

KNOCK IT OFF!
with *Jeff “Odie” Espenship*

This easy-to-use Leader’s Guide is provided to assist in conducting a successful presentation. Featured are:

INTRODUCTION: A brief description of the program and the subject that it addresses.

PROGRAM OUTLINE: Summarizes the program content. If the program outline is discussed before the video is presented, the entire program will be more meaningful and successful.

PREPARING FOR AND CONDUCTING THE PRESENTATION: These sections will help you set up the training environment, help you relate the program to site-specific incidents, and provide program objectives for focusing your presentation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Questions may be copied and given to participants to stimulate discussion about the program, its safety lessons and universal theme.

INTRODUCTION:

Jeff “Odie” Espenship is a United States Air Force A-10 Warthog fighter pilot and international airline pilot. As a popular motivational speaker, Odie uses his unique experiences to connect with audiences and explain how to work safely in a high-risk and sometimes dangerous environment. Odie is also the founder and owner of Target Leadership, an organization dedicated to teaching safety leadership and creating a positive safety culture.

In this program, Odie discusses the concept of calling a “knock it off” immediately when recognizing dangerous behavior, while his friend and fellow fighter pilot Wes Sharp encourages viewers to speak up and tell co-workers to “keep off the grass” when they witness an unsafe act.

While recalling personal experiences from their military careers involving knock it off and keep off the grass, Odie and Wes teach essential lessons that can be applied to any work environment:

- Anyone can call a knock it off, whether you’re fresh out of training or been with the company for 30 years.
- Anytime you hear a knock it off, you must call a time out and stop the work immediately.
- Once a knock it off has been called, you need to listen and reassess the situation to get everyone’s situational awareness up to speed before returning to work.
- We can’t rely on luck to save us from situations where a knock it off should have been called immediately.
- We must share close calls and other experiences that occur in the workplace because we are the only ones who know what really goes on when no one is looking over our shoulders.
- We should embrace a culture in which people feel compelled, if not duty-bound, to say something when they witness safety rules being broken no matter how silly or trivial it may seem.

PROGRAM OUTLINE

OPENING

- Odie opens the program by saying it would focus on two concepts. “These concepts, if you embrace these at work, I promise you, it’ll save equipment, it’ll save materials and it’ll probably even save a life.”
- “The first concept is, very simply, call a knock it off,” says Odie. “This phrase is used by military fighter pilots to basically stop the work, listen, then reassess the situation.”

- “The second concept I want to focus on,” he adds, “I’m going to bring a up a buddy of mine who’s an F-18 marine fighter pilot and he’s going to talk to you a little bit about what it means to keep off the company grass.”

EMPLOYEES IN HIGH-RISK WORK ENVIRONMENTS ARE LIKE FIGHTER PILOTS

- Odie asks the audience how many of them have ever heard the phrase, “knock it off.” He says they have probably heard it from their parents, siblings and peers.
- “As a fighter pilot, the term ‘knock it off,’ it has immediate and actionable meaning,” Odie notes. He adds that he can tell from the looks on the audience’s faces that they are thinking, “We are not military fighter pilots.”
- “I say yes you are. Folks, you are out there every single day like a fighter pilot, tip of the spear, working in these high-risk and sometimes dangerous work environments,” Odie says. “And, like a fighter pilot, you are the ones that have the most to lose if something goes wrong, aren’t you?”
- He adds that the actions and decisions we make before, during and even after the job directly “affect your life and the lives of those around you. My friends, you are fighter pilots and that’s why I want us to focus, focus on this term, ‘knock it off.’”

