



Supporting Your Midshipman Through Plebe Summer



Chaplain's Guide for Parents

Congratulations! Today marks a very exciting and pivotal day in your life as a parent. Your son or daughter will take an oath affirming their commitment to serve our nation as a Midshipman at the United States Naval Academy. They have chosen a challenging, but rewarding, path that should make you proud. Of course, along with that excitement can often come a sense of trepidation.

The Chaplains are committed to care for all Midshipmen regardless of religious denomination or belief system. As the first line of professional caregivers, the Chaplains want to work with you to support your son or daughter during the course of the summer. Be assured of our total commitment to their well-being. To that end, we offer the following reminders:

FOCUS ON THE MISSION

"To develop Midshipmen morally, mentally and physically and to imbue them with the highest ideals of duty, honor, and loyalty in order to graduate leaders who are dedicated to a career of naval service and have potential for future development in mind and character to assume the highest responsibilities of command, citizenship, and government."

Best Practices:

ENCOURAGE YOUR MIDSHIPMAN

You may get calls and letters from a very stressed son or daughter. We encourage you not to panic.

LOVE YOUR MIDSHIPMAN

- Step back most of the time, step in when truly necessary, and always be there with unconditional love.
- Embolden your Midshipman to meet new people and find support on the Yard.

STRENGTHEN YOUR MIDSHIPMAN

- When you can talk to your Midshipman, please use it to strengthen their resolve and imbue them with a sense of hope.
- Be prepared with positive things to talk about and positive language.
- Avoid bringing up further stressful subjects that your Midshipman has no control over (e.g. family pet sick, pending family issues). When at all possible, wait until after Plebe Summer to discuss such issues.
- Encourage them to focus on the things they can control and not on the things they cannot.

BE REALISTIC IN YOUR EXPECTATIONS!

This may be the first extended separation from your son or daughter, so please:

- Manage your expectations when it comes to phone calls and Plebe Summer.
- Enjoy each phone call for the time you have, and be flexible in the conversation based on your son's or daughter's needs.
- Let them vent.
- Remember that this is an opportunity for them to discover inner strength and grow.
- Remember also that you, too, may be going through a withdrawal by not being able to call or text. This is a time for everyone to grow and adjust.

Things to Remember & Share:

- Though there is PRESSURE, it always has a POSITIVE PURPOSE.
- Plebe Summer is six weeks, not forever.
- Everyone working with your Midshipman wants him or her to succeed!
- Your calm, consistent encouragement can make all the difference in the world.

Common Concerns:

Navy Chaplains are well equipped and extensively trained to handle a variety of concerns. Here are some of the common concerns Midshipmen share with us:

FAILURE

This summer will challenge your sons and daughters. This may be the first time they experience pressure from a feeling of failure as they learn to wear their uniform properly or address their leadership correctly. If they share this concern with you, encourage them that the pressure has a purpose. Remind them of their strength to overcome challenges in the past. Reassure them that you are proud of them, that this is a growth experience, that it takes time to learn and adjust, and they will overcome. These experiences help them to overcome and manage challenging times, and prepare them to be strong and calm as they lead in the future.

HOMESICKNESS

This may be the first time your sons and daughters have spent a significant time away from home, especially detached from social media. They will not have their typical resources to lean on. Remind them that it is temporary and everyone is in the same boat. This is an opportunity to make friends, talk with someone about their feelings, and reach out to a Chaplain if needed.

MADE A BAD DECISION

Your sons and daughters may experience culture shock that could lead them to believe they made a bad decision. Remind them that they will become more competent, and, as a result, more confident and more comfortable. Remind them that the summer is a temporary path which leads to success and achieving the larger goals that brought them to the Academy in the first place.

DISCONNECTED FROM FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Social Media connects our world more than ever before. We are used to constant connection and constant access to information. When that connection is halted, it is disconcerting and can produce stress and anxiety due to a sense of isolation and a fear of the unknown. This is an opportunity to exercise traditional disciplines of journaling, introspection, letter writing, and plain old talking to one another. These things facilitate healthy self-discovery. Remind your Midshipman that the disconnection is temporary, good training for time in the Fleet, and provides a healthy opportunity to meet new people and explore connections in new ways.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS

The rigors of physical exercise may be more than your Midshipman is used to. This, again, is positive pressure with a purpose to make them stronger both physically and mentally, and help them achieve their potential as leaders and Naval Officers. Encourage them to continue forward with endurance knowing that it is temporary and will build them up.

YOU HAVEN'T HEARD FROM YOUR MIDSHIPMAN

Remember that you, too, may be experiencing withdrawals from the ability to reach your Midshipman at any time. Phone calls and letters will happen every two weeks. If you have not heard from a staff member at the Academy, you can trust that your Midshipman is well. This is an important step in your Midshipman learning to be resilient and self-sufficient.

Emergency Contacts:

Chaplains' Hotline (all calls will be returned within 24 hours): 410-293-8012

Officer of the Watch: Contact in the case of death or serious illness in your immediate family: 410-293-5001

American Red Cross: Contact in the event that the presence of your midshipman is required at home due to an immediate emergency, serious family illness, or death: 1-877-272-7337. You will need to provide this information about your midshipman:

Full legal name:

Rank/Rate: (Midshipman 4th Class)

Branch of Service: NAVY

Social Security Number:

Military Unit Address: U.S. Naval Academy, 121 Blake Rd. Annapolis, MD 21402

COVID-19 Information: A number of measures are being taken to ensure the safety of your son or daughter. These include: sanitizing living spaces in Bancroft hall prior to arrival, spreading out report dates/times to facilitate social distancing, issuance of face masks, COVID-19 screening upon arrival, a 14-day restriction of movement (ROM) period for all inductees and their midshipman chain of command, repeat COVID-19 testing at the end of ROM, and distancing strategies after ROM to minimize the risk of exposure during Plebe Summer. The Naval Academy has a full-time staff of medical professionals who are available 24 hours a day/7 days per week to evaluate and treat midshipmen. In addition to guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. Naval Academy is following amplified guidance put forth by the Department of Defense and the Department of the Navy.