6 Essential Actions for Thriving in Close Quarters

Lessons from my time on board Navy SEALs submarines.

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Navy SEALs often rely upon a remarkable set of underwater vehicles to get their jobs done. What I'm referring to are specially converted nuclear submarines with advanced diving chambers, plus classified combat-ready mini submersibles also known as SDVs (or SEAL Delivery Vehicles).

I know a lot about these vehicles because two of three platoons I commanded were SDV-based. We SEALs spent an inordinate amount of time onboard Navy submarines all over the world. But as "guests" of these submarines, we were confined to just a few small areas of these amazing crafts.

Like all of us our current state of quarantine, we SEALs chose to submit to limited conditions for the greater good. Our shelter-in-place space was limited to a few cramped quarters. Yet the lessons I learned there — while spending *as many as 50 days at a time* on a submarine — are invaluable. Let me share them with you here so you can use your quarantine time to your benefit as much as possible.

The lessons fall easily into the acronym R.E.M.O.T.E. I promise that if you start putting R.E.M.O.T.E. into action, you will transform your quarantine experience. You might even transform your entire future like I did, because the time I spent confined on Navy submarines led me to invent more than 40 fitness products such as the best-selling Perfect

Pushup and Perfect Ab Carver. It also inspired me to write two books: *Be Unstoppable – The 8 Essentials Actions to Succeed at Anything*, and *Unstoppable Teams – The 4 Essentials Actions of High-Performance Leadership*. Let me break down the first and most important essential action to take with R.E.M.O.T.E. so you can see what I mean.

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R is for Routine, Routine, Routine!

Sailors know this firsthand. Whether you are living above or below the water, routine is an absolute must. It gives you purpose, keeps you focused and reminds you of recurrent tasks you can look forward to. Routine brings some certainty to uncertain situations.

Living in confined quarters at sea is, of course, very different than living in quarantine today. I happen to be sequestered with my family of six (four teenage boys), two Labradors and one remarkably busy wife. We each have specific routines throughout the day. Having them, and knowing one another's routines, creates the foundation to thriving. There are three routines that I want you to plan for:

- **Sleep, eat, exercise and work routine.** The Navy calls this the POD, or the Plan of the Day, and it is our daily Bible. From my days as a Midshipman at the U.S. Naval Academy to leading SEALs all over the world, we always had a POD. The process alone of putting together a POD (the night before) with the family is extremely helpful in getting everyone on the same page for the next day (not to mention it gets everyone thinking about it ahead of time). Below is an is an actual POD from a recent Monday in our family. You will notice I use military or European time (I find it's easier and gives the kids something to learn), and we have chores sections that rotate every day for each of the four

boys. We do general time blocks because each son has a different school schedule (we have kids in three different public schools) and work with them to make sure they are working on their own routines (which itself is the second routine).

1. 0800-0900 Breakfast
2. 0900-1200 Schoolwork
3. 1200-1300 Lunch/break
4. 1300-1500 Schoolwork/Home economics
5. 1500-1600 Exercise
6. 1600-1800 Free Time
7. 1800-1930 Dinner/Clean-up
8. 1930-2130 Movies/Games/Reading
9. CHORES:
    1. Dishes/unloading dishwashers _____
    2. Poop Patrol _____
    3. Walk dogs _____
    4. Trash _____

- The second routine is your own work schedule and specifically planning out **what you need to get done** during certain blocks of time. I use 3×5 cards along with my calendar to track to-do lists and meetings. The reason I like using note cards is that it does not offer me a potential distraction the moment I look at either my phone or computer. Often, I find myself getting sidetracked the moment I pick up my phone. I also find it satisfying manually checking off a task versus doing

it electronically, but that is me. The point is to create your own work routine within the family routine and then communicate it to the family.

- The final routine is your internal routine, or **your self-discipline** that keeps you going day after day, regardless of what the world throws at you. The internal routine is about keeping you on track. What I'm sharing with you may sound simple, but it's important to keep all these micro habits we normally have without quarantine. If you start to slack on your micro habits you will start giving yourself "permission" to slack off in other areas.

Here are a few actions that fall into the above categories that are especially crucial to keep up with"

1. **Sleep.** Be consistent when you go to bed and wake up.
2. **Shower/shave/prep.** Do the same routine you would normally do for work.
3. **Clothes.** Wear the same standard of clothing for your business casual days as you would for work. It communicates to your family that you're now in a work frame of mind. And change into "play" clothes when your day is finished.
4. **Space.** Rotate your work space. Keep your computer in the same place, but give yourself a break from it when you need to read a report. Or get creative and find another space so that when you return to your computer you're re-charged.

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These three routines, and their corresponding tasks, will help you thrive while living in close quarters with your family. It will take a little getting used at first, but in short order you will find family members appreciating the structure to

their day, which will make them and you much more productive. Let me know how it goes, and stay tuned, as I’ll be sharing the remaining lessons of R.E.M.O.T.E. in the coming weeks.

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