ANYONE CAN CALL A ‘KNOCK IT OFF’

- Odie says that the companies of audience members may use “speaking up,” “intervening” or “calling a time out.” “We use knock it off, so feel free to embrace it; feel free to use it.”
- “Now anyone, anyone can call a knock it off, right? It doesn’t matter how long you’ve been with the company, fresh out of training or you’ve been here for 30 years, anybody can speak up and call a knock it off,” Odie continues.
- “You might see somebody about to take a shortcut; you might see somebody being a little bit complacent, all of these things,” he says. “You might see somebody not following proper HazCom procedures; you might see improper PPE going on for the job; or, you might see somebody just getting into their emotionally, irrational brain, making snap decisions, right? Any of these items, you can step up to the plate and call a knock it off.”
- Odie then plays a recording of four pilots each calling a knock it off in less than five seconds. “That’s how it works in the business. So here’s the contract. Anytime you hear a knock it off, it doesn’t matter what it’s for, you call a timeout; you stop the work; you immediately stop. You don’t say, ‘Well, hang on a minute;’ you don’t get in their face; you don’t say, ‘What for?’ You immediately stop the work,” he concludes.

LISTENING & THEN ASSESSING THE SITUATION

- Once you immediately stop the work after a knock it off, you must listen because you might be the one who made a mistake, according to Odie. “You just don’t know it yet. Until they’ve had the courage to speak up, or the person that spoke up, they might be the one whose situational awareness is in the map case.”
- “You won’t know any of those answers until you do the third part, which is assessing the situation,” he says. “Now, when you assess the situation, you’re just trying to get everybody’s situational awareness back up to speed, which situational awareness is perception of reality, where I think we are versus actual reality, what, what’s really going on.”

- Odie says you must get those realities congruent and you won't know that until you've gone through all the steps. "Then, when everybody's situational awareness is up to speed, fight's on, time to get back to work, but that phrase, 'stopping the work,' 'knock it off,' let me tell you, it's all meaningless, absolutely meaningless unless you have the courage to step up to the plate and call a knock it off."
- Winston Churchill had a great saying, "It takes courage to speak up and it takes courage to listen," according to Odie. "As a fighter pilot, I can relate to that."

THE ONE-THOUSAND-FOOT-BUBBLE RULE

- Odie says that when he and other pilots went up to dog-fight each other in their planes, they had a rule to keep them safe. "It was called the one-thousand-foot-bubble rule. We weren't allowed to get within 1,000 feet of the other airplane; it was there for our safety."
- "It was just there, sort of like minimum approach if you're an electrician. We just weren't allowed to get in there, but sometimes, man, we would get inside that bubble," he adds.
- "It helped us win; it helped us gain advantage; it helped us get the job done," Odie says, "Because by Golly, we're just competitive by nature."
- Odie then shows the audience a video of a dog-fight between him and another pilot. He says he started the fight about 1,500 feet behind the other pilot and his job was to get him lined up between the fixed gun cross and the total velocity vector.
- "Right in there, that's a valid shot. He knows; he rolls to the left; I counter roll him to the right," says Odie. "I'm going to cut him off to the inside, but right in there I started getting too close."
- "I had to let him go; it's like a fish on, fish off. That's why his airplane disappeared off the bottom of that screen," he says.

FAILURE TO CALL A KNOCK IT OFF ALMOST ENDS IN DISASTER

- Odie recalls an incident that occurred a year prior to that dog-fight. He and his flight leader, who Odie says is like a foreman, were in a vertical dog-fight, passing each other at the bottom and the top with neither gaining any advantage.
- "It was like a knife fight in a phone booth, and we're just hacking and whacking at each other," he remembers. "And, on one of these passes, as we come at each other, nose-to-nose, alright, snot locker to snot locker, I noticed him turn just a little bit early on my bubble."
- "Now, I saw that safety violation. He was just trying to cheat a little bit to win, and I saw that and it was my job to get on that radio and say what?" Odie asks. "Knock it off, knock it off! That's right, but I didn't do it."
- On the next pass, Odie says he did something worse. "What do you think I did to him on the next pass? The same thing, exactly right. I turned a little bit early on his bubble, the next pass, he turned a little bit early on my bubble."
- "You see now what we're doing is basically peeling back those layers of safety that our squadron has set up for us," he adds. "But the whole time, I'm thinking to myself, 'You know what?' I know what I'm doing, but I'll be careful.' Let me tell you, being careful can get you killed."

