

Commander's Connection



Photo by Master Sgt. Paul Holcomb

Col. Philip Ruhlman speaks during Shaw's POW/MIA recognition ceremony Sept. 17. Master Sgt. Paul Holcomb.)

"Commander's Connection" is a link between Col. Philip Ruhlman, 20th Fighter Wing commander, and the Shaw community. Questions or concerns that can't be resolved through normal channels can be called in and recorded at 895-4611 or e-mailed to commandersconnection@shaw.af.mil.

Callers should leave a name and telephone number in case questions need clarification. Comments of general interest may be published in *The Shaw Spirit*.

Kudos

This thank you goes to Tech. Sgt. Lloyd Joyner, Master Sgt. Brian Dugan and all the 20th Security Forces Squadron members who help out at Shaw Heights Elementary School.

Thank you for standing out in all weather conditions and helping with the traffic on Frierson Road. You are very much appreciated. When you are there traffic is so much better for school buses and parents who drop off the children. Thank you for everything you have done and will continue to do through the rest of the school year.

Crossing Guards at Shaw Heights

Evaluate your drinking behavior in content of likely consequences

By Capt. Nicholas A. Lind
20th Medical Operations Squadron
Mental health flight commander

Let's say you're at a party and someone consumes eight beers, publicly pronounces the *Backstreet Boys* to be "the *Led Zeppelin* of our generation," gyrates seductively to "Funky Cold Medina" and throws up on the cheese platter. You're likely to think, "Dude, that boy's got some drinking troubles."

But what if that person was you? Your explanation is likely to be somewhat different.

"You gotta understand," you'd say. "It was a really rough week at work and I needed to blow off some steam. The punch tasted really good and was much stronger than I thought. I don't usually drink this much."

When it comes to our own behavior, we accurately factor in the many situational influences on behavior like work stress and good tasting punch as well as our personal attributes. But, when it comes to other peoples' behavior we misattribute the cause of their behavior to the person and nothing else.

This tendency to misattribute the causes of other peoples' behavior to internal factors is affectionately referred to as "the fundamental attribution error." By attributing our peers' over consumption to the person as having "drinking troubles,"

we conclude that this behavior is not unusual; this person likely drinks eight beers on a nightly basis. We therefore perceive our peers to drink more than they actually do.

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If your aspirations appear to be at odds with your behavior, you need to alter one of the two.

Capt. Nicholas A. Lind
20th Medical Operations Squadron

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Now fast forward to the following Monday morning. Despite the fact that the majority of the people at the party consumed, on average, two or three drinks, who do you think is the topic of conversation at the water cooler? That's right; the "Funky Cold Medina" dancer guy who couldn't keep his punch down. The co-workers who weren't at the party walk away from the chat assuming that they missed one wild party.

"Wow," they conclude, "people around here sure do drink a lot and get crazy. I must be in the minority."

By selectively attending to the abnormal behavior, we come to perceive such behavior to be "the norm." This "water cooler effect" perpetuates the myth that was established by our attribution error.

Here at Shaw, we overestimate the drinking rate by nearly 300%. Cutting edge prevention efforts have demonstrated that,

when misperceptions are corrected, both binge drinking and the negative consequences associated with it (injuries to self and others) are reduced by more than one third. If Shaw's

population had a realistic perception of the drinking rate, our number of alcohol-related incidents is likely to be curbed. If you consume more than 2.5 drinks per occasion, you need to realize that you're the exception rather than the rule. You need to evaluate your drinking behavior in the context of the likely consequences such as the following:

- Legal and/or administrative consequences
- Long-term dependence on alcohol
- Your life's ambition
- Military career goals

If your aspirations appear to be at odds with your behavior, you need to alter one of the two.

Aside from your personal choice, there is no excuse to be in the heavy drinking minority.

The majority of people can easily alter their drinking behavior with or without treatment. If you believe you could use some help, however, call Life Skill at 895-6199.

The Shaw Spirit

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Airmen warned: beware of Drool Bucket

By Maj. Ian Phillips
20th Fighter Wing Safety office
Flight safety officer

What is a Drool Bucket? It is any item that steals away a good crosscheck and lures you down the dangerous path of channelized attention. Of all aviation mishaps caused by human factors, channelized attention caused the most fighter/attack Class A mishaps and task mis-prioritization, is not far behind. This enemy can creep up on even the most experienced aviators, drivers or heavy equipment operators and have devastating effects. As a professional Air Force, we must make every effort to keep the Drool Bucket from getting any more kills to its name.

Although pundits understand the phenomenon fairly well, preventing future mishaps caused by channelized attention is a whole different ball game. One of the factors that perpetuates the problem is the fact that modern technology continues to add data sources to interpret. These data sources increase

workload in terms of information processing, which translates into additional tasks during a given phase of activity. Consider the competing information sources available to a driver on the roads today. Moving maps, multi-media stereos, multi-function diagnostic displays, not to mention cell phone and hamburger in your lap, all provide distractions away from safe driving. In order to safely drive or perform any potentially dangerous activity, one must make sound decisions in task prioritization and attention management.

