



In FOCUS

Newsletter

Issue 8
February, 2015



**FMF Chairman
Walt Suhre**

Happy 2015 to All!

I hope your 2015 is off to a great start. Our last FOCUS Course for 2014 brought us 34 additional participants which increased to 405 the total number of FOCUS graduates since we started in March 2010!! Amazing --- the opportunities we've had to help influence so many lives. What a pleasure it has been and what terrific relationships we've established. Thank you for sharing with us.

In the last two issues of *InFOCUS*, we've reviewed the first two of the three SMART Goals you were assigned during your FOCUS Course – First, to positively affect a relationship and secondly, to establish a goal for self-improvement. And remember that your goals must not be vague, unrealistic or somewhere out in the indefinite future. They must be **S-M-A-R-T** goals: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, [in-volve] Risk and [be reasonably] Time [specific]. Recall the old adage: "How do you eat an elephant? --- One bite at a time."

Having [hopefully] achieved your first two goals, let's review the third one assigned: To volunteer your time and talents. To do something



FOCUS December 2014

The December 2014 FOCUS Class was a tremendous success! 34 Marines, Corpsmen and Sailors from across the country had the opportunity to meet fellow warriors and work together to acquire new tools to move forward, and determine the next steps in their lives.

Participants settled in to their new surroundings with a question and answer session with NMCRS nurses and WWR DISCs, an introduction to therapeutic horsemanship, a relaxation session, and a variety of other activities. From there, a series of instructors led the class through programs and exercises to help determine where they've been, where they are, and where they want to be.

Inspirational speakers from various walks of life, including our FOCUS regulars John O'Leary and GySgt Nick Popaditch, inspired the service men and women with their own stories of surviving overwhelming odds. In addition, we were privileged to have Col. Shane Tomko, Commanding Officer of the Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiment, speak on Wednesday evening to encourage our Marines to be resilient and follow his "SPAM" approach for sustained success and happiness in life.

Each FOCUS class is unique but certain aspects remain constant. Friendships are made, experiences are shared, goals are set, and lives are changed. FOCUS class 14/12, take pride in the fact that you are now FOCUS Marines. You will always find support within the FOCUS family and with your extended fire team – use these resources. More importantly, you are called upon to help your fellow Marines and Corpsmen find their own strength and resolve to attend a FOCUS course.

Walt's Welcome (cont.)

for someone in need or to do something to improve your community. Help a family member, friend or neighbor who is struggling with a difficult task or situation. Volunteer at a food bank to feed the needy. Volunteer at your church. Find a group dedicated to helping inner-city children academically. Visit the hospitalized or those in elder-care facilities. Be a companion; break the endless monotony they face. Read to them. Share mutual interests – music, art, history, sports, whatever. You have much to share and limitless opportunities to serve again in some capacity.

Helping others is one of the great opportunities in life. Not only does the recipient benefit, the contributor also benefits, often exponentially. I assure you that the pleasure and satisfaction that I personally gain from serving you through FOCUS Marines Foundation far exceeds the efforts that I make. And you can be certain that every FMF Board member, every Team Leader, every staff member, and every other volunteer feels exactly the same.

Now set that last SMART goal and get busy achieving it. You will quickly realize the satisfaction of which I speak and will enjoy a lifetime commitment to helping others less fortunate.

Semper Fi,
Walt



NMCRS Combat Casualty Nurses
Donna, Sue, Tammy, Kim

Building Your Resilience

Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress – such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems, or workplace and financial stressors. Resilience is not a trait that people either have or do not have. It involves behaviors, thoughts and actions that anyone can learn and develop.

Developing your resilience is a personal journey. An approach to building resilience that works well for one person might not work for another. People use varying strategies. Some variation may reflect cultural differences. For example, an individual's culture might have an impact on whether and how he or she connects with others and communicates feelings.

The following pointers may be helpful to consider in developing your own strategy for building resilience.

Make Connections

Good relationships with close family members, friends, or others are important. Accepting help and support from those who care about you and will listen to you strengthens resilience. Some people find that being active in civic groups, faith-based organizations or other local groups provides social support and can help with reclaiming hope. Assisting others in their time of need can also benefit the helper.

Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems

You can't change the fact that highly stressful events happen, but you can change how you interpret and respond to these events. Try looking beyond the present to how future circumstances may be a little better. Note any subtle ways in which you might already feel somewhat better as you deal with difficult situations.

Accept that change is a part of living

Certain goals may no longer be attainable as a result of adverse situations. Accepting circumstances that cannot be changed can help you focus on circumstances that you can alter.

