



# COMBAT AND OPERATIONAL STRESS CONTROL (COSC) STATEMENT

## HEADQUARTERS AND SERVICE BATTALION FLEET MARINE FORCE, ATLANTIC U.S. MARINE CORPS FORCES COMMAND



Whether we realize it or not, stress enables us to cope with mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional challenges. Understanding stress reactions and proactively addressing harmful stressors increase mission readiness, preserve the force, and promote long-term health of our Marines, Sailors, and civilians. Combat and Operational Stress Control activities support this effort, oriented around five core areas:

**Strengthen.** Develop and apply approaches to strengthen ourselves and our subordinates mentally, physically, spiritually, and socially against negative effects of combat or operational stress. This includes the tough training already being conducted to develop technical proficiency and increase unit cohesion. Without struggle there is no progress.

**Mitigate.** Stress can be a risk to mission accomplishment and unit and personal health, requiring mitigation like other risks. Many stressors can be avoided with normal planning activities including proactively identifying potential hazards, making sound risk mitigation decisions, and supervision. Knowing yourself and your people is a critical element to mitigation. Listening to your instincts to look further into a situation that doesn't seem right, asking penetrating questions, and demonstrating concern for your people create an environment which identifies and mitigates unhealthy stress more quickly. A network of engaged, concerned leaders and team members can (1) prevent unnecessary stressors and (2) quickly respond to unforeseen negative stressors as they arise.

**Identify.** It is critical for leaders and team members to promptly identify and address signs of stress in their people before they escalate. Know and use the Stress Continuum and Stress Decision Flowchart located within MCO 5351.1. Moreover, have the moral courage to speak up. You might save a life by simply saying, "How are you doing? No, really how are you doing?"

**Treat.** Treatment is about taking specific action, beginning with self-care and peer support. This might include self-education or self-referral to address your own personal issues, helping others by sharing lessons learned, or referring someone in jeopardy to a chaplain, medical officer, or mental health professional for help from an expert. When a fellow Marine, sailor, or civilian is experiencing harmful stress, follow-through is key – we should not be satisfied until our teammate is visibly better or in the care of trained professionals.

**Reintegrate.** Regardless of an individual's level of treatment, we will assist them during the process and see to their full reintegration once recovered. We successfully reintegrate amputees, cancer patients, and other team members who suffer serious physical injuries, and a stress injury is no different.

COSC is another tool to help us accomplish the mission and keep our honor clean. I count on you all to apply the above pillars to sustain a combat ready and resilient force capable of accomplishing any mission.

  
**M. R. REID**  
Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps

  
**B. S. DRIVER**  
Sergeant Major, U.S. Marine Corps