

# WVNG Coffey Break

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## Rising Above



Welcome to the March 2013 edition of the WVNG Coffey Break, a monthly wellness publication for all WV National Guard members and their families. The objective is to promote wellness, readiness and resilience by providing information and resources on topics relevant to daily living.

This month, many among us face the possible impact of sequestration. Feelings of anger, helplessness, and fear would all be common reactions. And believe me, I know how easy it is to jump on the complaint bandwagon and focus on how unfair a situation is. But what does that get us? This edition of the Coffey Break is about rising above whatever challenges you face. This doesn't mean pretending they don't exist. What it does mean, is taking steps to keep moving forward and practicing resilience.

We hope you find this newsletter challenging, uplifting, and educational. So, please take a few minutes to read the following article before hitting "Delete" on your computer.

The mission of the National Guard Psychological Health Program is to advocate, promote and guide National Guard members and their families by supporting psychological fitness for operational readiness. For contact information regarding the Director of Psychological Health in your state or territory or other resources, go to:  
[www.jointservicessupport.org/](http://www.jointservicessupport.org/)

### Worry = Fear

**To feel uneasy or concerned about something which leads to agitation, anxiety, and apprehension**

### Peace = Contentment

**The absence of anxiety which leads to satisfaction and joy**

"Worry is like a rocking chair. It gives you something to do but it gets you nowhere."

Glen Turner



**Break (brāk)** definition *verb*: To interrupt or stop *break a habit*; *noun*: A respite or brief pause *taking a break*.

## Steps to Rise Above Unexpected Challenges

- **Get Rid of Bitterness:** Refuse to hold onto anger and resentment that allows bitterness to grow. Flush out the poison of bitterness you may already have by facing it head on. Bitterness hurts you more than anyone else. Choose to forgive and let go of the damaging thoughts and feelings. Don't waste time and energy thinking of ways to get revenge. Enjoy the freedom that forgiveness can give you.
- **Grieve your losses:** Face the fact that you've lost something valuable to you, rather than trying to ignore the hard reality or sugar-coat it in some way. Cry if you need to cry, journal about your loss if that helps, talk with a counselor or trusted friends, and do whatever else helps you grieve your losses. Accept your situation, and begin to work through it honestly. But don't get stuck in a rut; once you've expressed your grief, start to move on. Steer clear of whining, complaining, and self-pity. Allow your grief to take its course. Then let go of your old dream and look forward to what is in store for you in the future. Stop reviewing your mistakes; give up regrets and grow beyond them.
- **Give thanks:** Although this may be the last thing you feel like doing right now, it's vital to give thanks in all circumstances (not *for* all circumstances, but *in* the midst of them. Make giving thanks a daily practice.
- **Focus on the Big Picture:** Shift your focus away from what's wrong in your life to what is right. Keep in mind that where you may see a mess in your life, there is a potential for something good to happen.
- **Speak with Sincerity:** The words that come out of your mouth reveal the condition of your heart and identify who you are. Speak carefully, since your words can either bring about joy or hurt and destruction. Decide to speak positive words that reflect hope and encourage others - no matter how challenging your circumstances are right now. Avoid complaining. Don't listen to advice from negative or bitter people, and avoid media content that negatively influences your thinking. Listen to positive people, read uplifting books and TV shows.

“Do not anticipate trouble or worry about what may never happen. Keep in the sunlight.”

Benjamin Franklin

- **Walk Confidently in a New Direction:** Keep a confident posture: head up (focusing on positives), stomach in (staying centered on truth, not assumptions), and eyes forward (looking toward the future, not the past).
- **Make Healthy Connections with Other People:** Notice people in your life right now who can help and support you. Be thankful for them, and allow those people to get close to you. Listen to people's advice and allow them to help you. While you're looking for friends, be a good friend yourself. Do all you can to encourage other people. If you're married, work on your communication with your spouse to keep your marriage strong while you're going through challenges. Use your friends to help you heal.
- **Use What You've Learned to Help Others:** Make sure that none of the pain you've gone through while dealing with your challenges are wasted. Take advantage of opportunities to show what you've learned in the process to help others going through similar challenges.
- **Persevere:** Remember that you have a lot to offer in this life. Each day as you move forward, you will find your strength renewed and with it, an accompanying joy and inner peace.

“Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows; it empties today of its strengths.”

Corrie Ten Boom

## *Breaking Away with Dr. Daniela Lupu*

We live in interesting times indeed. Amongst talks of government shutdowns, sequestration, possible mission changes, it is easy to become unsettled and lose focus. Worries about the future can easily crowd one's mind. Burnout, decision paralysis or the opposite, decision reactivity are common hazards of stressful periods.

