

K-GRAM #11

01 APRIL 2009



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Yes, I know today is April 1st but any reference to “April Fool’s Day” is unintended ... I will leave that to my beloved Detroit Lions. Of course, as many of you know, I am a rabid Michigan State University fan and we Spartans are the eve of playing in the Men’s Basketball Final Four this weekend. With any luck, by the time you all read this, the Spartan Nation will have beaten UCONN and UNC. Hey, it could happen, MSU did beat Louisville, the number one seed. GO GREEN!

Today also marks the exact midway point of my tour as your commander and my tenure as a flag officer. So much has happened over the past year-and-a-half, mostly good, that I am reminded of my college Latin where I learned the phrase “*tempus fugit*,” or “time flies.” This fall the selection board will meet to pick my successor. Wow! Okay, hold on, I am not retired yet, and there is so much more that we need to accomplish. I do sincerely thank All Hands – RC, AC, contractors, retired, civilians, and families – for their continuing support and dedication.

The main discussion topic for this month is a very serious one. The Vice CNO, Admiral Patrick Walsh, has directed that All Hands to receive training relative to suicide prevention. I have directed that all NNWG units standdown for an hour during April’s drill weekend to read over and discuss this most important issue. Far be it from me to improve upon the Vice Chief’s words, so here they are:

FM CNO WASHINGTON DC//N09//
TO NAVADMIN
INFO CNO WASHINGTON DC//N1//
BT
NAVADMIN 092/09

UNCLAS PERSONAL FOR ALL COMMANDING OFFICERS, OFFICERS IN
CHARGE AND COMMAND MASTER CHIEFS FROM ADM WALSH//
MSGID/GENADMIN/CNO WASHINGTON DC/N09/MAR//

SUBJ/SUICIDE PREVENTION//

POC/LT BATTLE, WES/OPNAV N09/WASHINGTON, DC/TEL:
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RMKS/1. SUICIDE RANKS AS THE THIRD LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH IN THE
NAVY AND IS A LOSS THAT DESTROYS FAMILIES, DEVASTATES

COMMUNITIES, AND UNRAVELS THE COHESIVE SOCIAL FABRIC AND MORALE INSIDE OUR COMMANDS. 41 SAILORS DIED FROM SUICIDE LAST YEAR AND THAT NUMBER HAS RISEN IN EACH OF THE LAST THREE YEARS. SADLY, IN THE LAST THREE MONTHS, WE HAVE LOST TEN SAILORS TO SUICIDE.

2. WHILE THE SYMPTOMS OF THOSE WHO CONTEMPLATE SUICIDE ARE UNIQUE TO EACH PERSON, A COMMON THREAD TO ALL VICTIMS IS A SENSE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPTINESS THAT LEAVES INDIVIDUALS IMPAIRED AND UNABLE TO RESOLVE PROBLEMS. SUICIDE KNOWS NO BOUNDARIES AND HAS AFFECTED A FORMER CNO TO OUR YOUNGEST ENLISTED SAILORS.

3. SOLUTIONS TO THIS TRAGEDY MUST ADDRESS THE UNDERLYING CAUSES THAT AFFECT THE ABILITY OF AN INDIVIDUAL TO RECOVER FROM CHANGE OR MISFORTUNE AND REGAIN THEIR PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL STAMINA. THE TARGET OF OUR POLICY AND PRACTICE IS THE RESILIENCE OF INDIVIDUAL SAILORS AND THEIR FAMILIES. THIS MEANS LEADERS MUST LOOK FOR AND CONNECT TO THOSE INDIVIDUALS CHALLENGED BY SEEMINGLY INTRACTABLE TROUBLES WITH RELATIONSHIPS AND WORK, FINANCIAL AND LEGAL MATTERS, DETERIORATING PHYSICAL HEALTH, AS WELL AS MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES AND DEPRESSION.

4. OUR OPERATIONAL STRESS CONTROL PROGRAM IS A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH DESIGNED TO ADDRESS THE PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH NEEDS OF SAILORS AND THEIR FAMILIES. IT IS A PROGRAM LED BY OPERATIONAL LEADERSHIP. IT IS SUPPORTED BY OUR NAVAL MEDICAL COMMUNITY, AND PROVIDES PRACTICAL DECISION-MAKING TOOLS FOR SAILORS, LEADERS AND FAMILIES SO THEY CAN IDENTIFY STRESS RESPONSES AND PROBLEMATIC TENSION. BY ADDRESSING PROBLEMS EARLY, INDIVIDUALS CAN MITIGATE THE EFFECTS OF PERSONAL TURMOIL, AND, GET THE NECESSARY HELP WHEN PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING OR TREATMENT WARRANTS.

5. SHIPMATES, WE MUST CONTINUE TO EMPHASIZE AND REINFORCE THAT THERE IS NO STIGMA, SHAME AND DISHONOR IN ASKING FOR HELP. THIS IS NOT SIMPLY AN ISSUE ISOLATED TO THE MEDICAL COMMUNITY TO RECOGNIZE AND RESOLVE; EVERY COMMAND, UNIT AND DETACHMENT HAS A CRITICAL ROLE TO PLAY IN SETTING A SUPPORTIVE CLIMATE FOR THOSE WHO NEED TO ADMIT THEIR STRUGGLE AND SEEK MENTAL HEALTH ASSISTANCE.

6. THE KEY TO ADDRESSING SUICIDE PREVENTION REQUIRES ACTIVE CHAIN OF COMMAND LEADERSHIP, INVOLVEMENT BY ALL HANDS AND INTERACTION WITH SAILOR'S FAMILIES. I WANT YOU TO RE-EXAMINE

YOUR COMMAND-LEVEL EFFORTS TOWARD THIS EFFORT. WE WILL DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO SUPPORT OUR SAILORS, SO THAT IN THEIR EYES, THEIR LIVES ARE VALUED AND ARE TRULY WORTH LIVING. SHIPMATES TAKE CARE OF SHIPMATES ... IT IS THE MODEL OF LEADERSHIP THAT HAS PROVEN ITSELF CONSISTENTLY ACROSS THE EXPANSE OF OUR SUCCESSFUL, STORIED HISTORY. IT IS ULTIMATELY ABOUT LEADERSHIP, KNOWING OUR SAILORS AND THEIR FAMILIES, AND WORKING PROACTIVELY WITH EVERY SOURCE AT OUR DISPOSAL. WE OWE OUR SAILORS AND THEIR FAMILIES NOTHING LESS THAN OUR VERY BEST EFFORTS TO PREVENT ANOTHER TRAGIC SUICIDE.

7. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON SUICIDE PREVENTION CAN BE FOUND AT WWW.SUICIDE.NAVY.MIL.

8. RELEASED BY ADMIRAL PATRICK M. WALSH, VICE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS.//

Break. Break.

We are indeed all Shipmates and we all know that we need to take care of each other. If one our number is challenged, we need to assist that person towards seeking help. I consider all of this a part of the new Navy Ethos and those three core value words of Honor, Courage and Commitment.

That is all for now. TFK BT K