

COMMUNICATING INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

What Do You Do When You Don't Know What To Do?

By Susanna Del Llano, NAS Corpus Christi Gold Star Coordinator

We've all been there: knowing we need to make a choice, but not knowing how or where to turn. When our brain feels clogged with too many options, choosing just one sends us into a panic. When you're stressed, freaking out and can't think straight, it can be hard to see things clearly. We are suffocating in choices, options, possibilities, and what-ifs. A Google Search supplies you with 3,457 results. We live in a world with a lot going on, and not all of it is easy to deal with.

So, what do you do? Here is a list of some resources you can turn to for answers:

Navy Gold Star coordinators are available to provide long-term support, can connect Survivors to support groups and grief and bereavement counselors, provide health benefits milestone management, request copies of documents, and offer information and referral services while providing you a safe and compassionate environment to experience your own unique grief. Gold Star coordinators are located all over the United States. For contact information on a Gold Star coordinator near you, visit <https://www.navygoldstar.com/locations> and click on your area on the map. Call 1-888-509-8759 for additional information.

Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) oversees payments to Survivors of Department of Defense

personnel. Visit www.dfas.mil or call 1-888-332-7411 for customer service.

Department of Veterans Affairs provides dedicated and comprehensive support to Survivors and dependents of deceased veterans and members of the armed services. Visit www.vba.va.gov/benefits/ or call 1-800-827-1000 for benefits questions.

TRICARE is the health care program for uniformed service members, retirees and their families. Visit www.tricare.mil or call 1-866-773-0404 for more information.

Navy Long-Term Assistance Program (LTAP) provides extended assistance regarding benefits to survivors of Sailors who die while on active duty, including the Reserve component. Visit www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/support/casualty/ltap/Pages/default2.aspx or call 1-866-827-5672 for assistance.

You don't have to do this alone. Assistance is available. All you need to do is take the first step and ask. You've got this!



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Navy Gold Star Program
716 Sicard Street SE Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20374
Phone: 1-888-509-8759

www.navygoldstar.com

1-888-509-8759



NavyGoldStar

Disclaimer: It is the mission of the Navy Gold Star Program to provide Survivors with information on resources available to them. Survivor's Link is one of several tools used to accomplish that mission and from time to time will include information (including phone numbers and websites) for various non-governmental resources. The Department of the Navy does not warrant or endorse these entities, products or services.

Serenity Is What We All Need

By CNIC Force Chaplain's Office

Serenity is a noun that captures a state of being – calm, peaceful, untroubled, poise, aplomb. Serenity is what we all need.

There are three key elements of serenity: relax, relate, release.

