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[PSYCH](#) > Vol.2 No.9, December 2011



Understanding Good Coping: A Submarine Crew Coping with Extreme Environmental Conditions

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ABSTRACT

The present study is based on in-depth interviews with 12 Israeli submarine crew members. The study examines various aspects of coping with submarine service and its unique characteristics from the crew members' points of view. Content analysis reveals the following salient themes: First, positive perception of submarine service: positive thinking, optimism and sense of humor, accompanied by cynicism. Second, the submarine team is characterized by high moral standards, high team spirit and a sense of the importance of the service. Third, social relationships are characterized by avoidance of conflicts, while maintaining a good atmosphere and high social cohesion. Fourth, crew members perceived separation from home, friends and daily life as the most difficult aspects to deal with. Fifth, they perceived the submarine as dangerous place but reduced aspects of danger by developing a sense of trust in their submarine and in their ability to control potential dangers. Study results are discussed in light of relevant theories. This study is unique in that it was a rare opportunity to get a glimpse into the unknown world of an Israeli submarine crew which is mostly secret and not open to researchers.

KEYWORDS

Coping, Stress, Extreme Environment, Submarine Service, Positive Thinking, Optimism and Sense of Humor

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