

## FAMILY ADVOCACY BASIC KNOWLEDGE

### DISCUSSION LEADER'S OUTLINE

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Good morning my name is \_\_\_\_\_. Today we will be talking about basic knowledge in family advocacy.

The **ground rules** for this discussion are:

- (1) No personal attacks on anyone's opinions
- (2) Allow each participant to express themselves
- (3) Make head calls at your leisure, just don't interrupt the group
- (4) Keep your language clean as not to offend others
- (5) PARTICIPATION BY ALL!!!!!!

#### **Gain Attention**

SSgt Green is a dedicated Marine. He was raised in a family of five and his father was a Marine who ran a very tight ship. SSgt Green and his wife have three children, two boys and one girl. Having adopted his father's no-nonsense attitude, Green and his wife, who was raised in a small, liberal family, often butt heads over how to raise the children. Green believes in a zero-tolerance policy and that children should do what they're told. His wife, on the other hand, believes that everyone deserves a second or third chance. These colliding views have caused issues for the family that some may consider abusive.

**Key points** for the discussion today will be:

- (1) Recognizing when behaviors have the potential to be abusive
- (2) Recognizing when and what type of communication needs to occur
- (3) Describing strategies that aid in healthy relationships
- (4) Identifying where to seek assistance

**Learning Objective:** After this guided discussion, you will be more aware of how to recognize when your relationship is under stress, how to communicate so each person's needs are met, and where to seek assistance when needed.

#### **DISCUSSION**

One day during the summer, SSgt Green's oldest son, John, missed his 5 o'clock curfew after his wife, Linda, had given John permission to attend a summer basketball league. Although Linda had clearly communicated this to Green, he considered it a violation since he and his son hadn't spoken about it. Green also felt as though his son manipulated his mother into giving him permission to attend the basketball league. Upon his son's arrival, Green makes him do 200 push-ups, scrub the driveway, wash his siblings clothes and sends him to his room. Infuriated, Green's wife tells him she can no longer deal with the way he disciplines and keeps such a tight rein on the family. After all she did give their son permission to attend the game. Frustrated and angry about the way he believes his wife covers for the children, Green and his wife end up engaging in a heated altercation that leads to some pushing and shoving. Green shares his experience with you at work the next day, telling you this is the way he was raised and it's up to him to keep his wife and children in line. During the course of the conversation, you realize some of his viewpoints are a bit extreme—he doesn't believe in second chances, dishes out heavy punishment, and doesn't allow the children to socialize much. You also think the expectations he has of his wife could be

considered abusive. She is not allowed access to the bank account and cannot go anywhere without his permission. When you raise your concerns, Green dismisses them, telling you this is the way his father ran his home and this is the way he will run his. On the rare occasion you've been around his two younger children, 5-year-old Jessica and 4-year-old Sammy, you've noticed that they are anxious and withdrawn, not your typical 4- and 5-year-olds. You know Green is not open to therapy and cannot see the issue with his mindset. You like him and sincerely want to help him, so you confront him about being so hard on his family.

### **KEY POINT 1**

1. What concerns would make you approach Green? (Pause and let Marines answer)
2. What types of potential issues might the kids have? (Pause and let Marines answer)
  - a) Anxiety
  - b) Controlling behavior
  - c) Power and control
  - d) Pushing and shoving
  - e) Emotional abuse
  - f) Stress
  - g) Bedwetting
  - h) Sleeplessness
  - i) Shame
  - j) Being withdrawn
  - k) Easily frustrated with self/ others
  - l) Eating disorders
  - m) Poor academic progress
3. How might you explain or share this with Green? (Pause and let Marines answer)
4. Think about behavioral health issues. How do you think these issues might affect children in the long term? (Pause and let Marines answer)
  - a) Isolation
  - b) Difficulty establishing relationships
  - c) Low self esteem
  - d) Fear
  - e) PTSD
  - f) Manifestation of mental disorders
  - g) Aggression
  - h) Substance Abuse
  - i) Alcoholism
  - j) Stunted social relationships
  - k) Ideations
  - l) Cutting
  - m) Bulimia
  - n) Anorexia
5. Although there is no one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to intimate partner abuse, there are some behaviors that should raise a red flag. Jealousy, controlling behavior, unrealistic expectations, isolation, verbal abuse, rigid gender roles, and hypersensitivity could indicate abuse is occurring or has the potential to occur. It is important to remember that any behavior that makes the other person feel violated or mistreated should be closely examined.
6. Would you alert your chain of command?  
(Pause and let Marines answer)

As a Marine you are a mandated reporter of child abuse and domestic violence. It is your responsibility to contact the Family Advocacy Program to report actions or behaviors you witness to be abusive or could lead to abuse.

