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COSC CORE CONCEPTS TO SUPPORT COVID-19 RESPONSE

COVID-19 poses a unique challenge for all of us, but the core Combat and Operational Stress Control (COSC) concepts can help Marines manage any difficulties they encounter.

The concepts and tools presented here are pulled from the COSC Doctrine (MCTP 3-30E). Your Operational Stress Control and Readiness (OSCAR) teams know these concepts well and can share them with others.

The Marine Corps directed implementation of OSCAR Generation III in January 2020 (MARADMIN 045/20). The OSCAR Gen III course includes a job aid with a variety of exercises designed to help build stress management skills. Core master trainers can share what they learned during the rollout.

While not a substitute for OSCAR team training, nor the guidance of your unit's COSC Representative per MCO 5351.1, many Marines, Marine leaders, and supporting personnel may find the following concepts and tools helpful.

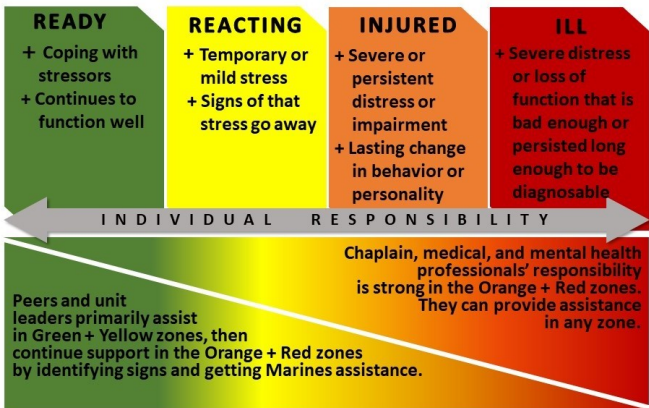
Some ways you may share these resources include but are not limited to:

- Share by email or approved social media platforms
- Print and distribute materials
- Use materials to guide hip pocket discussions or to provide information and support during one-on-one discussions
- Lean into your OSCAR team members for best practices from OSCAR Gen III. The course is evidence- and research-informed.

Our OSCAR teams know how to recognize and respond to the earliest signs of stress—not just in combat, but in operational and garrison situations as well. We are confident OSCAR Teams are trained and ready to respond in moments just like this global pandemic to be a source of calm in a stressful and challenging period that will certainly become a part of our rich Marine Corps history.

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THE STRESS CONTINUUM



- ◆ The Stress Continuum model provides us with a common language to talk about stress.
- ◆ This model helps us identify levels of stress in ourselves, our peers and units. The stress continuum can be used both in combat, in garrison, and in everyday life. One of the main goals is to keep service members in the Green Zone as much as possible and return them to that zone as quickly as possible after leaving it.
- ◆ The gray bar across the continuum illustrates how across the continuum, individuals have a personal responsibility to be accountable and proactively manage their stress.
- ◆ It's our primary responsibility to support fellow Marines in the Green and Yellow Zones, where peer support is effective. We continue peer support in the Orange and Red Zones by identifying signs and getting Marines assistance from experienced professionals. Even at the handoff to a professional, our role doesn't end.
- ◆ Remaining engaged and letting Marines know you are interested in their welfare reinforces a sense of belongingness and aids in their recovery.

GREEN (READY) ZONE

- Good to go
- Prepared
- Sleeping enough
- Well trained
- Fit and tough
- Sense of humor
- Calm and steady
- Eating well
- Good decisions

- ⇒ Keep wellness a priority and work to stay in the “Green Zone.”
- ⇒ Grow your problem-solving and conflict management skills.
- ⇒ Monitor yourself and others (check in often) for signs of distress or loss of function.

If the distress looks **SEVERE OR PERSISTENT**, proceed to Orange Zone.

YELLOW (REACTING) ZONE

- Feeling anxious, sad, or angry
- Cutting corners on the job
- Trouble sleeping
- Withdrawing from friends and family
- Worrying
- Being short-tempered
- Eating too much or too little
- Inability to concentrate

- ⇒ Recognize when you or peers are in the Yellow Zone and take action to return to the Green Zone.
- ⇒ Promote use of peers, family, chain of command, chaplain, MCCS resources, and the [Military Crisis Line](tel:800-273-8255) (800-273-8255, press 1).
- ⇒ Ensure adequate sleep and rest, PT, and nutrition.
- ⇒ Check in—**SAY SOMETHING**—and coordinate if needed.

If the distress looks **SEVERE OR PERSISTENT**, proceed to Orange Zone.

ORANGE (INJURED) ZONE

- More severe or persistent distress or impairment
- Lasting personality change
- Feelings of guilt or shame
- Losing control of emotions or thinking
- Unable to enjoy usual activities
- Difficulty sleeping

- ⇒ Always consider professional help in this zone.
- ⇒ Connect to a chaplain or medical.
- ⇒ The earlier you get help, the higher the possibility you will heal.
- ⇒ Promote positive peer support.
- ⇒ Don't allow Marines to withdraw from others.
- ⇒ Mentor back to full duty and function.
- ⇒ Check in—**SAY SOMETHING**—and coordinate if needed.

If the distress significantly impacts CAREER OR RELATIONSHIPS, proceed to Red Zone.

