capacity to shelter three dogs, 10 cats and 10 kittens, is now receiving assistance from volunteers and the Navy Mobile Construction Battalion 11 (NMCB) Seabees to increase their capacity.

"The base, at the moment is giving us some aid, by sending the Seabees over to construct some kennels," said Montoye. "They are pulling out our old supply cupboards and crafting make-shift kennels to handle the increase of animals."

The new boost in space will allow P.A.W.S. to take in more animals who are temporarily being sheltered and awaiting foster owners.

"A lot of the animals we're getting are eventually going home to their families, but for the time being they just need a foster family," said Heather Jackson, P.A.W.S. Yokosuka president. "We've had a lot of great people step up to help these animals, but we're going to need more."

Even with the increased high tempo in the non-profit shelter, the 10 plus P.A.W.S. volunteers are keeping a positive attitude.

"I think that with this community, our Japanese workers and the people of Yokosuka base, that all of these animals are going to find loving homes and I also think P.A.W.S. will come out of this stronger than we've ever been before," said Jackson.

P.A.W.S. has currently waived their adoption fees and are taking donations of supplies like cat and dog food, litter, garbage bags, as well as money. If you would like to volunteer, please contact the shelter at 243-1702.