- Closure rates are about 900 miles per hour, according to Odie. “Okay, 900 miles an hour and I’ve got about seven G’s on my body, and as I’m coming at him and I’m looking at him cross circle on this pass, it looks to me like I needed to go a little bit to the left to miss him.”
- His flight leader told Odie later that I looked like he needed to go a little bit to the right to miss Odie. “Well, that’s just what I did; I went a little bit to the left. He’s cross circle, right?”
- “You know by then, it’s too late. Now we’re screaming on the radio. What? ‘Knock it off!’” Odie says. “Can I tell you we passed each other in a flash, and had there been another coat of paint on those airplanes, we would have been pink mist that particular day.”

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE CLOSE-CALL INCIDENT

- “It wasn’t our training or our skill that got us to survive that day, it was pure luck, divine intervention,” says Odie. “You and I, we can’t rely on luck, can we? We can’t rely on that divine intervention; we’ve got to rely on our own noodle.”
- He then asks the audience who they think he and his flight leader told about the incident when they go back to their squadron and landed safely. When they reply, “Nobody,” he asks, “How did y’all know that? You all are fighter pilots, aren’t you? That’s right, nobody.”
- “Isn’t that a shame that nobody got to benefit from that lesson we learned out there? Do you all think that we were the only fighter pilots that that happened to? Absolutely not!” says Odie. “If it’s happened to me, it’s probably happened before, and statistically, it will probably happen again in the future.”
- “The person it happens again to in the future might not be as lucky as you are, so that’s why it’s important to share with each other those experiences that go on every single day in the workplace,” he adds. “Because you see what really goes on out there when no one is looking over your shoulder.”

DON’T LET ‘SITUATIONAL COMPLIANCE’ RATIONALIZE AWAY THE NEED TO CALL A KNOCK IT OFF

- Odie introduces his friend Wes Sharp, an F-18 marine fighter pilot and motivational speaker, to tell his story and to talk about “keeping off the company grass.”
- Wes opens his story by saying that back in November 1996, a day that started like any other day, he was on the flight schedule to fly a routine training mission with a fellow instructor pilot.
- “You want to get yourself killed as a fighter pilot, flying on a routine training mission, right?” asks Wes. “When you read in the paper, that’s how we always get killed, right? They’re out on a routine training mission and didn’t come back.”
- “We briefed the work and briefed the job like we had done many, many times before, but let me tell you, unlike Odie, we had that extra coat of paint and we had a mid-air collision going over 500 miles an hour,” Wes says.
- He adds that because of his desire to get the job done, he rationalized away to call a knock it off. “I thought that it didn’t apply in this particular case. We call it ‘situational compliance.’ It doesn’t really apply here, right?”

- “I’ve got my truck parked on a hill, but it’s not really a hill, so I’m not going to put the chocks under the tires. Or I’m not going to get the proper PPE because it’s a small job and the equipment is too far away,” are two examples Wes uses.
- “Situational compliance, right? We’re going to follow the rules until when? The rules get in the way, right? And it almost cost me my life,” he concludes.

CREATING A CULTURE WHERE PEOPLE SPEAK UP

- Wes says he was one of the lucky ones because he got away with it. “We were able to land our planes safely on deck. Except for a clean pair of skivvies and an utter look of shock on our faces, we were otherwise good to go, right?”
- “So, as leaders and co-workers, the challenge is to create a culture where people, when they see something, they feel compelled, if not duty-bound, to say something,” he adds.
- “If they see someone violating a rule, policy or procedure, “ Wes says, “We want them to call a knock it off and stop the work so no one gets hurt.”

