A Fair Fight

By Chaplain Allen Vaughan

According to international law of armed conflict, military chaplains are non-combatants, which means that we are not allowed to bear arms on the battlefield. But, one thing you might find a little surprising is that chaplains actually teach people how to fight. Specifically, we teach couples how to fight. The tactics we teach, however, don't involve hand-to-hand combat or weapons training, thankfully!

Now you might say, "Chaps, my spouse and I don't need to be taught how to fight. We have no problem doing that on our own." That may be true, but chaplains teach couples how to fight fair, so that when you have an argument or a disagreement, you come away from the experience feeling as though you were heard and understood; as opposed to feeling attacked, like you lost the argument, or that you weren't heard.

A technique my wife and I have put to good use many times in our 16-year marriage is a method known as "drive-through talking." A simple example of this takes place when you go through the drive-through window of your favorite fast food restaurant. As the customer, you drive up to the speaker and place your order. The restaurant employee takes the order and repeats it over crackling and distorted speakers.

When you and your significant other begin to use "drive-through talking," one person agrees to be the "customer" and the other agrees to be the "employee."

The rules for the customer are: (1) Use "I" statements – share only your feelings or needs about the conflict; (2) Avoid generalizations or attributing motives; (3) Don't bring up past mistakes; (4) Stay on one topic and share small amounts of information at a time; (5) Take frequent pauses and allow the person listening to repeat what they've heard.

The rules for the employee are: (1) Listen with 100 percent of your attention focused on understanding what your partner is trying to say; (2) Simply repeat what is said by the speaker to ensure full understanding; (3) Don't analyze, edit or interpret what is being said; (4) Don't be defensive or rebut what you are hearing, even if you disagree; (5) A helpful phrase to use might be, "What I hear you saying is… " Be sure to switch roles, when you feel like you have been heard.

The key to fighting fair is to focus not on winning the argument, but rather on understanding, more fully, the heart of your partner. "Drive-through" talking also helps your mate feel safe to express his or her needs and feelings, without fear of being misinterpreted or put down. When you do this, it enables you to work on solutions to conflict based upon mutual understanding, rather than who shouted the loudest, cried the most, or got in the last word. This is also a useful technique for parents to use when trying to resolve conflict with children.

Check with a chaplain or your Fleet and Family Support Center for relationship counseling or classes that can help enhance your communication skills with the people you love. Blessings!

Heads Up Yokosuka

Community Announcements

Base Movie Theater Closure – The Fleet Theater will be closed from now to Nov. 3 and the Benny Decker Theater will be closed Nov. 4 to Dec. 2 for repairs and minor renovations. Call 243-5215 for more information.

Commissary Halloween Costume Contest – A costume contest for kids in age groups 1-4, 5-8 and 9-13 will be held Oct. 31 at the commissary. Participants should come in costume and be ready by 3:45 p.m. Judging begins 4 p.m.

Fire Hydrant Flow Testing – Annual fire hydrant flow testing will be conducted in Ikego Nov. 2 - 5 and in Yokosuka Nov. 16 - 25. Hydrant testing can cause household water discoloration. If you notice discoloration, let the tap run for a few moments to clear. Please do not park in the vacinity of hydrants and remain clear of the area when testing is in progress. Call 243-4619 for more information.

Federal Employee Health Benefits Briefing – Representatives of the American Foreign Service Protective Association will hold Federal Employee Open Season Briefings Nov. 9 at the CNFJ Human Resources Office Training Room in building 1472. Two one-hour briefings will be held at 10:30 a.m. and at noon. To reserve a spot in the briefing or for more information, contact HRO Labor/Employee Relations and Services Eiko Norinaga at 243-8184 or by e-mail to eiko.norinaga.ja@fe.navy.mil.

Navy College Office Tuition Assistance (TA) – Navy College Officer TA/ Electronic TA (ETA) Briefs are conducted on the first and third Thursday of each month at 11 a.m. For TA processing, submitted ETA/TA forms will be available for pick up the next day after 1 p.m. Command TA/ETA Briefs are provided for groups of eight or more at your location. Contact the Navy College Office located in room 347 on the third floor of the Fleet Recreation Center at 243-8131 or by e-mail to navycollege_yokosuka@fe.navy.mil for more information.

Seahawk Community Announcements and Article/photo Submissions – Deadline for community announcements and article/photo submissions for the Seahawk is the Friday before the next Seahawk edition. E-mail your submissions to Seahawk-Umitaka@fe.navy.mil. Please include your telephone contact information in the body of the e-mail. Contact the Seahawk editor at Seahawk-Umitaka@fe.navy.mil or call 243-2567/3003 for specific submission requirements