### **KEY POINT 2**

1. In this scenario Green didn't take the time to talk to his wife or son. He acted impulsively based on his view of raising children. The scenario doesn't indicate whether or not Green and his wife and son had a previous conversation about the son attending the game. That is why communication is so important. Knowing how to communicate with children can be challenging, but age-appropriate communication is necessary. Expectations are not the same for children of different ages and will require an understanding of the child's level of maturity and ability. In this case, maybe Green and his son could've created a list of pro's and con's detailing why or why not his son should attend the game. This would have helped Green and his son establish a rapport and build strong negotiation skills. Also, from this scenario we don't know if Green and his wife had a discussion about their son attending the game. Open, honest, and direct communication is necessary when addressing issues with both adults and children. What have you learned about how to communicate across the different ages?

### **KEY POINT 3**

1. In this scenario do you feel Green and his wife communicate well? How did that impact the family? Open communication, maintaining a positive attitude, and reassuring your partner of your commitment to the relationship are just a few strategies designed to keep your relationship healthy. Striking a healthy balance in all of your relationships, handling expectations and disagreements with care, as well as a sincere desire to resolve issues, strengthen the role of each individual in the relationship. Communicate with your partner and children at all times. Communication is key! How has open communication helped relationships in your family? We just talked about communicating with children in a healthy way, how do you keep things positive in your relationships?

### **KEY POINT 4**

What resources are available?

1. The Family Advocacy Program (FAP)  
FAP is intended to reduce, and help prevent the incidence of family violence by addressing the causes of stress and risk factors which are the major contributors of abuse. Domestic violence is a social, economic, and health concern that does not discriminate. The types of domestic violence actions perpetrated by abusers include physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, and psychological tactics. The intent of FAP is to help ensure that victims of domestic violence are safe from future abuse by providing education, awareness and services that can assist them with problems they may be facing.
2. Big five
  - a) peers
  - b) chain of command
  - c) chaplain
  - d) medical
  - e) Marine Corps Community Services resources
    - Substance Abuse Counseling Center (SACC)
    - Community Counseling Program (CCP)

- Family Advocacy Program (FAP)
- DSTRESS Line (1-877-476-7734)
- New Parent Support Program (NPSP)

1. OSCAR
2. Military and Family Life Consultant (MFLC)
3. Military One Source
4. Children and Youth Program (CYP)
5. Marine Corps Family Team Building (MCFTB)

Check your installation MCCS website for a list of specific resources.

### **SUMMARY/CONCLUSION**

We just finished talking about what constitutes abusive behavior. It is important to trust your instincts and be vigilant if you suspect a child, or intimate partner is being abused. While differing ideals set the tone for the way each individual raises their children and interacts with their spouse or significant other, it is important to recognize when these ideals and behaviors have the potential to become abusive. If you notice signs of child maltreatment or domestic abuse, remember Marines are mandated reporters. Contact your victim advocate located at FAP to report your concerns.

#### **Closing Statement:**

Being aware of the long-term effects of abuse will be beneficial in helping you to understand each individual's behavior and/or response when interacting with the potential abuser. For example, a child whose parent yells and criticizes a lot may always appear anxious, or an individual with a controlling spouse may seem withdrawn. Being aware of the signs and symptoms of abuse can aid in the foundation of developing a happy, healthy relationship by helping you identify what behaviors to avoid when interacting with your loved ones.

### **END OF DISCUSSION**

#### **RESOURCES**

1. MAPIT Guide: Retrieved from [http://bhin.usmc-mccs.org/uploads/MAPIT\\_Guide.pdf](http://bhin.usmc-mccs.org/uploads/MAPIT_Guide.pdf)
2. MCO 1754.11, Marine Corps Family Advocacy and General Counseling Program