KEEPING OFF THE GRASS

- The Marine Corp is one of the most rigid services in the world with lots of protocol and etiquette, according to Wes. “So this could be a challenge for them when someone junior, to speak up and call someone out, that’s more senior when they’re doing something that’s not right.”
- “So the way they handle it is, one of the first things you’re taught when you join the Marine Corp is, you can’t walk on the Marine Corp’s grass,” he says.
- Wes adds that when he first heard this, he just thought it was another way to make his job more difficult than it needed to be. “If they cared about the grass so much, why don’t they take better care of it, right? I mean, make it look like a golf course green.”
- “In fact, on desert bases where they don’t bother to grow grass, they comb the dirt and outline it with rocks to simulate where the grass would be and dare you to walk on it. But, we are humans, right?” he asks.
- Wes remembers a time when he was a second lieutenant and late for a meeting, which he says you don’t want to be in the Marine Corp. “I looked up at the building at the front door and I took off in a straight line, straight across the grass, not even thinking about it.”
- As he walked in the grass, he heard some say, “Sir, get off the Marine Corp’s grass.” He looked up to see a lance corporal, very junior to him in rank, had corrected his errant behavior.
- “Well, I was a little embarrassed, right? A little bit angry. I’m like, ‘You can’t talk to me that way.’ Well, yes, he can. Right is right and wrong is wrong. So I embarrassingly got back on the sidewalk and ran to my meeting,” says Wes.
- He realized later on as he got a little older and wiser that the Marine Corp didn’t care about the grass. “It’s a metaphor for when you see something, you say something, no matter how silly or trivial the rule is to you.”
- “Now, they realize we’re humans and we’re going to get footprints in that grass, aren’t we?” Wes asks. “Well, they’re hoping that when you have that weak moment, when you want to hurry

through a job, not get the proper PPE on, maybe not chock that truck, that somebody will notice it and they'll feel duty-bound to speak, regardless of their experience level or how long they've been with the company."

- "Because we're humans, they know they're going to get footprints in the grass, right? We're going to make mistakes, but what they are not going to tolerate is allowing a path to develop. A path means people are taking shortcuts, they're not following the rules, and what? Nobody's saying anything to them; it's become okay, it's become the way we do things around here," says Wes.
- "So, that's the way the Marine Corp handles it," he concludes, "And I encourage each and every one of you to stay off your company's grass, and when you see someone doing something they shouldn't be, say something."

PREPARE FOR THE SAFETY MEETING:

Review each section of this Leader's Guide as well as the videotape or DVD. Here are a few suggestions for using the program:

Make everyone aware of the importance the company places on health and safety and how each person must be an active member of the safety team.

Introduce the program and then play it without interruption. Review the program content by presenting the information in the program outline.

Here are some suggestions for preparing your videotape equipment and the room or area you use:

Check the room or area for quietness, adequate ventilation and temperature, lighting and unobstructed access.

Check the seating arrangement and the audiovisual equipment to ensure that all participants will be able to see and hear the program.

CONDUCTING THE PRESENTATION:

Begin the meeting by welcoming the participants. Introduce yourself and give each person the opportunity to become acquainted if there are new people joining the training session.

Explain that the primary purpose of the program is to discuss the concepts of "knock it off" and "keep off the grass" as they apply to our response when we see unsafe situations in the workplace.

Introduce the program and play it without interruption. Review the program content by presenting the information in the program outline. Copy the discussion questions included in this Leader's Guide and allow the participants to review them and then conduct a discussion about the program.

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Discussion Questions

1. If you were a newly-hired employee and saw a veteran co-worker in an unsafe situation, would you have the courage to call a knock it off? Why or why not?
2. Have you ever been involved in an unsafe work situation where no one spoke up and you were just plain lucky not be injured? If so, what could the consequences have been of your risky behavior?
3. What are the steps involved in resolving an issue when you or a co-worker calls a knock it off?
4. Odie says in the program that “being careful can get you killed.” What do you think he means by that?
5. If you were involved in a close-call incident at work, would you be willing to share the experience with your co-workers? Why or why not?
6. Have you ever broken a safety procedure because the rule got in the way of you completing the job in a timely manner or it just seemed insignificant at the time? If so, what could the result have been had something gone wrong?
7. What does the concept of keeping your feet off the company grass mean to you?