



COMMUNICATING INFORMATION AND RESOURCES



Say Goodnight to the Ghosts of Holiday Stress and Forge New Traditions

By Christy Forsling, CNRNW Gold Star Coordinator

In Charles Dickens' classic story "A Christmas Carol," we are introduced to Ebenezer Scrooge, a tight-fisted miser who often utters the catchphrase, "Bah! Humbug!" in reference to the holiday season. Jacob Marley, Scrooge's deceased business partner, visits him one ghostly night to warn him away from the perils of a life lived for greed and to tell him that he will be visited by three ghosts. Through the course of the story, Scrooge is visited by the ghost of the past, the ghost of the present and the ghost of the future; each has a message for him.

Dickens' reason for writing a holiday ghost story is simple; he wanted us to examine how our choices and thoughts can create a new future for us. The holiday season is filled with festivities, feasting and family, but it can also be filled with crisis, loneliness and stress. The hustle and bustle of this season can be tough on our body, mind and soul. When it comes to managing stress, our perceptions about an event will determine the consequent emotions and behaviors. We can get swept away by the high emotional demands of the season, or we can practice changing our thoughts and actions to manage our stress level in a healthy manner.

Make peace with the past

The ghost of Christmas past helped Scrooge understand how patterns had formed in his life and highlighted the need for new thoughts and perspectives. A first step toward making peace with the past is to reflect on a past situation, and assess one thing we cannot change and one thing we can change about that situation. We can also determine one action to take today to become proactive in changing the future. By looking at the past and making peace with it, Scrooge changed the ultimate outcome of the story. When we properly identify things that are out of our control, our expectations become a more accurate reflection of reality, and our stress level adjusts accordingly.

Transform negative thinking

At the beginning of the story, Scrooge had some very definite ideas about the holiday season and his place in it. When he was challenged by the ghost of Christmas present to change his beliefs, he was able to engage the holidays in a fresh new way. This is the challenge for us as well. Transforming negative thinking is all about challenging automatic negative thoughts and replacing them with positive, truthful thoughts. These thoughts, in turn, create the possibility for new perspectives and an optimistic outlook on life. Instead of telling yourself the negative side of a person or event, try reforming the statement as a positive affirmation. This will change your perspective and allow you to see things from a different angle.

Forge new traditions

At the end of "A Christmas Carol," Ebenezer Scrooge is a different man. He addresses his neighbors, relatives and employee in an entirely new way; his actions and attitude are transformed. He embraces the opportunity to show gratitude and to serve others. Entering the holiday season with new actions and thoughts brings a fresh perspective. By forging new traditions, we create a new frame of reference for ourselves and that helps to reduce our stress. A new tradition can be something as simple as watching a holiday video, baking cookies for your neighbors, visiting an elderly care facility or volunteering at the local food bank. When you make peace with the past, transform your negative thoughts and forge new traditions, you become an active participant in holiday stress reduction.

Spotlight on Resources: Gold Star Youth Mentorship Programs

wear blue Gold Star Youth Program Helps Kids Through Mentorship, Run Training

The wear blue Gold Star Youth Program is a community impact program benefiting children of fallen service members. Wear blue: run to remember is dedicated to pairing each registered Gold Star child with a military mentor, who will provide the youth a glimpse into the life of service that defined his or her fallen parent, while participating together in the life-affirming action of running. This positive relationship and living memorial will help promote continued healing and growth. The program currently operates for families in the Joint Base Lewis McChord, Fort Bragg and San Antonio regions.

Active-duty service members are encouraged to invest in the community by meaningfully supporting the Gold Star children mentoring program. By pledging to provide this needed mentorship, wear blue commits to provide training plans, guidance, education, and the wear blue community to ensure a successful partnership between the service member and the Gold Star child.

