

# ***ALERTNESS GUIDE...***

## **Mental Readiness**

**Guide Objective:** Use discussion topics to identify importance of being mentally ready to perform your job and the skills that can be put into place to be successful.

### **Discussion:**

#### ***MENTAL READINESS***

The importance of mental readiness when going to your job relates to everyone (live on boats, dinner bucket / harbor boats, shore tankerman, shoreside personnel, etc.). Being mentally ready to perform any task, whether it be your job or a sport, is a very important part of performing well. It also plays a crucial role in near misses, accidents and the quality of your work. There are skills that can be learned and developed to address preparation, concentration, attitude and awareness. In time, approximately 21 days, you can turn the skills that work for you into habits.

#### **PREPARATION...**

- 1. Establish a clear plan to go to work.**
  - Are you finished, or at a stopping point, for any projects or obligations at home so you don't worry about them while on the job?
  - Does your family have a support system so you can concentrate on your job?
  - Are you sure of your travel arrangements?
  - How long will you be on the vessel?
- 2. Know what is expected of you.**
  - Be focused on being away whatever amount of time is needed.
  - Make sure you bring everything you'll need for your hitch or specific job.
  - Are you well rested to start your hitch or to go to a job?
- 3. Know what you need to do to perform the task.**
  - If you have any anxieties about going to a different vessel, working in a different area or starting a new position talk to your Port Captain or someone you trust about your anxieties.
- 4. Communicate to your direct supervisor any issues that may affect your mental readiness when coming to or while at work.**
  - Stress concerns (marriage, financial, family illness, children, etc.).
  - Taking medications (prescription or over-the-counter) that may affect alertness.
  - Make them aware of any illness or injury that occurred while at home that may be lingering.

#### **POSITIVE ATTITUDE...**

1. **Attitude is a choice, so choose to have a positive attitude.**
  - You're going to be doing your job whether you're positive about it or not but having a good attitude can positively impact your safety, performance, general health & relationships with the individuals you work with on the job.
2. **Strive to improve.**
  - Sometimes there are situations out of your control than might impact your attitude. Accept it if you can't change it & make the best of the situation because the negative attitude will ultimately affect you & your performance.

## **CONCENTRATION...**

1. **Focus on essential tasks or situations while blocking out distractions.**
  - This is where training & drills, as well as understanding policies & procedures, become your second nature.
  - Pay attention to internal or external cues & determine which are important & which should be ignored.
2. **Fatigue, self-criticism, noise & not focusing on the moment are common distractions & must be blocked.**
  - A clear mind & sharp focus bring our best talents to the most challenging situations.
3. **If you're anxious or stressed you can lose focus.**
  - Being in good health, physical & mental, can help you put anxieties & stresses in perspective so they don't distract you from your job.
  - Recognize when there is a situation you may not be able to handle yourself. There may be resources to assist you through your company's Employee Assistance Program or health insurance.
4. **Follow up.**
  - Check in occasionally with your supervisor on how things are going with the matters of stress discussed when first coming back to work.
  - As a supervisor, if your employee shared information on their stress, medications, etc. check to make sure these issues aren't adversely affecting their concentration at work.

## **STAMINA...**

1. **Evaluate your personal needs in the following areas to sustain &/or increase your stamina.**
  - Eating habits.
  - Sleeping habits.
  - Physical fitness.
2. **Follow up.**

- **Let your supervisor know if any illness or injury suffered while last at home is affecting stamina to perform job and/or rest periods.**
- **As a supervisor, if your employee shared information on their illness or injury suffered while last at home check to make sure these issues aren't adversely affecting stamina at work and ability to rest.**

3. Set realistic goals & how to accomplish them.

4. Manage stress. Stress can take energy away from you & reduce stamina & endurance.

Additional recommendations, tools & questions for mental readiness:

- Plan your time off to get things accomplished but keep time for quality time for your family, friends, hobbies & down time.
- Routines can be beneficial when returning to work, performing certain aspects of your job & time at work & returning home.
- Reexamine the task training program
- Evaluate the specific mental, physical, nutritional and equipment readiness that's needed.
- Is your technique solid?
- Do you capitalize on your strengths?
- Work on your perception of success. Are you where you want to be? If not, what can you do to get there?

*Summary:*

The challenges of being away from home for any length of time, working shift work & being on call can contribute to near misses & accidents. The importance of being alert & in top condition, mentally & physically, can't be underestimated. These recommendations & issues to consider can assist you in being mentally prepared to do your job safely & in top condition.

Resources to assist in eating, sleeping & physical fitness, as well as managing stress, can be found in the following manuals:

Crew Endurance Management Practices -

**A Guide For Maritime Operators**

**A Guide For Maritime Operations ADDENDUM**

These manuals are available for downloading on the Crew Endurance Management System section of the USCG Human Element & Ship Design Division Web Site:

<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg5/cg5211/>