



RECOVERY. RESILIENCE.

Wounded, Ill, and Injured



Preventing Social Isolation on All Fronts: Service Member's Handbook

September 2014



NAVY AND MARINE CORPS PUBLIC HEALTH CENTER
PREVENTION AND PROTECTION START HERE

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction: Preventing social isolation and promoting social engagement | 1 |
| Social Engagement Conversation Guide | 3 |
| Plan of Action Worksheet | 5 |
| Strategies for Social Engagement | 6 |
| Resource Guide | 8 |
| Sites and Organizations that Provide Multiple Services | 8 |
| Crisis and Peer Support Lines | 9 |
| Counseling Services | 9 |
| Non-Medical Case Management and Care Support | 10 |
| Activity Resources | 10 |
| TBI/PTSD Resources | 10 |
| Appendix A: Social Engagement Conversation Guide | 12 |
| Appendix B: Plan of Action Worksheet for Service Members | 13 |

Introduction: Preventing social isolation and promoting social engagement

A serious wound, illness, or injury can create a big change in outlook and daily living which has a ripple effect on your social network. Your focus on doctors' appointments, hospitalizations, treatments, and recovery time combined with physical limitations, pain, and psychological and emotional changes can all have an impact on your relationships and personal life. These changes in your social environment and support network can positively or negatively affect your treatment, recovery, and quality of life.

Social isolation happens when you are disconnected and/or have some strained connections with your family, friends, and peers, and often limits access to the support you need. Social isolation can contribute to: depression, anxiety, apathy, and frustration; all of which can negatively impact the recovery process and total wellness. It's ok if you realize that you are isolating yourself, as this is something you can change. It is important to be patient with yourself and focus on small steps. Do what's right for you and don't compare yourself with others. It is important to strike a balance that you are comfortable with between being alone and being social. Through self-reflection, communication, and action, you can make sure social isolation doesn't become a habit.

For service members who are wounded, ill or injured, maintaining social interaction is especially important to the recovery process. As a service member, you have learned through training and serving with your unit that working with others can enhance personal performance and provide a sense of belonging and satisfaction. You know that you can accomplish more as a member of a team than you can on your own. If you find yourself withdrawing from others, this is the time to take early preventative action that can keep you on track and connected to a support system.

The goal of this packet is to provide information, education, and resources for early intervention to help prevent you from becoming socially isolated. This handbook is one of three

Inside the Service Member Handbook

- **Social Engagement Conversation Guide.** This is a list of questions asking service members about their level of social engagement before and after their wound, illness, or injury.
- **Plan of Action Worksheet.** This is a one page worksheet designed to help organize your goals and track progress.
- **Strategies for Social Engagement.** This section includes some tips that other Service members have found helpful in connecting with your family, friends, peers, and community.
- **Resource Guide.** The Resource Guide includes links and descriptions of support services available to Service members and their families.

Social Isolation Prevention Handbooks, each written for different a group of people that are on your care team:

1. Wounded, ill, or injured service members,
2. Caregivers, and
3. Providers.

Preventing social isolation and building or maintaining a strong support network is a team effort and each of these groups has an important role to play to support your overall health and wellness. The resources in these handbooks; the Social Engagement Conversation Guide, the Plan of Action Worksheet, the Strategies for Social Engagement, and the Resource Guide; are designed to start a dialogue about social isolation, as this can be a neglected area of treatment. These resources can be introduced and used by any member of the care team, but will be most effective if they are used by you with your care team together, addressing the value of social engagement from all fronts. This Handbook can help you engage as active member of your healthcare team and support network through conversations about your level of social interaction.