The wear blue Gold Star Youth Program is designed as a multi-month mentorship and run training program. After careful screening, currently serving members of our armed forces are paired with a Gold Star youth. The participating children range in ages from 6 to 16 years old. The program requires a commitment from mentors and youth every Saturday in the spring. The specific start dates vary by location at established weekly wear blue community runs. The weekly runs follow a prescribed training plan, culminating in a special Memorial Day Weekend and Heroes' Hike. Gold Star youth receive technical running shoes and gear, and both youth and mentors receive personalized wear blue: run to remember training shirts.

On Memorial Day, the mentor's training and guidance will allow the Gold Star child to proudly participate with athletes and honored guests at wear blue's annual Memorial Day run. On the Saturday following Memorial Day, the mentor and Gold Star youth will participate in a special Heroes' Hike, joined by family members and a special guest speaker. It will be a meaningful day to celebrate and remember our Gold Star families as well as all of our nation's fallen heroes.

Spring 2020 program applications are now being accepted. The application deadline is Feb. 1, 2020. Visit wearblueruntoremember.org for more information.



Operation Bigs of Hampton Roads Provides Mentors

Operation Bigs, a program of Big Brothers Big Sisters, is a one-on-one mentoring program serving the children of active-duty, veteran, Gold Star and wounded service members by offering them mentors who can provide an added layer of support through deployment, transition or loss, while promoting continued healing and growth. Together, the Navy Gold Star Program and Big Brothers Big Sisters are committed to defending the potential of our Gold Star littles.

The Gold Star child must be in grades 6 through 8 in the upcoming school year, and be a family member of an active duty, retired, veteran, wounded, ill, or fallen military hero. If you are interested in learning more about the Operation Bigs Gold Star Kids Mentoring Program of Hampton Roads, call Sylvia Muller at 757-392-5155.

The Gold Star Youth Mentorship Program
Connecting currently-serving military with children of fallen service members

Register at wearblueruntoremember.org



Navy Gold Star Program Hosts Holiday Memorial Tree Campaign

By Lisa Bauch, Navy Gold Star Program Analyst

As the holiday season approaches, we encourage everyone to remember our fallen and their Gold Star families. The holidays can be a difficult time for Gold Star families grieving the loss of a loved one. Your Navy family would like to extend our warmest thoughts and best wishes for a wonderful holiday season and a very happy new year to all of our Gold Star families. Our fallen heroes and Gold Star families will never be forgotten.

Each year, the Navy Gold Star Program honors our fallen by decorating holiday trees around our communities with ornaments bearing the names of these service members. Holiday memorial trees create a place for the community to remember and publicly say “thank you.” Family members are invited to contribute to any memorial tree they wish by sending us the name of their loved one and even a favorite photo.

Many of our locations are hosting decorating events and would love to have you attend! To find out more about any of our participating locations or events, contact the coordinator in charge of the location or reach out to your closest Navy Gold Star coordinator.

Participating Locations:

NAS Oceana Fleet and Family Support Center, Virginia Beach, Va.
POC: Heather.L.Kuhn@navy.mil; 757-492-8282

NSA Great Lakes Fleet and Family Support Center, Great lakes, Ill.
POC: Julie.Boesel@navy.mil; 847-688-3603, ext. 127

NSA Mid-South Fleet and Family Support Center, Millington, Tenn.
POC: Diana.Burleson@navy.mil; 901-874-5017

NCB Gulfport Fleet and Family Support Center, Gulfport, Miss.
POC: Emily.Kolenda@navy.mil; 228-871-4569

NAS Jacksonville Navy Exchange (NEX), Jacksonville, Fla.
POC: Jamie.Banther@navy.mil; 904-542-5706

NB Point Loma Commanding Officer's Building Lobby, San Diego, Calif.
POC: Catherine.Spence@navy.mil; 619-767-7225

For the following locations, contact:

Stanford.L.Parks@navy.mil; 805-982-6018:

NAVBASE Ventura County- Point Mugu, Calif.
(FFSC and Flightline Café)

NAVBASE Ventura County - Port Hueneme, Calif.
(FFSC, Navy Exchange, 19th Hole Grill, and Bard Mansion)

Pacific View Mall, Ventura County, Calif.