Cont. Pg. 3 "Nurses Corner"

"Nurses Corner"

(Cont. from Page 2)

Move toward your goals

Think about possible solutions to the problems you are facing and decide what realistic goals you want to achieve. Do something regularly – even if it seems like a small accomplishment – that enables you to move forward. Focus away from tasks that seem unachievable. Instead, ask yourself, "What's one thing I know I can accomplish today that helps me move in the direction I want to go?"

Many people find it helpful to track their progress by making a record of any accomplishment that moves them toward their goals. It is important to spend a moment reflecting on the fact that you are taking action and achieving what you believe you need to do.

Take decisive actions

Act on adverse situations as much as you can. Take decisive actions, rather than detaching from problems and stresses and wishing they would just go away. Being active instead of passive helps people more effectively manage adversity.

Reduce stress and negative feelings

Following a stressful event, many people feel they need to turn away from the negative thoughts and feelings they are experiencing. Positive distractions such as exercising, going to a movie or reading a book can help renew you so you can re-focus on meeting challenges in your life. Avoid numbing your unpleasant feelings with alcohol or drugs.

Look for opportunities for self-discovery

People often learn something about themselves and may find that they have grown in some respect as a result of their struggle with loss. Many people who have experienced tragedies and hardship have reported better relationships, greater sense of strength even while feeling vulnerable, increased sense of self-worth, a more developed spirituality and heightened appreciation for life.

Keep things in perspective

Even when facing very painful events, try to consider the stressful situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective. Avoid blowing the event out of proportion. Strong emotional reactions to adversity are normal and typically lessen over time.

Maintain a hopeful outlook

An optimistic outlook enables you to expect that good things will happen in your life. Try visualizing what you want, rather than worrying about what you fear. Take care of yourself. Pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Engage in activities that you enjoy and find relaxing and that contribute to good health, including regular exercise and healthy eating. Taking care of yourself helps keep your mind and body primed to deal with situations that require resilience.

Additional ways of strengthening resilience

For example, some people write about their deepest thoughts and feelings related to trauma or other stressful events. Meditation and spiritual practices help some people build connections and restore hope. The key to developing an effective personal strategy is to identify ways of building your resilience that are likely to work for you.

Where to look for help

Getting help when you need it is crucial to building your resilience. Many people turn to family members, friends and others who care about them for the support and encouragement they need.

Self-help and community support groups can aid people struggling with hardships, such as the death of a loved one. By sharing information, ideas and emotions, group participants can assist one another and find comfort in knowing that they are not alone in experiencing difficulty. For many people, using their own resources and getting help from others may be sufficient for building resilience. At times, however, an individual might get stuck or have difficulty making progress on the road to resilience.

A licensed mental health professional such as a psychologist can assist people in developing an appropriate strategy for moving forward. It is important to get professional help if you feel like you are unable to function or perform basic activities of daily living as a result of a traumatic or otherwise stressful life experience.

Different people tend to be comfortable with different styles of interaction. A person should feel at ease and have a good rapport when working with a mental health professional or participating in a support group.



NAVY-MARINE CORPS
RELIEF SOCIETY

FOCUS Lessons Learned “Keeping That FOCUS Feeling”

By
Michael Van Deren
FOCUS Graduate/Mentor

As FOCUS graduates, we all remember getting on the buses Saturday morning on that last day of FOCUS fired up about life and excited to get home to work on our relationships, our anger and anxiety issues, get back in shape, or square our lives away. We leave FOCUS feeling empowered with new tools and a mindset that nothing is out of reach.

The question now is. “... do you still have that feeling today and how do you keep it present in everything you do?” For those of you that can recall, SgtMaj Fogarty asks each class “...what are you doing to stay green?” what’s the one thing you carry to remind you to stay true to our core values - a pin, a USMC hat, a challenge coin, etc. That same principle applies to the FOCUS mindset. It is a choice you have to make daily. If you want to maintain that feeling you had on that Saturday morning leaving FOCUS you need to do something to keep it present in your life.

For me personally, it starts with the picture of the circle and an arrow pointing to a blue star hanging on the back of my door with the question below. “What are you doing to live outside your comfort zone today?” Dan Dorr talks about growth and decay. If you’re not growing, if you’re just marking time and standing still, then you are decaying. Remember the example of the wooden stool on stage? With that in mind I choose to start my day not only to do something new and outside of my comfort zone, but also to make choices that allow me to grow.



Then when I’m at work, with family, running errands, or whatever my day has in store for me I consciously ask myself... “am I handling this situation with a *responsible* or *victim mindset*?” It is far too easy to fall back into bad habits and allow ourselves to do so with a victim mindset. If necessary set a reminder or a note on your desk to keep the question in the front of your mind.

