Maintaining your marriage "quals"

By Chaplain Bruce Vaughan

When young Sailors and their fiancées come to my office to talk about getting married, I usually start off by asking them the following questions: "What is your job in the Navy? What kind of training or classes did you have to take in order to become professionally qualified and technically proficient in your job? How long do you want to stay in the Navy? How long do you want to stay married?"

After asking these questions, I get a variety of puzzled looks from the young couple in love, because they came in to talk to the chaplain about marriage, instead of a class on Navy career counseling. The responses to the first two questions are particular to the Sailor's rate or designator. And, depending upon whether the Sailor intends to stay through one enlistment period or make the Navy a career, the answer given in response to the third question may vary between four to twenty or more years. However, the answer to the last question is always, "We want to stay married for the rest of our lives."

Every couple who is considering marriage wants their relationship to last forever, and certainly longer than their Navy career. And yet, most of us will put in more hours of classroom time and training for our jobs than we will for our marriages. This past year, can you count how many courses or hours have you put into either establishing or maintaining your qualifications at work? Now, try to count how many classes have you attended, or books have you read, or retreats have you attended for the sole purpose of benefiting your marriage and significant relationships?

Just as there are certain skills that need to be mastered in order to be technically proficient in your line of work, there are many skills that also need to be mastered in order to be technically proficient at being married. It may sound a little odd to put it in these terms, but it's true. Skills like effective communication, active listening and compromising may seem in abundance when couples first meet, because you are "falling in love." However, these skills which are essential to lasting and healthy relationships can get rusty from disuse over time, and deficiencies in these skills are revealed by stressful events in a marriage.

So, how can you sharpen your marriage and relationship skills? Chaplains, as well as the Fleet and Family Support Center, offer relationship counseling, and a number of classes to help you become technically proficient at marriage. Retreats and seminars are always effective, especially for couples who have been married for a long time and have endured lengthy separation due to deployments. Finally, there are plenty of books, marriage-coaching Web sites and video resources available that will aid in maintaining your "qualifications and proficiency." Remember, jobs may only last for a few years, but we want our marriages to last for a lifetime. So, don't forget to work on your marriage "quals."

Employee transition from NSPS to General Schedule system to begin soon

By Lisa D. Marsh, CNFJ Human Resources Office

As you may know, as part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) 2010 that was enacted by Congress Oct. 28, 2009, the Secretary of Defense shall take all actions to orderly terminate the National Security Personnel System (NSPS) and conversion of all employees and positions from NSPS no later than Jan. 1, 2012.

The NSPS Transition Office will oversee efforts to transition roughly 220,000 employees from the pay-for-performance system to their old personnel systems. John James Jr., previously the executive director for logistics, maintenance and industrial operations at the Naval Sea Systems Command, will head the new transition office.

Most of the Department of Navy (DoN) employees will transition to the General Schedule (GS) personnel system; this will take place during 2010, on a cycle over the next several months.

Commander U.S. Naval Forces Japan (CNFJ) Human Resources Office (HRO) will work with local commands during the transition to move from NSPS to the successor system. Given the short time frame allowed for the transition, employees transitioning in 2010 will not be eligible for a 2011 NSPS performance payout.

However, as a GS employee, you will be eligible for all recognition and rewards within that system. You will receive additional information leading up to the date your organizations are scheduled to transition, including information on performance management and your grade placement within the GS system. Some employees are not familiar with the GS system therefore the DoN will have an online program to teach you about the GS system.

We understand that you have questions about the transition and communication is critical. CNFJ HRO will continue to work with you and your commands to provide information as it becomes available. HRO will continue to communicate with you through your command leadership as well as the Seahawk and HRO Newsletters.

Contact a CNFJ HRO specialist or your command HRO representative for more information.