Camarillo Library, Camarillo, Calif.

Oxnard College, Oxnard, Calif.

Soule Park, Ojai, Calif

Ronald Reagan Library, Simi Valley, Calif.



The Power of Gratitude

By Susanna Del Llano, NAS Corpus Christi Gold Star Coordinator

In September, many of our Gold Star families were able to attend a Bells Across America for Fallen Service Members ceremony hosted on one of our military installations. This annual event is a small way that the Gold Star Program, as well as Navy installations, show the families of the fallen how grateful we are for their sacrifices.

You probably know what being grateful means, right? The accurate definition of the word grateful, according to Merriam-Webster's dictionary, is "appreciative of benefits received, expressing gratitude, affording pleasure or contentment, pleasing by reason of comfort supplied or discomfort alleviated." The act of being grateful is a social emotion that strengthens relationships. Its roots run deep in evolutionary history - emanating from the survival value of helping others and being helped in return.

This is the time of year when "What are you grateful for?" may be asked of us. For many, this may be a challenging question to respond to. It may not be the challenging question that upsets you, but how you perceive the question. The next time you find yourself complaining about life's hassles, see if you can mentally "flip the switch" to frame things differently. "In positive psychology research, gratitude is strongly and consistently associated with greater happiness. Gratitude helps people feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve their health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships" (www.health.harvard.edu).

Gratitude in its most simplistic form is defined by your attitude toward both the outside world and yourself. Having gratitude may be one of the most overlooked tools that we all have access to every day. Research suggests it is not about how much gratitude you have, but how you feel about what you have that may make the difference. It is a healing and supportive emotion, too. If you are struggling with family issues, stressful travel or disappointments, the practice of gratitude can help you through. Gratitude also reduces the lifetime risk for depression, anxiety and substance abuse disorders, and it helps people entangled with those and other problems to heal and find closure. It can give you a deep and steadfast trust that goodness exists, even in the face of uncertainty or suffering.

If you are having a difficult time fostering gratitude, maybe trying a few of these suggestions might help:

- *Keep a journal or in some way note the big and little joys of daily life.*
- *Write down three good things - identify three things that have gone well for you and identify the cause.*
- *Write thank you notes to others.*
- *Think about people who have inspired you and what about them was most significant.*
- *Engage in "mental subtraction." Imagine what your life would be like if some positive event had not occurred.*

Experiencing gratitude in the present makes us more likely to remember positive memories and actually transforms some of our neutral or even negative memories into positive ones. It makes us more resilient to trauma and stressful events. For those families that attended a Bells Across America for Fallen Service Members ceremony, we can only imagine the stress you were feeling. However, if you were a family who was able to attend a ceremony this year, we hope you were able to see and feel the gratitude the coordinators, participants and attendees have for you and your family. This holiday season, we are grateful to the Gold Star families we support. We will always remember and honor your sacrifices.





The Terrible Tuesday

By Devita Bishundat, Sister of PO2 Kris Romeo Bishundat

As I woke up one Tuesday morning after a long night of dancing, I thought I would wake up to my normal routine – getting up 15 minutes before class, just enough time to take a shower and grab a bite to eat before the long haul to English class. This particular morning was quite different. It changed my life.

After I got out of bed, my roommate was still sleeping, so I proceeded to walk to the end of the hall to my friend Ericka's room. As I walked down the hall, I heard the blaring noise from televisions and noticed that many of the doors to the dorms were open. I thought that this was particularly strange, because usually at 11 o'clock during the day, everyone is at class. I walked to Ericka's room and asked her what all the ruckus was about and why everyone's television was on. She responded, "You haven't heard. Two planes crashed into each of the World Trade Center towers and a plane crashed into the Pentagon." My first reaction to all of this was, "Did my brother go to work?" He started working at the Pentagon three months ago and worked on a shift schedule. I rushed to the telephone to call my mother to find out if my brother had gone to work that morning. At first, I could not get through to her due to the circuits being busy in Washington, D.C. I tried to use my cellular phone, but no cellular phones were working. I then decided to try someone else's phone and got through. My brother, Romeo, had talked to mom at 8:20 that morning, about an hour and a half before the plane dove into the Pentagon. He called from work, which was odd for him. He told my mother that my sister had left him lunch and he wanted to say how much he appreciated it.

