Breaking the habit to worry

By Chaplain Corey Thornton

Worry is a common issue amongst many whom I encounter. Sometimes it is someone who has recently gone through major change in their lives or is preparing for change in the future. Other times it is someone who has recovered from a trauma or an injury and worries about it reoccurring. Often times it is someone who worries because they have learned worrying as a habit. This becomes particularly evident when they worry about concerns that do not merit being worried about. Having been a habitual worrier myself, I can remember spending enormous amounts of energy worrying about things that were nonsense.

For example, I would sometimes stay up half the night worrying that I would sleep through my alarm in the morning. The common sense response to this would be to advise that the more sleep one gets, the less likely they will be to sleep through their alarm. But worry doesn't often work that way. It defies reason. It becomes a behavioral pattern, a frame of mind, a habit.

I would like to share some advise that has proven helpful to me and many others to diminish the habit of worrying. The first point is to recognize that worrying is habitual and that you are a worrier. Some will defend worrying as being evolutionarily prudent, as a reasonable means of self-preservation. I do not wish to discourage the reasonable measures of care and safety that keep us alive and well. Worry, as I am using the term, goes beyond this and is more often counterproductive to our care. Identifying worry in our lives is necessary in order to identify that it is unhealthy and we are in need of a change.

The second point is to identify where the worry is getting its power: in the present, past or future. Once you identify this, you will know where to direct your efforts.

Worry about the past is often rooted in our past mistakes. We beat ourselves up over things that, in hindsight, we would like to go back and re-do.

Unfortunately, there is no erasure for our history. What we can do is practice the art of forgiving and forgetting. Forgiving ourselves for our past gives us the permission to forget about it. This may look less like actually forgetting the event and more like not reliving the trauma that accompanies the memory of the event, and thus forgetting its negative personal impact. St. Paul wrote this scripture, "…one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead. I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13b-14) I have found contemplation of this verse to be inspirational to the efforts of forgetting painful memories that empower worry.

We can classify worries in the present as concerns for the immediate events in our lives having just occurred or soon to occur and everything in between.

One common worry in the present is with performance; for example, a musician giving a recital or an athlete competing in a sporting event. Worry empowered by the present can cause us to freeze up and perform far below our potential.

One helpful concept for this comes from the psychologist William James who said, "The essence of genius is to know what to overlook." In other words, it is a brilliant skill to be able to focus on what is important and worthy of attention and to have the discipline to skip over or choose to not pay attention to the unessential. One way this might look is, when an important event is about to take place, one that will require actions from you, stop a moment and think about what is important, what essentially needs to be done. Sometimes I will picture myself performing the task successfully several times in my head, like a mental rehearsal. As soon as I am tempted to think about what will happen if I fail, I immediately turn my attention back to the successful performance of the task. This practice has helped me to approach performing in the present with more confidence and success.

Thoughts on the future can easily be accompanied by fears and anxiety. Human beings tend to fear the unknown of the future. One helpful point of advice for this is to daily affirm faith in your future and the future of the world. The philosophical underpinnings for faith and hope in the future are too ambitious of a topic to cover adequately here. Let me simply say that it is important to know what you are living for; what motivates you to continue.

One might ask, what gets your head off of the pillow in the morning? The answer to this question will tell you in what your hopes and dreams are vested. As a Christian, my hope is in God who I believe leads my life on a journey that will ultimately lead to everlasting life in His Kingdom. No matter what happens to me tomorrow, whether it is cause for celebration or for mourning, pales in comparison to the light of eternity.

It can be helpful to deflate worrying about the future with a simple meditative practice (some call it contemplative prayer). In this meditation, practice emptying your mind of thoughts of anxiety, fear and insecurity.

Once you have arrived at a point in which your mind is empty of these thoughts, then practice filling it with thoughts of peace, courage and calm. Prayerfully tell yourself, "God is now filling my mind with peace, with courage and with calm assurance." St. Paul again offers encouraging advice along these lines, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6, 7). In other words, don't worry, pray.

These are only a few helpful practices to help with the habit of worry. Perhaps one or more of them will prove helpful for you. Perhaps you will find others for yourself. My wish for each of us is that peace may replace fears and prayer and meditation, worrying.

Ikego cont. from pg. 1

Approximately, 150 people participated in the runs and observed the scrimmage.

"I think it's neat. I did the 4K run this morning with my stroller. It was fun, there was a good participation from the Japanese and Americans too" said Tonya Miyano, Navy spouse and Zushi resident.

One of the main events on the field, the U.S. 7th Fleet Band, "Pacific Ambassadors," played to welcome visitors as they arrived.

"I feel the friendship between Japan and America. I was impressed by the Japanese and American anthems," said Junko Saito, a Hayama resident.

Another stage included *taiko* (drum) performances, the Zushi City High School Band, Keaulaula Okalani Hula Hulau dances, and rock bands Motor Mustang and The Arounds.

CFAY Morale Welfare and Recreation organized the two stages of entertainment and the 32 concession stands run by CFAY and American and Japanese private organizations including carnival games and bouncy houses. Several ships were represented at booths by Family Readiness Groups including *USS Cowpens*, *USS George Washington* and *USS Shiloh*.

