



# The Receiver



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But be doers of the word, and not hearers only.... James 1:22

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Your comments and thoughts on this article are requested. [rmrchaplaincy@rmr.cap.gov](mailto:rmrchaplaincy@rmr.cap.gov).

In the latest CAP *Dispatch*, there is an article by Ch Tenney of the Indiana wing. It is about encampments and bears repeating. I have included the article in full. I hope it is helpful.

## Strategies for Helping Cadets with Anxiety and Stress at Encampment

By: Ch Lt. Col. Theodore "TJ" Jenney, IN-001

Encampment season is filled with all the excitement, challenge, and yes, stress and anxiety of our cadets. Encampment staff often ask for additional training on how to help cadets who struggle in the stressful encampment environment. Two mental health issues that cadets often struggle with at encampment are separation anxiety and social anxiety. Both are not uncommon at squadron meetings as well as at school, but encampment sometimes takes these struggles to a new level.

**Separation Anxiety** is caused from separation from family or close friends beyond the normal hesitation to leave home, and in some sense, is a heightened homesickness. Many cadets have never been away from home for an extended period especially in a more intense and challenging environment like encampment. Separation anxiety can manifest in a spectrum from mild to more serious, even to the point of being a disorder according to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). Most of the time cadets at encampment experience mild levels of separation anxiety that often diminish as the week goes on.

**Social Anxiety** is caused from social situations that cause anxiety or fear and a sense of an inability to deal with meeting new people, new dynamics in interaction or social pressure as often present themselves at encampment or other social situations. Social anxiety can also present in a range of seriousness even to the point of a disorder at which point the NIMH

defines it as "an intense persistent fear of being watched and judged by others" the person "feels symptoms of anxiety and fear where they are scrutinized, evaluated, or judged by others" (NIMH). Typically, at encampment it is mild but can cause anxiety and stress that make it hard for a cadet to interact with others.

Complicating factors for both issues may include family dynamics, experience being away from family (possibly for the first time), any experience being bullied, autism, eating disorders, anxiety, depression, health, or hydration. Most caring adults can offer support to help cadets cope with these struggles or other stress, fears, and anxiety by using this **STEP** method, as well as calling on individuals with more training such as chaplains, CDIs, or mental health professionals. Ch Col. John Murdoch and I presented this strategy as a pre-encampment training session prior to the INWG encampment, and the staff found it helpful.

Notecard Summary for **STEP**: (Full explanation in the *Dispatch*.)

**Step away** from the group, encourage one step at a time: one milestone at a time.

(A journey of a thousand miles begins one step at a time.)

**Time to Talk & Think**, relieve stress, anxiety and reframe.

**Evaluate/Encourage**, assess the level of challenge and stress and call for assistance if necessary. Present positive self-talk and encouragement.

**Plan** strategies for success and milestone goals: what are they looking forward to most? Help develop a growth mindset and set strategies to deal with stress and anxiety. Emphasize a positive attitude, and positive affirmation. Remind them you and other caring adults are there to assist them. Set time to check back with them.