All of this shocked me, and the uncertainty of it all kept me in complete dismay all day. I sat in my dorm room and watched the news, waiting for the phone to ring and hoping that my brother called to say that he was alive. I could not let my eyes leave the television. Maybe I would see my brother helping outside the Pentagon. I kept hope in my mind that the reason he could not call us to let us know he was okay was due to the downing of all the phone lines in D.C. I paced around my room, down the hall, and, as dawn was approaching, I grew nauseous knowing that so

much time had passed. The firefighters were still trying to extinguish the fires made by the jumbo-jet plane, and the chance of there being survivors diminished by the second.

I received a phone call around 8 p.m. It was my sister. She told me to pack my bags; she was on her way to come and get me. I asked her if she heard any news, but she had not. The ride home was quite quiet. I did not want to go home expecting to hear the worst – that my brother was dead. When I arrived home, there were over 30 people at my house – friends, family and my brother's crew. Everyone was in total shock because his 24th birthday was three days after the terrible Tuesday.

We learned later that night that my brother was one of the seven who were "officially missing" in his division. As the days passed, no new news arrived. We sat in agony for 11 days until we received the news that Romeo's body had been identified.

It brings a type of closure knowing that he is resting in peace. Even though he is not physically with me today, his memories and smile will always be in my heart. We keep Romeo's legacy alive through an annual 9/11 Walk/Run at Thomas Stone High School in Waldorf, Maryland. Not only do we get the chance to honor him, we are giving back to other students with a scholarship in Romeo's name.





Simplify the Holidays

By Christy Forsling, CNRNW Gold Star Coordinator

If you're anything like me, life is already too busy and the thought of holiday preparation brings a groan. Don't get me wrong. I love the holidays, but the shopping, wrapping, cooking, decorating, traveling, etc., stresses me out. Once it's all done, I then collapse and try to enjoy it. This leads me to wonder if all of the preparation is worth the stress. Here are some ways you can simplify the holidays and have more reserve energy for the time you spend with your loved ones.

Prioritize

There is just so much to do; step back and decide what are "must-haves" and "nice-to-haves." Next, decide if the nice-to-haves are truly necessary. Can you live without decorating the whole house this year? Do you really need to prepare the entire dinner for your guests, or can you potluck it? Do you have to bake all 15 varieties of holiday cookies, or can you settle on two? It's hard to pull back and not do the things you have always done, but you need to decide where your limits are to help reduce your stress level. You can reevaluate your decision year-to-year, and depending on your circumstances, add some of the nice-to-haves back in. Believe me, people will more appreciate and remember spending wonderful moments with someone who is less stressed than eating the latest variety of baked goods.

Rethink the gifts

For many of us, getting the right gifts is our major stressor. We often spend part of November and the entire month of December shopping for the perfect gift, which might not be that perfect after all. Giving gifts is a wonderful way to show someone that you care, but think of the time

and expense that we put into giving "things." Is it really worth it? What would happen if you decided not to give gifts this year and instead devoted that time to family? Instead of fighting our way through the shopping malls, we could spend that time together playing games, watching a movie, creating a craft project, or volunteering time with those less fortunate.

Maybe you aren't ready to stop the gift giving altogether; you can still decide to limit the number of gifts and give your loved ones some awesome experiences rather than things. For example, treat them to a class they've always wanted to take, a great dinner or a trip to a museum. Time together is a gift that is priceless and is sometimes much more memorable than the things we buy!