It is imperative, particularly during these times, to deliberately infuse our daily life with people, activities, and thoughts that will nourish hope. Hope and faith are the antidotes to fear and worry. Here are a few thoughts to ponder when facing challenging times:

*As a rule, men worry more about what they can't see than about what they can. Julius Caesar*

The psychological concept known as gestalt closure explains how we intrinsically fill in visual gaps. This ability helps us create structure which in turn helps us categorize information. The "what ifs" conversations occurring during uncertain times are a means of filling in the gaps created by missing information. It's a normal response. It can be an adaptive response when used to come up with contingency plans. If left unchecked, the "what ifs" become an avalanche pulling one under the weight of worrying. Reign in worrying by regularly shifting focus on what is known and what is under one's control. The situation may be out of your control yet you can control how you respond to it.

*Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow. It empties today of its strength. Corrie Ten Boom*

We get trapped thinking of the past or the future forgetting that the present is a gift. Shifting one's focus to today doesn't occur naturally. Refocusing on the present moment takes effort and practice especially when facing a difficult situation. Taking a few moments to create a daily gratitude list, giving your undivided attention to someone conversing with you, focusing on the task at hand are just a few examples of being in the present moment. The problem may not disappear but this discipline will give you the energy to face it one day at a time.

Recently a friend shared with me a short poem written by Annie Elizabeth Cheney, *Overheard in an Orchard*, toward which my mind has frequently returned to.

*Said the Robin to the Sparrow:*

*"I should really like to know*

*Why these anxious human beings*

*Rush about and worry so."*

*Said the Sparrow to the Robin:*

*"Friend, I think that it must be*

*That they have no heavenly Father*

*Such as cares for you and me."*

Such simple lines remind us that even the most insignificant of creatures are taken care of. Hope and faith are the life vests that keep one afloat during life's storms. I know not what specific situation may keep you awake at night. Yet, I would encourage you to shift your focus from the worry and fear and anchor your thoughts on the hope that troubles do pass. Focus on those attributes of your spiritual life that encourages perseverance, endurance, patience and communion with others. If you don't believe in a higher power, keep your focus on the values and virtues that encourage and sustain you. Above all, remember to reach out and seek help from your wingman, family, friends, Chaplains and us, your DPHs. As you keep your mind focused on the present, focused on what you can do, surrounded by people who encourage you and walk along side of you, you will find yourself feeling calmer and stronger in spite of the difficulty you face.



*Dr. Lupu*

**"Worry deprives us of our right to enjoy life without giving us anything in return."**

**Robert Gerzon**

## *The Final Sip*

Wouldn't life be great if things were always to work out the way we wanted them to? Just imagine, a life without adversity. Keep on dreaming. Life has never been, nor will it ever be free from challenges. So the question is not will life challenge you, but rather, how will you react when it does?

Sometimes we are knocked off our feet, taken down, reeling from disappointments. But when that happens, it's important to get up again. None of us handle every situation right. Believe me when I say, I mess up a lot. How long I stay the victim versus becoming a victor is up to me. I can maintain a "woe is me" attitude, which will have a negative impact on myself and others around me or I can stand up and try to grow from the situation. And that can be very difficult.

Don't be afraid to share the burden, not to commiserate together, but to find a way out of the darkness. If you just sit around sharing how horrible or unfair you've been treated, nothing is accomplished. However, if you are surrounded by positive thinkers, ask them to listen and to help you move forward.

We are each responsible for our own life - no other person is or ever can be. That is why it is crucial not to let challenges, be they your own characteristics, events, people, or other uncontrollable factors, act as a barrier between you and your goals. Overcoming the obstacles present in your life is what will ultimately give you the confidence to reach your goals.

The truth is, if you find a path with no obstacles, it is most likely a path that doesn't lead to anywhere important. Difficulty gives birth to opportunity. Look into history and you will find numerous examples of individuals taking the difficult road. They rose above and forged our nation's future. Of course, our lives may not be discussed in history books, but to those around us, we definitely have an impact. Choose to be a positive influence and rise above your struggles. It's all in the attitude.



Feedback on these articles is welcomed. If you have a concern about yourself or a family member, feel free to contact Stephanie Lincoln, Daniela, or myself. Contact information is listed below. Services are free and confidential. We look forward to hearing from you. So.....Step back , take a Coffey Break, and Drink to Your Health!

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### Article References:

<http://www.crosswalk.com>