Finally, and I cannot stress this enough, maintain contact with your FOCUS family. You connected with brothers/sisters, team leaders, mentors, and more at FOCUS. You will be amazed at the opportunities if you continue to build upon those relationships. Allow them to hold you accountable to the FOCUS mindset and encourage you with new goals or challenges.

For several months now I have been working with one of the Corpsman that came through FOCUS, and have almost daily conversation with him. I’ve been called out on several occasions and heard him say “you’re being a victim right now” or “have you thought about this from your co-workers viewpoint?” **WE need** consistent contact with someone that can remind us of all the lessons learned at FOCUS. We should challenge each other with tasks or short goals to use the skills learned. My recommendation is to call someone you connected with at FOCUS, not next week, not tomorrow, but right now. Check in on them and see how you can help each other continue to grow and push for that next “Big Blue Star” goal.

S/F!

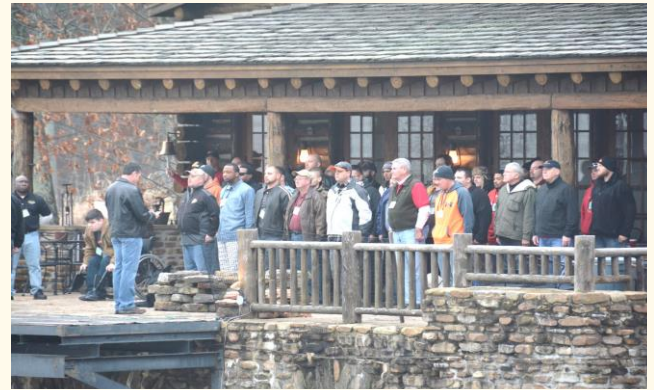
FOCUS at CMC

Focus Marines Foundation received an invitation from the new Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Joseph Dunford, to attend the New Year's Day Reception and Serenade Party at his home in Washington D.C. The historic residence of the Marine Corps commandant on Capitol Hill's Barracks Row is hallowed ground for the nation's Marines. FMF board members John Brauer and Tom Ilges flew to D.C. and attended the party on New Year's Day. Many General staff officers and military supporters from all fields of endeavor were in attendance.

The invitation was the direct result of Colonel Shane Tomko's, CO WWR, belief in our mission. He wanted the Marine Corps top command to become more personally acquainted with our FOCUS program. There was a lot of interest and respect expressed about our mission. John and Tom were well received, and took pride in representing FOCUS and its success.

When they spoke with Gen. Dunford, they quickly realized he was very aware, interested, and supportive of our mission. Many of the other attendees had also heard about FOCUS. In addition to the Generals, John and Tom also made contact with a number of civilians who we believe will strengthen our effectiveness at helping warriors transition to a meaningful and productive civilian life.

To conclude, the Commandant spoke to the assemblage and wished all a Happy New Year and thanked the people who continue to support our Marines making transitions from the military.



Pearl Harbor Memorial Ceremony
FOCUS Dec 2014



Wounded Warrior Regiment Trials



by
Col Shane Tomko
Commanding Officer
Wounded Warrior Regiment, USMC

The Wounded Warrior Regiment will once again hold the Marine Corps Trials at Camp Pendleton, California from 1-12 March. This year the WWR will host 9 different international countries and their Commandant's to view and participate in the games. It was the Marine Corps Trials that served as the reference point for Prince Harry of Great Britain to develop the Invictus Games that were executed in London this last September.

Competition includes: track and field, archery, bicycling, shooting (both pistol and rifle), seated volleyball, wheelchair basketball, and the addition of wheelchair rugby. Wheelchair rugby was introduced at the Invictus Games, and due to overwhelming popularity by the athletes, it has been added to the United States arsenal of team competition.



The Wounded Warrior Regiment continues on at an amazing operational pace as the USMC will be hosting the inaugural DoD Warrior Games right in Quantico, Virginia from 19-30 June. This will be the first year that the games are not controlled or run by the United States Olympic Committee. Due the USMC's ability to expertly run the Trials, it was determined that the Wounded Warrior Regiment be the very first to handle this inter-service competition on behalf of the Department of Defense.

Of course, the WWR's support of the trials and the Warrior Games will be done while simultaneously accomplishing our primary mission of covering the care of all wounded, ill, and injured Marines and sailors in the regiment's population. This is in addition to our outreach to over 30,000 active, reserve and veteran Marines across the globe.