Many factors play into how much attention a person can devote to a given task. The task environment, while driving on a crowded downtown freeway at night and looking for an unfamiliar exit, is vastly different from driving down a familiar rural road Sunday afternoon with no traffic. The latter allows more time playing with the radio or dialing a cell phone number but, channelized attention can still have consequences. The driver might risk drifting slightly off the road because he was trying to get a

pen out of the glove compartment is acceptable, and he's probably right. However, what happens when a deer jumps in front of him while he's fumbling for the pen? This scenario is the root evil of the drool bucket syndrome

Another factor that affects attention management is experience. A person who has been driving for 20 years can allocate more attention to outside tasks than a person who has been driving for 10 days. Focusing even further on the individual within a certain level of experience, and a certain task environment, there are factors that vary daily which dictate attention management. Fatigue, stress, motivation, coordination, and cognitive ability all affect a person's capability of doing a task.

Deciding on what to spend one's attention is a fundamental skill of being a good driver. Sometimes a driver will channelize on a specific item without realizing it. Other times, a driver will channelize knowing full well that he is allowing himself to succumb to the Drool Bucket. Why then does he do it?

The fact is that much of our judgment, or ability to discern how much time we can spend on a given task, comes from trial and error over the course of experience. This process is synonymous with developing a good crosscheck. Most of the time the cost we allow ourselves to risk by channelizing is negligible, but occasionally it can be severe.

Most pilots have long known of the dangers of channelized attention and task-misprioritization, and yet the problem continues to plague aviation. The countermeasure for the feared Drool Bucket often boils down to having the personal discipline to spend time on the information source that is the priority, rather than on the information source that you would like to watch.

"Aviate, navigate, communicate" is the old adage for pilots. Everyone must admit to themselves when they are spending too much time on a particular task at the detriment of something else that is more important at the time. Each individual must defeat the Drool Bucket and everyone benefits.

Family member tells Team Shaw thank you

Dear Shaw personal and families,

My family and I arrived in the parking lot of 20th Logistics Readiness Squadron last week. There sat a large charter bus that would be taking my father and other Airmen to the airport for a four-month tour overseas.

Weapons were being loaded on the bus and there, in that minute it, all became very real. Since the beginning of the war in Iraq, my father has been blessed to be stateside. The closest our family had to come to the war had been through television and the press.

I am the mother of two and it has been very difficult to explain to my children that their "Papa," currently a master sergeant serving with 20th LRS, would be deployed for the next four months.

I remember fondly a few years ago my father was deployed to Turkey and when you would ask my daughter where Papa is, she would gladly respond with, "He has gone to get a turkey for Thanksgiving." Then she would just giggle.

Now my daughter is seven and my son eight and they are very aware of what is going on in the Middle East and around the world.

The staff sergeant stepped off the bus to let the men and woman of 20th LRS know it was time to load up and get going. I slowly looked around to see the pain in everyone's eyes.

A beautiful young lady with long blonde hair held her Airmen as tight as she could and from across the parking lot I saw tears streaming down her face. I am sure he was telling her everything would be fine.

A toddler stood next to a car screaming as if her only toy had been broken. Truth is known, it was her father she just let go to board that bus. I watched as her young mother held an infant in her arms and tears streamed down her face trying to console the toddler. You could see the hurt in her eyes. She would be a parent, alone, for the next four months.

Then it was my turn to say good bye. I held my Daddy as tight as I could and made him promise to come home safe.

"You know I will, and I love you," he said." Then he turned to my children. My daughter, red-faced and starting to cry, said her good-byes. Then, to he turned to my son who was trying to be big and not cry. My other siblings said good-bye and then my Daddy approached my mother. She has been dealing with deployments for the last 20 years. I always wanted to ask how does she handle it so well, but I know it never gets easier. You just get better at dealing with it when you have to be strong for your family. She has always been the rock of our family.

The bus was loaded and ready to go. I leaned over to answer a question from my son, "Mommy can I salute the bus?"

"Of course you can!" I told him. The bus circled the parking lot and turned back out onto the road. I glanced down and saw him, all of 3 feet 11 inches tall, snap to attention and salute that bus as it drove away. My heart just sank.

I asked him why he saluted the bus and he would not tell me. He only said it was for his Papa. The bus turned the corner and was gone. I

turned to hear my mother talking to a female officer in my father's command and she was telling my mother, "If you need anything don't hesitate to call, if I can't handle it I will send my husband." Then they both laughed. Yet you could still see tears in my mother's eyes.

Many have called and promised to be there if my family needed anything while my father was gone; officers, their wives, senior NCOs and even the civilians that work with my father. It is a great feeling to know my family will be well taken care of while my father is deployed.

Since the deployment, I walked into my daughter's room to find her watching the video by Toby Keith, "American Soldier".

She climbed up in my lap to say "I really never knew Papa was an American soldier. "I miss him so much, and I am SO proud of him!" She brought tears to my eyes.

We have lived through many deployments, having to move to many duty stations. Shaw has been an outstanding base to be a part of! The people here have far exceeded any expectations I ever had about the commitment they provide to the spouses and families left here while family members are deployed.

The closeness of the base and its relationship with Sumter and the network of support they provide for the families left here is amazing. I would just like to sincerely say "thank you" to everyone who makes it possible.

Respectfully,

A proud daughter of a United States Air Force master sergeant