RED (ILL) ZONE

- Severe distress or loss of function persisting long enough to be diagnosable
- Requires intervention
- Unmanaged symptoms may significantly impact career and family


- ⇒ Check in—**SAY SOMETHING**—and coordinate if needed.
- ⇒ If you think a Marine is in the Red Zone, refer him or her to medical.
- ⇒ Only a qualified medical officer can diagnose disorders.
- ⇒ Follow up and ensure treatment compliance.
- ⇒ If possible, reintegrate with unit and restore to full duty.

FIVE CORE LEADER FUNCTIONS



1. **Strengthen**—Leaders must strengthen their Marines to enable them to successfully endure and master the stressors they face during operational deployments, garrison life, and in their personal lives. Strengthening Marines before exposure to extreme stress can help prevent stress injuries and illnesses. Many of the actions leaders already take to prepare their Marines for their operational duties can also, with only a slight change in focus, strengthen them against stress reactions, injuries, and illnesses. Strengthening for resilience and training for mission accomplishment are two strongly linked responsibilities of leaders.

2. **Mitigate**—Leaders also must mitigate the stress of their Marines to keep them functioning optimally and to prevent the negative effects of stress reactions and stress injuries. The word “mitigate” literally means to reduce in force or intensity. Since no amount of strengthening will make anyone completely immune to stress, the crucial second step for leaders to maintain the psychological health of their units and family members is to reduce the force and intensity of the stressors they experience whenever possible.



3. **Identify**—Identifying means closely monitoring every available indicator of Marines’ functioning and performance to quickly recognize when they need help. Identifying involves more than looking, listening, and feeling for signs of possible breakage or wear—it means anticipating these inevitabilities. Leaders must identify not only the stress reactions, injuries, and illnesses experienced by their Marines, but also the day-to-day stressors they encounter so they can recognize occasions of high risk for stress problems. Whereas strengthening and mitigation are activities to promote primary prevention, the core function of identification makes secondary prevention possible—timely interventions that may prevent small problems from becoming big ones. Leaders need to know how to recognize a Marines’ stress zones and which sources of stress may be most likely to push them further to the right—away from health and readiness—on the stress continuum model.

4. **Treat**—Leaders must ensure that Marines who need help receive assistance from counselors, chaplains, embedded mental health providers (EMHP), and other professionals trained to treat stress issues. Leaders cannot do this important work alone. They must assemble a network that includes Marines trained in Combat and Operational Stress Control (COSC) principles, including Operational Stress Control and Readiness (OSCAR) Team Members, medical and religious ministry Extenders, and EMHPs, and installation behavioral health personnel.

5. **Reintegrate**—Leaders also must ensure that Marines who recover from stress injuries and illnesses do not suffer any stigma or career degradation. Leaders must retain and fully use Marines who have recovered, or are in the process of recovering, from stress injuries and illnesses. For leaders, reintegration includes evaluating and forming judgments about Marines’ psychological fitness and suitability for duty, assigning recovering Marines to duties that make the best use of their capabilities, and changing whatever negative attitudes exist among unit members that might interfere with accepting these individuals back into the unit.

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STRESS FIRST AID TIPS

When a Marine hits the Orange Zone, first aid is needed. Four stressors are most likely to shift someone into Orange:

LIFE THREAT: Sensing extreme danger, which could result in death, to self or others.

LOSS: Grief due to the loss of close comrades, leaders, family members, friends, or other loved ones. This can also include loss of role, functioning, relationships, and values.

INNER CONFLICT: Psychological and emotional conflict that results from acting outside of one's morals or values, from an inability to prevent harm to others, or by contributing to—or not preventing harm—to a fellow Marine. Indications for inner conflict include the words: could've, should've, why me, if only.

WEAR AND TEAR: The result of fatigue and accumulation of prolonged stress, including from non-operational sources, without sufficient rest and restoration.



Use Combat and Operational Stress First Aid (COSFA) to:

- Preserve life
 - Prevent further harm
 - Promote recovery
1. **CHECK:** Watch and listen for unusual stressors, severe distress, and changes in behavior.
 2. **COORDINATE:** Inform chain of command (at least one level up), refer Marine to care provider, and follow up.
 3. **COVER:** Recognize danger posed by or to a stressed person. Neutralize the danger. Keep person safe until he or she recovers.
 4. **CALM:** Help the person relax. Use tactical breathing. Refocus the Marine's thinking.
 5. **CONNECT:** Spend time with Marine; encourage peer support.
 6. **COMPETENCE:** Encourage and mentor Marine back to full function. Retrain if necessary.
 7. **CONFIDENCE:** Offer positive reinforcement as Marine reintegrates with unit. Give the Marine increasing responsibility.

BEFORE THERE IS A CRISIS

- 1** Leaders must know their Marines. Know their strengths and weaknesses. Know the challenges they face at work and at home.
- 2** Recognize when Marine's stress level moves from mild to moderate to severe.
- 3** Ensure your unit has a fully trained Operational Stress Control and Response (OSCAR) team that is ready to respond.
- 4** Check your unit's training records to make sure every Marine has had Unit Marine Awareness and Prevention Integrated Training (UMAPIT).
- 5** Stay in contact with stakeholders: your installation's Behavioral Health staff, your Embedded Preventive Behavioral Health Capability staff, your chaplain, and Navy mental health providers. Read the Combat and Operational Stress Control doctrine (MCTP 3-30E). It contains helpful information.



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