In May 2013, the all-Marine team won the championship title for the fourth consecutive year at the Warrior Games. For more information on the Marine Corps trials and the Warrior Games contact the Wounded Warrior Regiment at wwsports@usmc.mil.



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
WOUNDED WARRIOR REGIMENT



FOCUS Profile Francisco Escobar SSgt, USMC



SSgt Francisco Escobar is a FOCUS Marine from our September 2012 FOCUS session. He was active duty in the USMC from 1999 through 2008, and he epitomized the true character of all Marines by his honor, courage, and commitment.

During his active duty, he was deployed twice to Iraq serving in the War on Terror. However, Francisco's call to action, or "0400 moment", did not come in the mideast combat theater, but on deployment in another far-off "friendly" land.

In 2005 while stationed in Japan, Francisco was honored as "Marine of the Year" in his unit. But also that year, his life took a dramatic turn.

One night while in town, Francisco answered the call of a damsel in distress – a young local girl being attacked by a group of local thugs. The altercation that ensued left him in a coma with severe traumatic brain injury (TBI).

SSgt Escobar awoke from the coma three months later. However, he was a shadow of the young Marine that he was just three months earlier. His TBI was so severe that he could no longer function independently on his own. He required a care-taker to help in his every day activities. He was even assigned as a fiduciary to manage his affairs.

Francisco's heroic fight for recovery had begun.

With the help of the VA and his NMCRS visiting nurse, Francisco began taking steps on the long road to recovery. Included in this journey was his participation in FOCUS.

One of the tasks that we assign all FOCUS participants is the completion of three goals – their SMART goals as eloquently described by Walt, our FMF President, in this and earlier issues of InFOCUS. Francisco defined his SMART goals and began working toward each one systematically even with his TBI. It took a little longer than most – 27 months to be more precise – but Francisco completed his goals and is now moving on to new thresholds with his recovery, and in his life.

Francisco **NEVER** lost the FOCUS mindset. He has displayed the perseverance and resiliency that stands as an extraordinary example for all FOCUS graduates - past, present, and future.

S/F Francisco!

Focus Marines Foundation Upcoming Events

Mar 21 st -28 th	FOCUS	Spring FOCUS Session	Augusta, MO
May 15 th	Fundraiser	FMF Trivia Night	Andre's West, Fenton, MO
May 16 th	Fundraiser	Sailing for Vets	Carlyle Lake
May 25 th	Fundraiser	Chandler Hill 5K/10K Run	Defiance, MO
May 30 th -Jun 6 th	FOCUS	Summer FOCUS Session	Augusta, MO
Jun 29 th	Fundraiser	FMF Golf Tournament	Old Hickory Golf Club
Sep 12 th -19 th	FOCUS	Fall FOCUS Session	Augusta, MO
Oct 5 th	Fundraiser	Gateway Warrior Golf Tournament	St. Albans Golf Club
Nov 7 th -14 th	FOCUS	Winter FOCUS Session	Augusta, MO

For detailed information on any of the FMF upcoming events, please contact our FMF VP of Development, Ted Kretschmar, at... help@mmffocus.org
Or visit our website at www.focusmarines.org



FOCUS December 2014

SCCAD Allin4Life Poker Fund Raising Event



FOCUS Graduate/Mentor J. Vermillion
with
Miss Missouri, Jessica Hartman

Every FOCUS session, you will see the blue uniforms of the St. Charles County Ambulance District. The paramedics of SCCAD volunteer their time to ensure the care of all those that attend FOCUS.

They provide a sense of comfort knowing they are on site and can provide immediate assistance when needed. It doesn't stop there, each session the paramedics cook an amazing meal, bake delicious cookies and give even more of their time and talent.

The generosity of the St. Charles County Ambulance District continued when they held the 4th annual Poker Charity Event benefiting the FOCUS Marines Foundation and Brace for Impact. The event was held on January 31st and drew a large crowd of poker players, Cardinal players past and present, and many FOCUS graduates and board members. It was a fun evening that included poker,

casino tables, and a silent auction. There was something for everyone.

The evening began with speeches from the organizations benefitting from the event. Tom Ilges, a FOCUS Marines Foundation board member, spoke briefly and introduced Matt Garvey. Matt, a graduate of FOCUS, shared with all in attendance the impact FOCUS made on his life. Tom and Matt did an excellent job sharing the vision and experience of FOCUS.

We were grateful to have FOCUS graduates be a part of the poker tournament as well. They were well received and given a standing ovation when it was their time to exit the game.



We cannot express enough our gratitude to this amazing group of paramedics. The gift of their time, talent and generosity truly make an impact on this organization and the men and women we serve.