

## RESILIENCY

### DISCUSSION LEADER'S OUTLINE

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Good morning my name is \_\_\_\_\_. Today we will be talking about resiliency.

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**

Cpl Frost is a great Marine. He is a no-nonsense, always serious, reliable, and dependable person who will pitch in any time his help is needed. He is his family's anchor, often providing guidance to his younger siblings as well as financial support to his mother. Everyone considers him a good guy; truthfully the only issue anyone, including the commander, has with him is that he has a hot temper that usually manifests itself without warning. You and others in the unit understand that he has a lot riding on his shoulders and try to be as supportive as possible even though you all feel like Frost needs to counter his stress by talking about his issues and making better decisions. Last night while working on his motorcycle, Frost injured his hand, requiring stitches to his right index and middle fingers—an injury that could prevent him from deploying with your unit as planned. On your drive to medical, his mother calls to tell him his youngest sister has been arrested for stealing and that he needs to come home to bail her out. Under other circumstances, Frost would have taken leave, but since he's preparing to deploy in 2 weeks, leave is unlikely to be approved. You overhear Frost tell his mother that he is unable to come home, and her only feedback was to accuse him of turning his back on his family and leaving his sister without the support she needs. He tells you that his mother behaves as if he is responsible for his siblings, causing him tremendous frustration. This often keeps him awake at night trying to figure out how he can do more to help. You feel for your best friend and realize he has some difficult issues to deal with. Later that day, you talk to him and he seems a lot more agitated. He downs a few beers while he's talking to you and heads to the gym. Frost ends up in an altercation with a fellow Marine over the proper use of a machine while at the gym. Because the altercation turned physical, Frost is now restricted to the barracks and won't see his girlfriend before he deploys. Upset about the consequences, Frost tells the duty he needs to grab something from his car. He has his girlfriend meet him in the parking lot. Their conversation quickly escalates into an argument and soon other Marines from your unit are involved and pulling him inside. You're concerned about his poor decision-making and hot-headed nature, so you decide to do something you've never done before and confront him head on.

#### **Facilitator note: Ask questions and let Marines answer**

What do you say? Could Frost have processed his issues differently? What should he have communicated to his mother? What can Frost do to lessen the stress? What steps should Frost take to normalize the many issues he is facing? Would having strong protective factors or understanding the concept of resiliency have an impact in Frost's case? Would you talk to the commander?

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

- (1) Define resilience
- (2) Discuss the importance of resilience
- (3) Describe strategies that aid in resilience
- (4) Identify resources available to Marines that promote resilience

**Learning Objective:** After this guided discussion, you will have a better understanding of the importance of building resilience.

### **DISCUSSION**

Resilience is not a special trait or gift. It is the ability to withstand, recover, grow and adapt under challenging circumstances (CJCSI 3405.2). “Marines, Sailors, and family members can become more resilient and resistant to the effects of stress through training, social cohesion, and leadership. Very much related to the spiritual aspects of resilience are the social factors in the unit or other social support systems, such as family or community, which contribute to effective and resilient coping. Being surrounded by buddies or fellow Marines, who are known and trusted, and with whom one has already mastered challenges and endured hardships, is a strong contributor to resilience. Likewise, being led by NCOs, SNCOs, and/or officers who have already earned trust through their competence and devotion to unit members is essential for effectiveness and resilience. Other social systems outside the unit, such as families, friends, churches, or broader communities, impact resilience differently depending on the Marines’ and Sailors’ strength of attachment to these social systems. Cohesive units function more as teams, while units lacking cohesion function more as a collection of individuals. Unit cohesion not only promotes effective performance, but also strengthens unit members to endure the toxic effects of operational stress and to be more resilient. Commanders play a huge role in resilience. The attitude a commander embodies either reinforces or diminishes the beliefs and behaviors of their Marines. If you were the commander in this case, what would you say to Frost? How would you support him?

### **KEY POINT 1**

1. You recognize Frost needs to talk to someone about what he is experiencing. What would you say? (Pause and let Marines answer)
  - a) “What’s going on with you?”
  - b) “Why are you always so angry?”
  - c) “You have a lot going on. Do you think it might help if you talk to someone?”
2. A warning sign is a change in behavior indicating that someone is at risk for further issues. What are the warning signs here? (Pause and let Marines answer)
  - a) Anxiety
  - b) Lack of self-control
  - c) Poor problem-solving skills
  - d) Lack of focus
  - e) Risky behavior
  - f) Destructive behavior (toward self or others)
3. Protective factors reduce the effects of stressful life events. These factors allow us to thrive in all aspects of life. What are some common protective factors that could help an individual? What could Frost do to lessen the stress? (Pause and let Marines answer)
  - a) Positive attitude

- b) Healthy perspective
- c) Good decision-making skills
- d) Motivation
- e) Sense of humor
- f) Adequate sleep
- g) Good nutrition
- h) Low-risk drinking
- i) Exercise
- j) Responsibility
- k) Core values (internal beliefs)

4. What do we have within our unit that can help us be more resilient? Work life? Leaders?

(Pause and let Marines answer)

- a) Trusted leaders
- b) Healthy relationships with healthy individuals
- c) Rules and structure
- d) Mission focus
- e) Unit cohesion
- f) Accountability
- g) Opportunity
- h) Core values (internal beliefs)

5. What does resilience mean? (Pause and let Marines answer)

6. Being resilient looks a lot like being in the green or “ready” zone from the stress continuum.

What are some characteristics of a Marine in the “ready” zone?

- a) Remaining calm and steady
- b) Being confident in oneself and others
- c) Getting the job done
- d) Remaining in control physically, mentally, and emotionally
- e) Behaving ethically and morally
- f) Sleeping enough
- g) Eating well and the right amount
- h) Working out and staying fit
- i) Retaining a sense of humor
- j) Playing well and often
- k) Remaining active socially and spiritually
- l) Being at peace with oneself

### **KEY POINT 2**

1. Individual resilience begins with having strong protective factors. Having a positive outlook, maintaining healthy relationships, exercise, a strong sense of humor, and having a sense of purpose are all examples. Within the unit, cohesion not only promotes effective performance, but also strengthens unit members to endure the toxic effects of operational stress and to be more resilient. This is important because Marines count on one another as each plays an integral part to the success of the mission. Individual resilience contributes positively to overall mission success.

### **KEY POINT 3**

1. One way to mitigate stress is to completely or partially eliminate the challenges that cause stress problems in Marines, Sailors, and family members. The negative impacts of unavoidable stressors

can be reduced in intensity by restoring the important biological, psychological, social, and spiritual resources that are depleted by those stressors. In Frost's case, identifying that he is stressed, identifying the sources of his stress, understanding his own limitations and prioritizing would greatly reduce his stress. Another way to eliminate stress would be setting boundaries with his mother and establishing expectations for his girlfriend. How would you explain this to Frost? How would you help him?

#### **KEY POINT 4**

1. What resources are available that promote resilience?
  - a) Self
  - b) Family
  - c) Peers
  - d) Unit leaders
  - e) Installation resources
  - f) Chaplain
  - g) Chain of Command
  - h) Marine Corps Community Services resources
    - Substance Abuse Counseling Center (SACC)
    - Community Counseling Program (CCP)
    - Family Advocacy Program (FAP)
  - i) DSTRESS Line (1-877-476-7734)
  - j) OSCAR
  - k) Military and Family Life Consultant (MFLC)
  - l) Military One Source
2. Check your installation MCCS website for a list of specific resources.

#### **SUMMARY/CONCLUSION**

Knowing and understanding how you and your fellow Marines deal with stress is important in the process of building resilience. Normalizing after a stress event requires identification of what is causing stress, an awareness of how one responds to the stressor and employing strategies that reduce stress. Resilience is not a special trait or gift. It is a quality that resides within us all, an individual's ability to process and interact positively with their surroundings. A resilient Marine is prepared to successfully operate in and respond to the rigors, demands and stressors of both combat and garrison. It is your duty to be in the best operational condition at all times and to help your fellow Marines achieve that same condition.

#### **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. Combat and Operational Stress Program (COSC); MCRP 6-11C COSC Doctrine