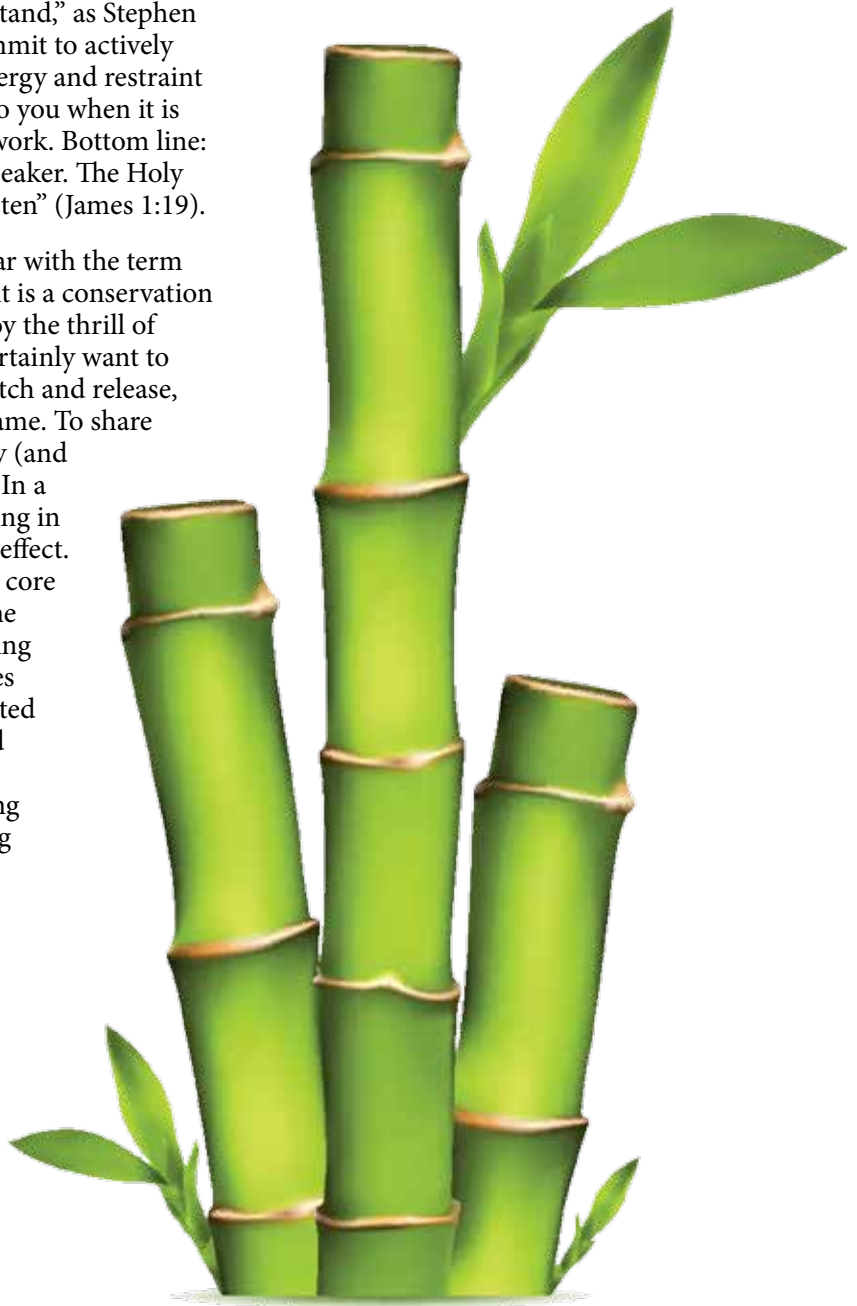
Relax: How often do you find yourself reacting to circumstances instead of just relaxing? Relaxing can be simply counting to 10 before responding to someone or something. Relaxing is whatever process you choose to restrain yourself from responding immediately to nonsense unfolding before you. Some call it “the pregnant pause” – you have experienced it before – seconds ticking like hours, and people are awaiting your verbal or even nonverbal response. Instead, you take the time to ponder the situation. You allow silence to be your words. You live in the moment. You sense their anxiety, but that does not spur you to rescue them from that anxiety. This is a powerful technique. You are giving yourself space to take in what is unfolding in that very moment.

Relate: Relaxing, in this context, fluidly leads to relating. When one responds in silence, it provides emotional space to gain understanding. Understanding of what? Understanding of a person or of a circumstance. You actually facilitate a gift for yourself and for others – “seeking first to understand,” as Stephen Covey would ascribe. A relational secret: If you commit to actively listening, as risky as it sounds, the investment of energy and restraint will return in dividends to you. Others will attend to you when it is your turn to seek out a listening ear. Try it. It does work. Bottom line: The more we listen, the easier it is to relate to the speaker. The Holy Bible counsels us, “Be slow to speak and quick to listen” (James 1:19).

Release: Avid fans of recreational fishing are familiar with the term “catch and release.” For those who are not familiar, it is a conservation technique. Using hooks with no barbs, one can enjoy the thrill of the catch without harming the fish. Practitioners certainly want to experience the chase and the catch. In practicing catch and release, fishing fans also make way for others to enjoy the same. To share the joy, the “big catch” is photographed for posterity (and bragging rights), but the fish is released unharmed. In a similar fashion, this practice of no barbs and releasing in our emotional and spiritual lives provides a similar effect. However, it is safe to say that one can be hurt to the core by negative things and negative people. How can one release and find joy after emotional trauma? Releasing can be a slow process. That slow process underscores the value of having a support group or circle of trusted individuals who indeed love us unconditionally and desire the best for us. Ultimately, releasing brings freedom to us all – in every facet of our lives. Healing from emotional and spiritual trauma requires taking one day at a time.

After relaxing, relating and releasing, what does one gain? The answer is a formula: relax+relate+release=serenity. Serenity is what we all need.

