



Health Promotion Toolbox

September: Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Month

Plan of the Week Notes

Each week during Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Month, share one of the paragraphs below with your command to enhance understanding of the importance of encouraging and supporting fellow Sailors and Marines.

Week 1

Encourage healthy behaviors among your peers when you access resources and programs designed for Sailors and Marines that address the importance of mental health and suicide prevention. When you learn more about [promoting psychological and emotional well-being](#), you can help foster an environment free from the negative attitudes that can be associated with reaching out for help with life's challenges. Military life can put stress on you. But often, some of the most significant stressors are everyday situations like relationship problems or financial strain. When life's challenges become too much to handle and Sailors and Marines feel alone in the challenges they face, some may contemplate suicide. You can help yourself and your peers when you recognize suicide [warning signs](#) and [risk factors](#) and take action to get help or intervene early.

Week 2

When stressors build up, and stress becomes overwhelming, you should reach out for help. You can call the [Military Crisis Line](#) at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or text 838255; reach out to [Military OneSource](#) at 1-800-342-9647; or contact the [Marine DStress Line](#), an anonymous phone counseling service with a 'Marine-to-Marine' approach, at 1-877-476-7734. **You can also take steps today to build your psychological resilience, so that you are better prepared for life's stressful situations.** There are training strategies that can help you and your peers [build psychological toughness](#) so that everyday stressors are easier to handle. Become more resilient when you start practicing psychological health exercises regularly. Building resilience tactics such as creating a strong social support network and making healthy living a priority can help. [Physical activity](#), such as martial arts, can also help you work out stress. Reinforcing your



psychological strength means navigating the stress of everyday life and [overcoming negative attitudes around reaching out for](#) support when you need it.

Week 3

The job you do can be difficult, so make sure you allocate time to relax and take steps to reduce stress. The [Relax Relax Toolkit](#) is a great resource that houses various relaxation and breathing exercises and techniques to reduce stress. Also check out the HPW resources [Navigating Stress](#) and [Beauty of Sleep](#), which offer guidance on ways to take care of yourself when you are feeling challenged, stay positive in the face of change, and improve your immune system. You can even find ways to navigate stress [at work](#). For example, in the midst of a busy workday, plan a relaxing weekend activity and visualize yourself there. If you are confronted with stress, reach out to supportive people such as friends and family. And as always, if you choose to [drink alcohol](#), do so responsibly. There are even mobile apps to help you relax! You can download [these apps](#) so that you always have a helping psychological health tool at the ready. The [Navy Operational Stress Control blog](#) also provides helping stress control resources.

Week 4

Change your daily routines and behaviors to promote a positive, healthy lifestyle. There are things you can do every day to improve psychological and emotional well-being. Instead of binge [eating because you are stressed](#), take the time to care for yourself by making [well-balanced meals](#). Staying physically fit can also keep your mind sharp,¹ so stay in shape by choosing one of these [exercise programs for active, healthy living](#). [Mindfulness meditation](#) can help create stress-free environments wherever you may be. And don't forget to get [enough sleep](#). Seven to eight hours of sleep each night can improve your memory and mood, allowing you to keep a positive outlook.² By making positive daily behavior changes you are taking control of your mental health and ultimately strengthening your mind and body.

References

¹The Benefits of Physical Activity. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/pa-health/>. Last Reviewed June 2015.

²In Brief: Your Guide to Healthy Sleep. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/files/docs/public/sleep/healthysleepfs.pdf>. Published September 2011.