



The path of life will inevitably travel through dark and turbulent times; it's easy to lose sight of the bigger picture when confronted by a grave crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic. As a future leader, you need to learn to know yourself well enough to identify when you are losing perspective – and, how to fix it!

During my 41 years of naval service, and the inevitable trials and challenges I have faced along the way as a leader, I have found the key to maintaining my perspective during difficult times is through keeping my focus on my people.

First, you need to continue to maintain a dialogue and personal connection with others. Whether I am talking to my most junior subordinate, a peer, or a seasoned mentor, I know they are providing me the tools to widen my own perspective on a problem. During the pandemic, one of the hardest things to do as a leader is to maintain these authentic human interactions virtually – do not let that keep you from trying! And, when this is over, do not forget that there is no true substitute for in-person interaction. Use the many tools at your fingertips to continue to stay connected with and learn from those on your team or in your sphere. Also, remember to make yourself available to those who need your counsel and wisdom. And, when the world returns to normal once again, remember to show up and be present for those who count on you.

Secondly, I keep my perspective through service to others. When life starts to seem especially challenging, and you feel like you might be losing your way, turn your focus and energy towards serving those around you. It's a wonder what that can do to shift your perspective and alter your attitude for the better. You might even be surprised that you've suddenly found your way once again.

When faced with a great challenge, it is not the time for self-doubt or self-pity. Our nation and our world need bold, courageous and compassionate servant leaders to carry us through difficult times. I believe our next generation is ready to rise to this challenge and I look forward to seeing what you all accomplish!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sean S. Buck". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sean S. Buck  
Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy  
63rd Superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy