ABOUT THE CCN NAVIGATOR

This newsletter provides members of the Cultural Champion Network (CCN) with important and timely information, updates, and resources to carry out their roles in supporting Sailors to help the Navy drive towards a Culture of Excellence (COE). This edition of The CCN Navigator primarily focuses on Self Care.

IN THIS ISSUE:

**Necessary Conversations** emphasizes the value of developing environments where Sailors feel empowered to communicate openly and honestly about difficult topics. These conversations help to foster inclusion and connectedness and are an important tool for our Navy people, leaders, and teams to acknowledge the past, address the present, and advocate for change.

**Self-medication** can result in various health issues, such as addiction, deteriorating mental health, and problems with physical wellness. Here you can learn about the warning signs and symptoms of self-medicating and the risks associated with it.

Life often involves stressful situations, and our bodies’ natural response to stress enables us to cope with the harm that it can cause. Fortunately, there are numerous tools that are supported by science to help manage the harmful consequences of stress.

Do you have an exceptional family member with special needs? If so, you must enroll in the Navy’s Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP), a vital resource for active-duty service members and their dependents.

Feel free to share The CCN Navigator content with others who may benefit. If you have questions or would like to submit feedback, please contact, culturalchampions@navy.mil. To subscribe, click here.

NAVY RELEASES MENTAL HEALTH PLAYBOOK (MHPB)

As a Navy, as leaders and shipmates, we must ensure that every member of our team - their minds, bodies, and spirits - are ready for combat, or for supporting those who go forward. For this reason, ensuring our people’s health, especially their mental health, is paramount.

To that end the Navy Culture and Force Resilience Office assembled a team of professionals from across the Fleet and developed the MHPB to assist Navy leaders in preventing, mitigating, or addressing mental health issues.

The MHPB defines roles and responsibilities (from triad to deckplate), describes how to have conversations that matter, and helps leaders understand how to identify and respond to a mental health related concern, navigate support systems, and understand available mental health capabilities and resources. In addition, there is a MHPB fact sheet that can be used by your command to promote the MHPB and resources.

**Download today** the Mental Health Playbook, Fact Sheet and fillable PDF Mental Health Points of Contact.

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**MENTAL HEALTH PLAYBOOK OVERVIEW**

- **SAILOR**
- **ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**
- **CAPABILITIES**
- **CONVERSATIONS**
- **SYSTEM OF CARE**
- **COMMAND**
- **NAVIGATING SUPPORT SYSTEMS**
In 2020, following the murder of George Floyd, CNO Michael Gilday encouraged all of us to have open and honest conversations across our Navy. In response, the Navy Culture and Force Resilience Office (formerly the 21st Century Sailor Office) developed a Necessary Conversations guide to help Sailors practice openness, active listening, and foster a desire to learn from others.

However, when we polled our Navy commands in 2022, we received feedback that these Necessary Conversations weren’t always happening. We wanted to understand what was and wasn’t working with Necessary Conversations, so we turned to the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) to help us find answers. An amazing group of NPS faculty and students worked together to produce a study entitled, “Sailor Perspectives and Recommendations for Communication About Divisive Events and Inclusion within the Fleet.”

So, why do commands sometimes struggle with Necessary Conversations?

The NPS team first dug into academic literature to study the benefits of effective communication and found that the Navy isn’t alone in acknowledging that discussing sensitive topics is important, but also challenging. For example, NPS researchers learned that Sailors knew that bias and emotions could get in the way of productive conversations and strong teams. However, the NPS team also found that sensitive conversations are not uniformly viewed as mission critical, and Sailors often lack agreement on what conversations are necessary.

How can commands facilitate Necessary Conversations?

First, approach divisive communication as a potential military threat and catalyst to erode trust.

- The 2021 NATO Strategic Communication Hybrid Threats Toolkit concludes that, “our enemies are directly targeting our divisions. Democracies’ enemies are using disinformation to amplify societal polarization and extremism…to weaken the rule of law and civil discourse and international and military relations.”

Second, define ‘necessary’ conversations in terms of the impact on the warfighting mission.

- Global events that divide us would qualify as topics for necessary conversations as would local events that trouble Sailors to the point that they’re distracted during their duty day.

Third, equip leadership with the tools they need to lead Necessary Conversations.

- Provide leaders with facilitation tools and resources on cultural curiosity, emotional regulation, increased self-awareness, and the benefits of diversity and inclusion.
- Emphasize the need to create a culture where open and honest conversations are a part of what we consistently and effectively do.

