

WELLNESS: GETTING OUT OF THE HOLE

"Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude." - Thomas Jefferson

An apocryphal story about a soldier illustrates the spiraling effects of mental health struggles. An infantryman suffering from PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) fell into a hole and couldn't get out. When a senior non-commissioned officer (SNCO) walked by, the soldier called out for help. The SNCO yelled back, "Suck it up, son-dig deep and drive on," and then threw him a shovel. The soldier did as he was told and dug the hole deeper. A senior officer passed by, and the soldier again called out for help. The officer told him to "use the tools your SNCO has given you" and threw him a bucket. The soldier used the tools, filled the bucket, and dug the hole deeper. A psychiatrist walked by. The soldier called, "Help! I can't get out!" The psychiatrist gave him a prescription and said, "Take this medication. It will relieve the pain and help you forget about the hole." The soldier said thanks and followed his advice, but when the pills ran out he was still in the hole. A well-known psychologist rode by and heard the soldier's cries for help. He stopped and asked, "How did you get there? Were you born there? Did your parents put you there? Tell me about yourself; it will alleviate your sense of loneliness." The soldier talked with him for an hour, and then the psychologist left, promising to return in a week. The soldier thanked him ... but he was still in the hole. Next, another soldier, one who had overcome PTSD, passed by. The soldier in the hole with PTSD cried, "Hey, help me. I'm stuck in this hole!" The other soldier immediately jumped down and joined him in the hole. The soldier with PTSD started to panic and said, "What are you doing? Now we're both stuck down here!" The other soldier just smiled and replied, "It's okay, calm down, brother. I've been here before ... I know how to get out." "You just can't beat the person who won't give up." -Babe Ruth

Connecting this quote to the story

The quote can be applied to the soldier who jumps into the hole with the Soldier with PTSD. By refusing to give up on his fellow soldier and working together to find a way out, they can

overcome the challenge together. Even in difficult situations, there is always hope and the possibility of finding a way forward.

Author Edmond Mbiaka has said, "The strength of your mind determines the quality of your life?"

Reflection Questions

1. As a teammate, how do you help another teammate that is stuck in a hole? What are some ways in which we can support teammates who are going through difficult times?

Click or tap here to enter your answer.

2. How can we ensure that our team's support extends beyond just words and into meaningful actions and tangible support for those in need?

3. How can we work to reduce the stigma around mental health issues, particularly among athletes and in sports culture more broadly?

4. Before the other soldier jumped into the hole to help, many other people tried to offer various forms of help. Ultimately, it was the empathy of another that helped the soldier in need. What is empathy - and how is empathy helpful on a team and in our relationships?