



## NAWCWD hosts diversity speaker Dr. Steve Robbins

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Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division employees listen and take notes as Dr. Steve Robbins presents a workshop on diversity and inclusion on Aug. 25 in Point Mugu, California. (U.S. Navy photo)

**NAVAL AIR WARFARE CENTER WEAPONS DIVISION, CHINA LAKE, Calif.** - There was laughter and there were tears, but more importantly, there was a deeper understanding of the human psyche and why “your brain is good at inclusion...except when it’s not.”

In an educational workshop by the same name at Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division China Lake and Point Mugu on Aug. 24 and Aug. 25, respectively, Dr. Steve L. Robbins used his personal and professional experience to explain how the brain’s natural functions can lead to things like unconscious bias and much more.

“Diversity is more than one person in a room,” Robbins explained. “It’s more than just race or gender because no two people are exactly alike. The issue is not diversity, however, it’s open mindedness and closed mindedness.”

Robbins went on to explain topics such as the “ancient brain” versus the “modern brain” and how judgment and bias can creep into your brain even when you don’t want it to. He described how the brain reacts to “social pain,” pain one feels when they feel excluded or



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isolated, and even spoke on why people tend to stay in their comfort zones and allow “noise” to block their ability to get to know someone.

“Be less certain and more curious,” Robbins said as he reminded the audience that no one knows everything. “We often can’t see the damage we do to a person at work when they go home.”

Robbins is an experienced speaker, professor, writer and consultant with a background in communication, socio-psychology and cognitive neuroscience. He’s the author of a book called, “Teachable Moments: Short Stories to Spark Diversity Dialogue,” and works with numerous organizations.

“This work is not about numbers for me, as in ‘Do we have enough Asians?’ or ‘Do we have enough women?’” Robbins concluded. “We can get to that point if we practice open mindedness and include each other. The world is becoming more diverse and it’s important that we take care of each other’s mental state. That’s what’s going to make people feel they are treated well here, want to be open minded to accepting people who are different and know that they’re not going to cause harm, but instead enhance the organization.”

The event, sponsored by the NAWCWD Equal Employment Opportunity Office, allowed its 150 attendants to take three and a half hours to learn more about each other and about themselves. Overall, it showed them how to have a deeper commitment to addressing the issues of inclusion and diversity. Dwayne Heinsma, director for Acquisition, challenged employees to practice what they learned.

“I’m sure you heard something today that resonated with you,” he said. “Think about what you’re going to do differently when you leave this room.”