How will you rise to the Navy’s call to action regarding Necessary Conversations?

- How will you take one step today to open your own perspectives?

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<th>NPS RECOMMENDATIONS ON NECESSARY CONVERSATIONS</th>
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<td><strong>Challenge</strong></td>
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<td>Sensitive conversations not uniformly viewed as mission critical</td>
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<td>Lack agreement on what conversations are necessary</td>
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<td>Leaders are not equally equipped (skills, personal characteristics)</td>
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<td>Organization is not well equipped to get the most from conversations (command control, feedback mechanisms, hierarchy)</td>
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Figure 1. Sailor Perspectives and Recommendations for Communication About Divisive Events and Inclusion within the Fleet (01 JAN 2022 – 31 DEC 2022)
How will you lead your team to be more open to Necessary Conversations?

What are some ways you can pulse your team to find out what’s on their minds?

What's going on inside and outside the gate that might weigh heavily on people's minds?

Culture change will take time, but we can all be more curious about other’s perspectives. We can listen to understand and be empathetic about what we hear from others. Even if we don’t agree, truly imagining what someone else might be thinking or feeling helps us to appreciate our teammates' opinions. We are all united under Navy’s Core Values and if we try, we can make a more resilient Navy by seeking to build great people, teams, and leaders.

Resources:

- The NATO Strategic Communication Hybrid Threats Toolkit, 2021
- Successful Communication About Sensitive Issues Requires Communication That Incorporates Active Listening, Empathy, And Participation (Jackson & Caballero, 2021; Zito et al., 2021).
- While Scholars Contend That Participating in Difficult Arguments And Debates In The Workplace Can Be Accomplished, Such Conversations Often Prove Challenging (Cowan & Maitles, 2012; Caliendo, 2020).”
- Navy Necessary Conversations Guide, July 2020

SELF MEDICATING IS NOT COMPATIBLE WITH SELF-CARE

BY OFFICE OF N173, NAVY DRUG AND ALCOHOL DETERRENCE

Prescription drugs are medications that can only be obtained from a licensed healthcare provider. These drugs are prescribed to treat specific conditions and should only be taken under the supervision of a medical professional. When individuals take prescription drugs that were not prescribed for them or fail to follow the prescribed dosage, they put themselves at risk of harmful side effects and even addiction.

The first danger of self-medicating is the risk of overdose. Prescription drugs are formulated to be taken in specific doses; exceeding the recommended dosage can lead to severe problems, including organ damage and even death. Some prescription drugs, such as opioids, can be especially dangerous as they can slow down breathing and cause respiratory failure.

Another risk associated with self-medicating is addiction. Many prescription drugs are highly addictive, and when someone becomes dependent, they may find it difficult to quit, even when they recognize the negative effects it is having on their life. Addiction can lead to a range of problems, including financial difficulties, relationship problems, and job loss.

Self-medicating with prescription drugs can also lead to adverse interactions when combined with other medications or alcohol. These interactions can cause serious problems, such as heart attack, stroke, or seizure. In some cases, drug interactions can be fatal.

Finally, self-medicating can lead to legal consequences. Individuals can face criminal charges, fines, and even imprisonment for possession of medications without a prescription. Prescription misuse in the military includes: taking medication outside its intended purpose (for example, taking pain medication for recreational use)
How to Respond to Stress in a Healthy Way

By Project 1 Small ACT Campaign

It can feel like stress comes from all directions at once – from juggling responsibilities at work, to navigating family life, to keeping up with friends or running errands, there’s often a lot to get done or make decisions on. Even though you can’t often control what life throws your way, you do have the power to manage how you respond and react to daily stressors. Controllability, one of the key Principles of Resilience, is about making choices that restore a sense of empowerment during adversity.

Finding out ways that work for you to respond to stress might take practice, but it’ll help prevent stress from escalating to distress. To begin determining what types of habits you can incorporate into your stress management plan, consider the following ACTions:

Take a few minutes to pause. When faced with a difficult situation and the tension escalates (e.g., you accidentally miss a deadline at work, argue with a family member), it might feel natural to lash out, place blame, or quickly act on the initial gut feelings. Instead, take a moment to push pause and organize your thoughts. Tune into the moment and your basic needs and consider how you feel before you react to a situation. When your basic needs aren’t met, rational thinking can go out the door.

Create a list of microbreak ideas. Write down the feasible activities you could quickly do in about five minutes to recharge and trigger your body’s relaxation response. When you feel overwhelmed, refer to the list and give yourself permission to take a brief break from the stressor. It might seem hard to step away from a big project or a large bill, but even a few minutes of doing something else can help you gain new perspective on the challenge.