The great theologian Reinhold Niebuhr captures serenity in a famous prayer: “God grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”





Bells Across America for Fallen Service Members

By Stephanie Hunter, Navy Gold Star Program Analyst

The Navy Gold Star Program, in coordination with Navy installations across the country, will host the 4th Annual Bells Across America for Fallen Service Members ceremony on Sept. 26. The event is held in association with Gold Star Mother's and Family Day, which is celebrated each year on the last Sunday in September.

Bells have been used for centuries by the Navy for timekeeping, safety and communication, to sound alarms, in ceremonies and events, and to signal the presence of important persons. However, during these ceremonies, the bells rung will not signal anyone's presence; instead, they will toll in their absence.

Bells Across America provides service members, Survivors and members of the community an opportunity to

commemorate the life and service of those who died while on active duty. The primary focus and mission of the Navy Gold Star Program is to provide an unprecedented level of service and commitment to our Navy Gold Star families. Bells Across America is one way the Navy recognizes the sacrifices of our fallen heroes and the Gold Star families left behind.

If you are a Gold Star family member and would like to ensure that your loved one is honored at a ceremony or for more information about a ceremony near you, please call your local Navy Gold Star coordinator, or send a message to www.facebook.com/navygoldstar or www.navygoldstar.com.

Veteran Tickets Foundation Gives Back to Military and Families

From vettix.org

The Veteran Tickets Foundation (Vet Tix) is a national non-profit, non-governmental organization that enriches the lives of our military personnel, veterans and Gold Star families by providing free and discounted tickets to sporting events, concerts and family activities. These events are a real gift of gratitude to honor our veterans' service, while providing essential community re-integration and family bonding opportunities.

Vet Tix teams up with major sports teams, leagues, promoters, organizations, venues, and ticket holders to provide free and discounted tickets to more than 21 million military personnel and veterans. Military personnel and honorably discharged veterans from all service branches, and the immediate families of those killed in action, are eligible for tickets.

The Veteran Tickets Foundation also has a program called "Hero's Wish." This program is open to all recently deployed active-duty personnel, severely wounded personnel and Gold Star families of those killed in action. The program allows eligible members to request a one-time dream event, such as a trip to Disneyland. These events allow families to spend time together in moments of happiness, without the stress that has become a constant in their lives. These veterans and their families have made many sacrifices to protect our lives and liberty, and this is the Veteran Tickets Foundation's way of saying thank you.

For more information about the Veteran Tickets Foundation, visit www.vettix.org.



Isabel Varela: Survivor's Story: The Healing Garden

By Patsy Jackson, NDW Gold Star Coordinator

Isabel Reyes Varela reports July 10, 2012, as the most difficult day of her family's lives. That was the day Patrick, her son, died. She and her family struggled for a very long time because Patrick took his own life. They did not know why he chose to take his own life. He was such a vibrant young man with a lot of friends and family who adored him. He was a corpsman in the Navy and was stationed in Bethesda, Maryland.

Patrick was their only son. His three sisters, Catherine, Bianca and Elizabeth, and his father, Victor, loved Patrick dearly. During that very dark time, they tried to grapple with the fact that he died, and adding suicide on top of it was quite heavy.

The family received a memorial stone from the staff at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC), where Patrick served during his last three months, to honor his memory. The Valeras held a stone-laying ceremony in September 2012, and the staff presented the memorial stone to Isabel as a birthday gift.

As the Naval District Washington Gold Star coordinator, I first met the Varela family on Nov. 18, 2014. During that first visit, we discussed

the WRNMMC healing garden and placing flowers by the memorial stone. We visited the hospital at Bethesda on Dec. 3. The Varelas brought a wreath to be placed by Patrick's memorial stone, but we were told the healing garden was still undergoing renovations. We waited, and waited and waited. We called and emailed the point of contact every six months.

During this waiting period, the Navy Gold Star Program continued to advocate for the family by linking them to other Gold Star families, and invited them to memorial events such as Gold Star Mother's and Family's Day. They participated in chili cook-offs, holiday potlucks, concerts, and many other special events, and established new relationships. Isabel participated in a suicide awareness campaign at Bethesda themed "Suicide the Aftermath," where she gave her perspective as a family survivor of suicide. During their journey since Patrick's death, the Varelas continue to meet new families, attend activities and remember Patrick.

