Outlook

Treating the Abnormal as Normal

I'd like to offer my heartfelt salute to the men and women of the US Navy, as well as those sailors serving alongside other allied forces in the cause of freedom. To that end, I want to share a bit of the history and philosophy behind one of the most celebrated branches of the military: the United States Navy Sea, Air, and Land Teams, or SEALs. Famous for their effectiveness and bravery, SEALs are part of the U.S. Naval Special Warfare Command and are renowned for conducting a wide range of high-risk, specialized missions worldwide.

SEAL training is known for its intensity, and a central concept within that training is the daily admonition to "treat the abnormal as normal." This concept is more than just a motto; it's a survival mechanism that defines how SEALs are conditioned to think and act in extreme environments. In training and in missions, SEALs face extreme physical and psychological challenges—from sleep deprivation and cold exposure to real-world mortal combat. They are pushed to endure discomfort and chaos so frequently that what might seem overwhelming or abnormal to most people becomes routine for them.

The mindset of treating the abnormal as normal is essential to their ability to remain calm and focused in even the most high-pressure situations. Whether operating in hostile environments, battling fatigue, or facing imminent danger, SEALs are taught to maintain composure. The ability to stay grounded in the face of danger allows SEALs to carry out critical missions with precision and efficiency.

It is not just physical toughness but also mental strength that enables SEALs to thrive in unpredictable, high-stress environments. SEALs learn to normalize chaos and danger, so their reactions become calm and instinctive, rather than fear-driven and chaotic. Instead of being thrown off by sudden changes, SEALs anticipate and embrace them. This mindset helps team members to remain adaptive and flexible, capable of executing mission objectives no matter what unforeseen obstacles arise.

Perhaps most importantly, this philosophy fosters teamwork. SEALs are trained to rely on one another and face abnormal conditions together, which builds a strong bond between team members. This shared resilience makes these unique fighting teams far more effective than others, as each member knows they can trust their teammates to remain steady under fire.

By embracing the idea that abnormal situations are a normal part of their world, SEALs develop the adaptability and resilience necessary to handle anything that comes their way. This mindset of thriving under pressure transcends the battlefield and provides valuable lessons that anyone can apply—whether in work, family life, or faith.

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On the cover: *Aviation Boatswain's Mate 3rd Class Roberto Cerdas directs a French Rafale fighter jet onto the catapult aboard the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush (CVN-77).-*

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