Think of the bigger context. Think about what motivates you and your values the next time you face a stressful event. Can a particular affirmation, meditative practice, or internal value be helpful to use when responding to stress? If there’s something you’ve found that has helped you feel grounded in the past, write it down on a piece of paper and put it somewhere visible (e.g., next to your bed, on your bathroom mirror). Elements of spirituality, like gratitude and patience, can also help you cope with stress by connecting you to something bigger than yourself.

Self Medicating (Continued)

purposes), taking a medication past its prescribed date, taking an excess dosage than prescribed, or taking medication that was prescribed for another individual. Any time a service member has a positive urinalysis or possesses a substance that they do not have a current prescription for in their medical record, they are in violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) and subject to disciplinary action, including ADSEP processing.

April 22, 2023 is National Prescription Drug Take Back Day. A simple way to find an authorized collection site is to simply type “drug disposal near me” into a Google Maps app or check with your command pharmacy. If there are no collection sites near you, you can dispose of medicine in the trash by mixing it with an unappealing substance such as coffee grounds or cat litter, putting the mixture in a sealed plastic bag, and throwing it away. Delete all personal information on prescription labels before discarding. Flushing medication down the toilet is not recommended because treatment plants are not equipped to remove pharmaceuticals from the wastewater.
EXCEPTIONAL FAMILY MEMBER PROGRAM NOW INCLUDES LEGAL SUPPORT

BY NAVY JAG CORPS PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Do you have an exceptional family member with special needs? If so, you must enroll in the Navy's Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP). EFMP is a vital resource for active-duty service members and their dependents. It provides crucial support during the orders assignment process, ensuring children with disabilities are located in areas with sufficient resources.

EFMP enrollees also have access to free legal services. The Navy Judge Advocate General's (JAG) Corps provides expert advice and distills complex information for families navigating the public education system.

What specific legal services are available? JAG Corps lawyers – who are based around the globe – help EFMP families maintain legal safeguards for their children. These lawyers first interview EFMP families to evaluate their needs, solving any general legal assistance matters. Families facing particular education law-related problems are then referred to a specialized attorney.

These specialized attorneys – who are based in San Diego, Calif. and Hampton Roads, Va. – guide families through educational assessment processes. They ensure a child's Individualized Education Plan – or 504 Plan – meets his or her unique needs, in accordance with the Individuals With Disabilities Act.

The specialized attorneys also host in-person and virtual training sessions to inform EFMP families about special education laws. They offer consultations to California- and Virginia-based families about state and local disability benefits, providing referrals and connections to local organizations. They have strong relationships with regional legal aid and pro bono networks, as well as local court conservatorship and guardianship clinics, in order to better support families.

Military life often includes a great deal of change, impacting every member of a family – but particularly those with special needs. At times of uncertainty, the Navy JAG Corps is always a source of trusted and knowledgeable advice.

EFMP enrollees should speak to their case liaison about available legal services. Those interested in general information should visit a Region Legal Service Office (RLSO). Lawyers at RLSO detachments and branch offices are standing by to provide service members, dependents, Reservists, and retirees with a wide range of legal assistance.

Visit https://www.jag.navy.mil/legal_services/legal_services_locator_rlso.htm to find the RLSO nearest you.
NOMINATIONS SOUGHT FOR NATIONAL BLACKS IN GOVERNMENT (BIG) MILITARY MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARD

National Blacks In Government (BIG) is one of the Department of Defense (DoD)'s diversity affinity groups and is accepting nominations for National Blacks In Government Military Meritorious Service Award.

The BIG Military Meritorious Service Award honors all military service members or Department of Defense (DoD) civilian employees, men, and women, who have supported the DoD mission, overseas contingency operations, or whose attributes best epitomized the qualities and core values of their respective Military Service and/or DoD Component.

Those interested in submitting for the award should contact Navy Outreach and Engagement coordinator Ms. Wendy Boler at wendy.d.boler.civ@us.navy.mil. **Submissions must be made by May 31st.**

UPCOMING CCN NAVIGATOR NEWSLETTER CHANGES

April will be the last issue of the CCN Navigator newsletter in its current form. The Navy Culture and Force Resilience Office (OPNAV N17) is streamlining efforts, so the May 2023 issue of the newsletter will be a 2-page briefing of the most important updates from N17, with links to learn more. Stay tuned!