Finally, on April 1, 2019 (four and a half years later), the healing garden



opened to the public. I met Isabel and Victor at the healing garden on April 4. This was truly a needed experience for them. They viewed Patrick's memorial stone, placed flowers next to the stone, visited with staff who cared for Patrick, and made plans to honor him on his death date with a small lunch gathering of Gold Star families, staff and patients in July 2019. Healing continues for them through the healing garden.





MWR Summer Reading Program: It's Showtime at Your Library

From Navy MWR Library Program

It's showtime at all DoD MWR Libraries this summer! MWR Summer Reading Program pre-registration opened in May for most installations. Readers of all ages, from pre-readers to adults, can get prizes for reading and also enjoy fun activities. To find a local program, visit <https://www.beanstack.com/dod>.

Readers who are not near an installation with a reading program can participate in the DoD-MWR Virtual Summer Reading Program (<https://dodvirtualsrp.beanstack.org>), which runs from June 1 to Aug. 31. Readers can receive a prize for participating.

You also can read your own books or check one out by visiting the Navy MWR Digital Library (www.NavyMWRDigitalLibrary.org), which includes thousands of ebooks and audiobooks. The Navy MWR Digital Library is available to Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard active-duty personnel, Reservists, retirees, dependents, Naval Academy Midshipmen, DoN Delayed Entry Program personnel, and DoN civilian employees.

Summertime Reading is FUN-damental!

By Sabrina Griffin, CNRSW Gold Star Coordinator

Reading is fun! Books take us to places we've never been, tell untold tales, and inform and teach. We learn and grow from reading while also nurturing our imaginations. This is especially true for young adults, which is why book lists are really useful and thoughtful. For example, GoodReads.com provides hundreds of book lists. The general public can freely search its database of books and reviews, and also share book recommendations. Below you will find two of their many lists to help you kick off your summer.

If you are interested in reading the classics, check out the AP Summer Reading list at www.goodreads.com/list/show/11579.AP_Summer_Reading_List.

For a more contemporary snapshot of young adult novels, check out the Best Young Adult books list at https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/43.Best_Young_Adult_Books.



Benefits of Using myPay for Military Survivors Receiving Annuity Pay

By Defense Finance and Accounting Service

Many military survivors who receive annuity pay from the Department of Defense (DoD) are missing out on the benefits of using myPay, the online pay management system of DoD's Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS).

myPay provides convenient access to a range of information about your payments, and lets you easily update your account information and submit your annual certification. And when you have an email address in myPay, you can receive important email messages from DFAS about your pay account and information from your loved one's branch of service.

myPay is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week using your computer or your mobile device browser at <https://mypay.dfas.mil>.

Using myPay, you can:

- View, print or download your Annuitant Account Statements (AAS)
- View, print or download your current IRS Form 1099-R and up to two prior years
- View, print or download your current IRS Form 1042-S and up to two prior years
- Change your federal tax withholding
- Submit your Certificate of Eligibility (COE)
- Submit your Report of Existence (ROE)
- Change your mailing address
- Change your direct deposit information
- Update your email address

With an email address in myPay, you can:

- Receive an email when your 1099R is available
- Receive email notifications from DFAS about your

annuity payments or account

- Receive email notifications about branch of service news and events
- Reset your myPay password online

Any military annuitant who is receiving annuity pay through DFAS can use myPay. To set up your myPay access for the first time and request a temporary password:

1. Go to <https://mypay.dfas.mil>.
2. Click "Forgot or Need a Password?"
3. Enter your Social Security Number and click the "Yes" button on the bottom right.
4. Choose "Mail to my Address of Record with Annuitant" and click "Send me a Password."

You should receive your temporary password in 10 business days by mail. Once you receive your temporary password, go to <https://mypay.dfas.mil> and select "Create an Account" or "Start Here." You'll be asked to enter your Social Security Number and temporary password. Follow the on-screen prompts to log in to myPay and set up your profile.

If you need assistance with your myPay account, please call the DFAS customer care center toll-free at 1-888-332-7411 (Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET).

There is a large menu of Frequently Asked Questions with answers on how to use myPay at <https://go.usa.gov/xEQEC>. You can browse more Frequently Asked Questions with answers or submit a question of your own using AskDFAS at <https://go.usa.gov/xEQEY>. Helpful videos on using myPay are available at www.youtube.com/user/WePayDoD.



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	410-293-9345	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	FFSC / 1896 LASER RD STE 120 VIRGINIA BEACH VA 23460-2281

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