Quiet the calendar

Parties, dinners, travel, school functions, community events, church festivities - who has time for them all? Additionally, with each event there is usually a gift to bring and a potluck item to cook. Relook at all of the events and choose carefully. Try to focus in on a few and then make those events matter. When we're running around and highly stressed, it's hard to focus on the here and now. Limiting how much you are trying to do will help you truly engage in the present moment. Give yourself and your family a break and make the most out of the few important festivities you attend.

Pay attention to the magic

On a regular basis, we move excessively fast and do not have the opportunity to stop and pay attention to those small details that make us smile, or what I call magic. Do you stop and take in a compliment that someone just gave you and relish that for a few seconds? Do you notice a child smiling at you, or your family sitting peacefully at dinner sharing their day? There is so much joy we have in our lives that most of us don't pay attention to because we think of it as "normal." Meanwhile, give us one negative experience (when a shopper elbowed us in the store, or we can't find a parking space at the mall), and boy can we focus on that and talk about it for days. Is that really what you want to pay attention to? Practice stopping and appreciating those small, wonderful joys that pop up on a daily basis. Paying attention to the magic will help you slow down and focus on those moments that make the holidays magical!

The holidays are a wonderful time of the year - a time to share with family and friends. Take some time now to decide how you want to spend the holidays, and make some changes that will help you cultivate positive energy and memories that will last a lifetime.

Chaplain's Corner: Celebrating the Winter Holidays and Remembering Simpler Times in 2019

By CNIC Force Chaplain's Office

As we enter the 2019 holiday season, our senses are bombarded with memories from the past. Predictably, as one grows older, it becomes more difficult to recall the very first memory of family and friends gathering for a winter holiday celebration. Predictably, we cannot avoid the memory triggers – the smell of favorite foods, the taste of favorite beverages, images seared in our minds of favorite relatives joining us at an annual common meeting place. Maybe that place was your grandparents' farm, or it was Uncle Joe's Pub, closed after hours and prepped just for the family and friends gathering there.

Celebrating the winter holidays practically sets the stage for us to remember when times were simpler. What were the simpler times like for you? Do you have joyful memories or sad recollections of times that you would rather not think much about? For most of us, the memories begin at the beginning – kind of like a “leaf blowing in the wind thought” that you can best peg as an event that happened when you were five or six years old. There is a happy-sad rhythm to thinking about bygone days centered on the winter holidays. A few of us have no thoughts that are emotionally neutral – just the dire opposites – either great joy or great sadness. The annoying problem with memories of the winter holidays is that our frame of reference holds frozen images captured through the lens of our childhood. For instance, the family homestead is not nearly as large now as it looked when we were five years old. Everything that appeared big at the time is now dwarfed by the passage of time and fading memories that may not be factually on point.

What was your very first thought when you read the title of this article, “Celebrating the Winter Holidays and Remembering Simpler Times”? No doubt, the first memory that pops up is linked to some type of blessing – a moment that touched you deeply and affirmed you. And the music for the seasons! The wonderful vocals of Bing Crosby, Nat King Cole, Mariah Carey, or Michael Jackson. There are so many holiday tunes that powerfully deliver us to that nostalgic place full of wonderment, longing or pure relief that those days are bygone.

Here is the good news! “Celebrating the Winter Holidays and Remembering Simpler Times” in 2019 can be whatever we want it to be. Here are a few powerful actions we can take for this year's celebrations: (1) Count the blessings of family and friends who truly treasure you, and take the time to tell at least one of them how much you appreciate their presence



in your life; (2) Celebrate the loss of those who have transitioned to eternity. We had the pleasure and joy of loving these dear souls unconditionally. Take time to remind yourself that you are to someone what you miss in your loved ones; and (3) Know that triggers will arise and take us places where we would rather not linger or to places where we would rather not leave. For either emotional state we may find ourselves in, once the emotions overshadow us, do as a threatened swimmer would in a riptide. Calmly release resistance and go with the current's flow, which always runs parallel to the shoreline. Once we sense the riptide's energy dissipate, then, and only then, are we free to turn and make it safely back ashore.

