



Building Your Resilience During Recovery from a Wound, Illness, or Injury

What is Resilience?

We generally talk about resilience as a person's ability to cope with and adapt to life's challenges. In the Navy and Marine Corps, we define resilience as "the ability to withstand, recover, and grow in the face of stressors and changing demands."¹ The challenges you face during recovery from a wound, illness, or injury can be difficult. You may have sustained or developed your wound, illness, or injury suddenly or unexpectedly. Maintaining and building your resilience is more important than ever during this time, in order to promote healing and to help prevent further illness or injury.



Adapting and adjusting to these new situations isn't always easy, and everyone has good and bad days. Positively adapting to change, positively navigating stress, and using positive coping skills to manage your challenges during treatment, rehabilitation, or reintegration all help in building your resilience. You can learn and build resilience through your behaviors, thoughts, and actions

Defining What "Recovery" Means to You

Recovery can mean something different to every Sailor and Marine. You may be confronting physical, psychological, emotional, social, or a combination of these or other challenges during your recovery. For one person, recovery might mean learning to manage chronic symptoms in a way that allows them to engage in desired daily activities. For another person, recovery might mean re-establishing or working on important relationships that were impacted at some point along the path of managing a wound, illness, or injury. Recovery can be the way you choose to adapt, find meaning, and live your life in response to your wound, illness, or injury.



Building Your Resilience During Recovery

Resilience can be learned and built. You can use the following to help strengthen your resilience and facilitate management of the challenges you face.

- **Create and build goals.**

Use a weekly action plan and log to establish new goals. These goals can be part of your treatment or rehabilitation plan or can be other goals you set such as trying a new sport or hobby. You may have to adjust goals you established for yourself before becoming wounded, ill, or injured. http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/Documents/health-promotion-wellness/wounded-ill-and-injured/PEW-for-WII/WII_PEW_RecoveryGoals.pdf

- **Think positively.**

Reframe negative thinking and log your thoughts using a thought log. When you find yourself in a negative thought, acknowledge the negative thought, and try to reframe the thought in a positive way. Write these thoughts down in your thought log.

http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/Documents/health-promotion-wellness/wounded-ill-and-injured/PEW-for-WII/WII_PEW_ReframingNegThoughts.pdf

- **Use relaxation or meditation techniques to manage daily stress and challenges.** Managing your stress is essential to your overall physical and psychological health and well-being and will aid with your recovery. Visit HPW's Relax Relax toolkit at

<http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/psychological-emotional-wellbeing/relax-relax/pages/index.html>.

- **Learn to recognize when you need help, reach out when you need it, and learn to accept help when it's offered;** an example might be that you or a loved one notices that you are using alcohol or misusing medications to cope with your challenges or avoiding or isolating yourself from others. You may feel alone even when physically surrounded by many people. There are many helping resources available, and this is a time when reaching out for help is good and necessary.

- **Fight the barriers that keep you from seeking help when you need it.** It can sometimes be difficult to admit you need help coping with challenges; reaching out for help builds your resilience and is a sign of strength.

- **Develop and strengthen your social network with family, friends, or peers.** Surrounding yourself around others who have been through similar challenges and adjusted can help motivate you during your treatment, rehabilitation, or reintegration.





- **Support others and get involved with your community.** Engaging in activities that are bigger than yourself can help strengthen your resilience.

Peer Support

- Vets4Warriors connects Active Duty, National Guard, Reserve members and military families to peers. Call 855-838-8255 or chat via <http://www.vets4warriors.com/> for confidential assistance in managing stress and building resilience. Peer responders are Veterans or military family members.
- The Real Warriors Campaign offers resources for people who are seeking peer support, or wanting to get involved. Visit the Real Warriors website at <http://www.realwarriors.net/>

References

1. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. (2011, Sep 01). Chairman's TotalForce Fitness Framework (CJCSI 3405.01). Washington, DC.