

As I lay awake in the middle of the night, it dawned on me – this situation has many similarities with being deployed in the military. Certainly, there is the added concern of Coronavirus, however, our military risks their health and well-being on a daily basis; maybe it’s really not that much different. What I’m about to share with you are lessons learned on 3 separate seven-month deployments on the *USS John F. Kennedy*:

1. **Develop a clear mission.** On one deployment, we supported our troops that were bombed in Beirut Lebanon. On another, we dealt with rising tensions in the Middle East and the erratic behavior of Muammar Gaddafi off the coast of Libya. And on my final deployment we conducted joint exercises with our allies across the world. The stronger the communicated mission, the more commitment there was to achieve our goals. Your new mission might look something like 1) To support the effort of stopping the spread of COVID-19 2) Keeping myself and my family safe and healthy 3) Helping my community and business sustain essential operations.
2. **Get your mind right.** When we boarded the ship and left the pier, everything changed. We knew we were leaving our old normal for a new normal. New rules, people and operations were our new “normal” for months. We knew we’d return, but understood there would be a significant adjustment all of us would have to make. Those that didn’t change their mind-set struggled. Those who adjusted quickly and conformed to the new environment became productive and positive. We just left the *dock* and are experiencing a new “normal”. Adjusting quickly to the new environment and rules will help you and others.
3. **Develop a routine.** Once underway we got up at the same time. Went to work at the same time. Ate breakfast, lunch, and dinner at the same time. We started developing a new routine. Getting up, making our rack (bed), showering, putting on your uniform (clothes), and keeping busy are absolute keys to functioning effectively for our “Coronavirus Deployment”. Your routine has likely changed. You may have kids at home. You might be working from home, quarantined or juggling new challenges or obstacles. Wake, eat, sleep, shower, dress, and sleep on a schedule if possible – you’ll feel better.
4. **Implement a Plan of the Day.** Each day we published our specific goals and objectives, flight schedule, calendar, events, etc. Our 5,000 shipmates knew exactly what we were focused on that day. Write down your family and/or company plan for the day – send it to appropriate family members or teammates. Cascading relevant information gives people confidence and trust.

5. **Find time to relax, exercise and get outside.** When we deployed, many of my shipmates used it as an opportunity to get and stay healthy. We did not have a gym. We used jump ropes, pushups, sit-ups, and many different tactics to keep in shape. We walked and ran on the hanger deck and some on the flight deck, when there weren't flight operations. I made it a point to get outside every day, watching the sunset every evening from a catwalk. Every evening we would watch a movie, listen to music, or play cards. Although gyms are closed, get outside and walk. Spend some time doing yoga, pushups or other exercises. Watch a movie. Listen to your favorite music. Limit consumption of alcohol and other substances. This will help you be at your best, stay physically and mentally healthy, and provide you with some endorphins – you'll need all you can get.
6. **Communicate often and regularly.** On the ship, we were socially isolated from our families and some of our friends. Although this was before email and cell phones, we wrote letters. Those who wrote and received mail fared much better than those who didn't. Mail call was a big event on the ship. You either felt loved and appreciated or you were disappointed nobody cared enough to write you a letter. Make an extra effort to regularly call, write or email your family, friends or business associates. Reach out to a neighbor or someone who has nobody to talk to. This is a time to increase communication and outreach to family, friends, clients and neighbors.
7. **Be a good shipmate.** One thing I really miss about the Navy is the comradery. Sure, we had disagreements, but we were a "family". On the ship, we appreciated the fact that everyone served a role to keep us underway, safe, fed and healthy. Our sheer existence depended on it. Now is a time to support your leaders, family, neighbors, community, business, clients, etc. Perform your job, role or mission to the best of your ability. Many in our community are experiencing mental, physical and financial challenges. We'll get through this much more easily and effectively if we'll be kind and give each other a little grace.

Although there are many other things to consider, focus on these 7 basic tips to help you in our new environment. We have left the dock. We've deployed to a new environment and we'll have a new normal for a period of time. My belief is we'll also return to our home port in several weeks/months and be more appreciative of what we have. Be Safe, Healthy and Helpful.

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