Here is the very good news! This is what awaits us when we are “safely ashore” in 2019: We get a chance to make new memories that will be as lasting for some in our love circle as our thoughts have been as we read this article! Blessings!

Life is worth living!

Click here for your lifeline.

1-800-273-TALK
(8255 Option 1)

Prevent Suicide

Suicide Awareness

Suicide is a serious concern in military communities; service members and their families deal with a great number of stressors. You can help reduce the risk of suicide. Pay attention to those around you – or reach out to talk to someone if you feel you can't cope.

Navy Gold Star Program Directory

Name	Phone	Address*
NAVY REGION SOUTHWEST REGIONAL COORDINATOR	619-532-2886	FFSP / 937 N HARBOR DR BOX 53 SAN DIEGO CA 92132-0058
NB VENTURA COUNTY INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	805-982-6018	FFSC / 1000 23RD AVE BLDG 1169 CODE N91 PORT HUENEME CA 93041
NAVBASE CORONADO INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	619-767-7225	FFSC / BUILDING G SAUFLEY RD SAN DIEGO CA 92135-7138
NB SAN DIEGO INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	619-556-2190	NB SAN DIEGO FFSC 3005 CORBINA ALLEY STE 1 BLDG 259 SAN DIEGO CA 92136-5190
NAVY REGION NORTHWEST REGIONAL COORDINATOR	360-396-2708	FFSC / 610 DOWELL ST BLDG 35 KEYPORT WA 98345
SMOKEY POINT SUPPORT COMPLEX INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	425-304-3721	SMOKEY POINT SUPPORT COMPLEX 13910 45TH AVE NE SUITE 857 MARYSVILLE WA 98271
NAVY REGION SOUTHEAST REGIONAL COORDINATOR	904-542-5712	FFSC / BLDG 919 LANGLEY ST NAS JACKSONVILLE FL 32212-0102
NAS JACKSONVILLE INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	904-542-5706	FFSC / 554 CHILD ST NAS JACKSONVILLE FL 32212
NSA MID-SOUTH INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	901-874-5017	FFSC / 5722 INTEGRITY DR BLDG 456 MILLINGTON TN 38054-5045
NCBC GULFPORT INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	228-871-4569	FFSC / 5301 SNEAD ST GULFPORT MS 39501-5001
NAS CORPUS CHRISTI INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	361-961-1675	FFSC / 11001 D ST CORPUS CHRISTI TX 78419-5021
NAVAL DISTRICT WASHINGTON REGIONAL COORDINATOR	202-433-3059	FFSC / 2691 MITSCHER RD SW BLDG 414 WASHINGTON DC 20373
NAVAL DISTRICT WASHINGTON INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	202-685-1909	FFSC / 2691 MITSCHER RD SW BLDG 414 WASHINGTON DC 20373
NAVY REGION MID-ATLANTIC REGIONAL COORDINATOR	757-445-3073	FFSC / 7928 14TH ST SUITE 209 NORFOLK VA 23505-1219
NWS EARLE INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	732-866-2110	FFSC / 201 RT 34 BLDG C59 COLTS NECK NJ 07722
NAVSTA GREAT LAKES INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	847-688-3603 ext 127	FFSC / 525 FARRAGUT AVE STE 300 BLDG 26 GREAT LAKES IL 60088
NB NORFOLK INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	757-322-9182	FFSC / 7928 14TH ST SUITE 102 NORFOLK VA 23505-1219
SUBASE NEW LONDON INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	860-694-1257	FFSC / BLDG 83 BOX 93 GROTON CT 06349-5093
NAS OCEANA INSTALLATION COORDINATOR	757-492-8282	2073 TARTAR AVENUE, BUILDING 585, FFSC AT DAM NECK ANNEX, VIRGINIA BEACH, VA 23461-1917

*When communicating with your coordinator via mail, please add NAVY GOLD STAR PROGRAM and contact column info to all mailing addresses to ensure delivery.