Commander Naval Forces Japan Regional Fire Department and Zushi City Fire Department had several displays popular with families. Children could dress in firefighting gear, sit in a fire truck and walk through a smoke filled tent that simulated a smoky room.

Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit 5 Det. Japan ran an interactive display where people could operate two PacBots, which are used for ordinance disposal.

Attendee and Negishi resident Kana Barton said of the day, "It's the first time I came here to Ikego, lots of things for the kids. The kids are having so much fun."

Food kiosks ran the gamut from American barbeque and hot dogs to döner kebabs (Turkish kebabs), and Japanese Hiroshimayaki, which the Hiroshima version of okonomiyaki which is a non-sweet pancake, usually filled with vegetables. Hiroshimayaki contains grilled *soba* (buckwheat) noodles inside.

The largest line for a food vendor was at Masaki Catering where the draw for many Japanese were the giant American burgers, particularly the Sasebo burger. Owner Shozo Masaki explained that the Sasebo burger included a fried egg, bacon and cheese.

"I enjoyed many shops, food shops and souvenirs. This is first time having spare ribs; a little bit sweet and tender. The homemade sweets are interesting, I've never seen them like that," said Chieko Kawahara, Kanazawa-Bunko resident, referring to the various stands.

Mayor Hirai also promoted an upcoming event "Sports Challenge Day" on May 30. He encouraged Zushi and Ikego residents to participate in a friendly competition with its Tokushima prefecture city sister city, Naruto. The losing city must raise the winning city's flag at City Hall.

For more information on the event contact the Ikego OIC office at 246-8042.

Shimoda cont. from pg. 1

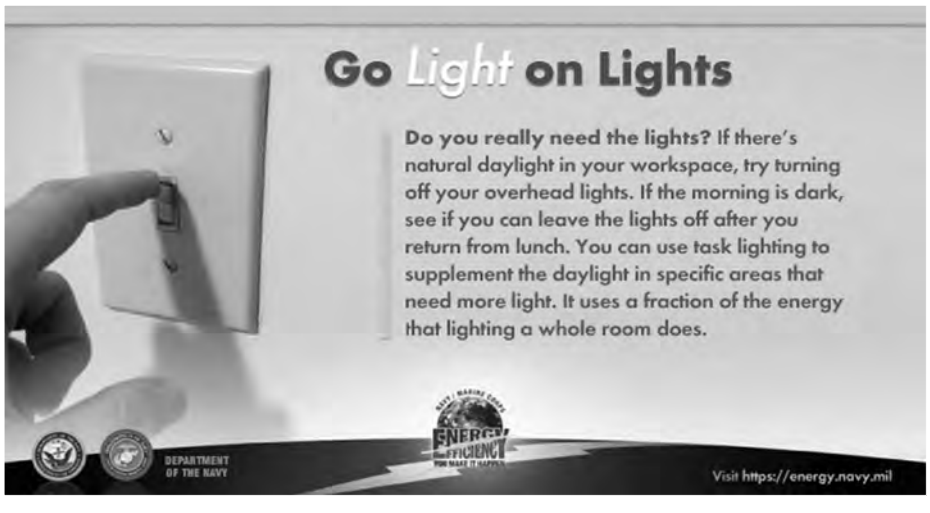
This year, the festival unveiled new grave stones and a structure to protect them from the weather.

"For 150 years, the citizens of Shimoda City, have been praying for these five souls who lie here," said Naoki Ishii, mayor of Shimoda. "We burn incense for these Sailors and say prayers…this is the way the Japanese honor the dead. As the mayor of Shimoda City, I would like to extend my appreciation to all of the former and current priests who watch over these souls who sleep here, and I wish and hope this place to remain as a symbol of the friendship between the U.S. and Japan, forever and ever."

In 2011, the Black Ship Festival was cancelled due to the Great East Japan Earthquake. "Last year, Japan received un-scaled support from the United States immediately after the disastrous tsunami and earthquake," said Heita Kawakatsu, governor of Shizuoka Prefecture. "American service men and women worked tirelessly to search and rescue those missing and transport much needed food and relief supplies. "In Shimoda, our festival was unfortunately cancelled, as the relief effort was still ongoing. Therefore, for the first time, Shizuoka Prefecture decided to join together with Shimoda City, to host this year's festival, to express our deepest appreciation to the people of the United States."

Roos reassured Kawakatsu that the bonds created in Shimoda so many years ago with Commodore Perry are as strong as ever.

"I know that my military brethren would agree with me in saying that it wasn't difficult for the United States to step up in the role we played in Operation Tomodachi," said Roos. "It was instinctual because of the deep, deep bonds between the people of Japan and the people of the United States."

While in port, *McCampbell* Sailors visited six elementary schools in Shimoda City, marched in a parade, watched a play performed by Shimoda citizens reenacting Commodore Perry's landing at Ryosenji Temple and were treated to an evening of fireworks. They also participated in friendly competition events like beach volleyball, golf, softball, tug-of-war and arm wrestling.

"One of my shipmates and I were standing outside [on the street] and one of the kids that she visited at their school came up to her and starting hugging her," said Engineman First Class William Rivera, *USS McCampbell* Auxiliary Division. "Their [The people of Shimoda] reception has been very warm and comforting. I'm very impressed and glad that I got the opportunity to come here. It is so quite and lovely that I would definitely drive here on my own time to visit again."