All three handbooks are available for download on the Navy Marine Corps Public Health Center website:

Providers: http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/Documents/health-promotion-wellness/wounded-ill-and-injured/Rel-and-Int/WII_RelAndInt_SocialIsolation_Providers.pdf

Caregivers: http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/Documents/health-promotion-wellness/wounded-ill-and-injured/Rel-and-Int/WII_RelAndInt_SocialIsolation_Caregivers.pdf

Service members: http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/Documents/health-promotion-wellness/wounded-ill-and-injured/Rel-and-Int/WII_RelAndInt_SocialIsolation_ServiceMembers.pdf

Social Engagement Conversation Guide

Purpose

The Social Engagement Checklist is designed to start a discussion on how the onset of a wound, illness, or injury (WII) may interrupt or change your level of social engagement. It asks the how often you engage in a number of social activities; more than before, the same amount, or less than before their wound, illness, or injury. Reviewing the answers or discussing the questions can help the you identify goals with your provider and/or caregiver to improve and maintain your socialization and prevent social isolation. **The Social Engagement Checklist is available in [Appendix A](#).**

Instructions

You can complete this on your own time or you can complete it with your caregiver or someone on your health care team. If you complete it on your own, it is helpful to bring the completed Conversation Guide with you to any appointments where you might discuss social support. The guide is most effective when you discuss the questions and answers with your caregiver and/or provider.

Follow-up discussion

This Conversations Guide can be a resource for self-reflection as well as a spring board to start a discussion with your caregiver or provider about social isolation and setting goals to get involved in social activities.

This is not an assessment or evaluation of your social engagement, but a way to talk about your life before and after a wound, illness, or injury. If you have reduced social interaction for most or all of the activities listed, that might indicate there are some overarching changes that could help you prevent social isolation. However, if there are only a few areas where you have limited engagement, this might be an opportunity to talk about why that has changed or to set specific goals related to that activity.

If you are interested in taking action, there are resources in this Handbook to help you participate in enjoyable activities and increase your social interaction. You may not have the same exact capabilities as before but there are usually options to adapt an activity to your current situation and/or find new activities to enjoy.

As you are taking action to include new activities in your life, refer to:

- The [Plan of Action Worksheet](#) to help you organize your goals and develop strategies for implementation. This includes the **SMART approach** to goal setting which outlines to set goals that are Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound.
- The [Strategies for Social Engagement](#) for tips on ways to maintain and expand a Service member's social network and increase social interaction.
- The [Resource Guide](#) which can be used to identify specific and appropriate resources which you can access for support and information.

Plan of Action Worksheet

Purpose

The purpose of the Plan of Action Worksheet is to help you create an organized, documented plan including action items and implementation strategies. This will help organize your thoughts and give you a place to start to take steps to address potential social isolation issues. **The Plan of Action Worksheet is located in [Appendix B](#).**

Instructions

1. After you complete and score the Conversation Guide, go to the [Plan of Action Worksheet](#).
2. Use the Worksheet to identify specific goals related to any gaps in your social life or level of social interaction.
3. Review the SMART technique illustrated in the box below to ensure effective goal setting.
4. Use the Progress column to track specific challenges and successes as you work on this area of your life. Bring the Plan of Action Worksheet with you when you plan to talk to your provider about social issues.

Follow-up discussion

After working with to set SMART goals, write down the obstacles and challenges to reaching those goals. As you identify any particular obstacles that may be interfering with your socialization or causing you to withdraw, be sure to reach out to those around you to assist you in overcoming these barriers. Some common challenges include transportation, adaptive equipment, or emotional issues such as anxiety or loneliness. Try to be as specific as you can when you are describing obstacles, it will help you create more specific strategies to follow.

Use the Resource Guide to develop strategies and next steps. The Guide includes services that will help you connect with peers, find social activities, and garner support from people going through similar challenges.

Below, in the Strategies for Social Engagement section, there are also some suggestions for ways to prevent social isolation through self-reflection, communication, and action.

Setting SMART Goals

The SMART approach to goal setting suggests that each goal be:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Relevant
- Time-bound

Strategies for Social Engagement

Changes in your social life

A serious wound, illness, or injury can disrupt your everyday routine and interrupt your existing personal relationships and social life. As your social life changes and your social network evolves, temporary periods of social isolation may occur. During treatment and recovery, you may find yourself spending less time with your social network due to the time and energy required for your health and health care. You may withdraw from other people because you are worried that if you open up, what you say will upset or bother them. Communicating and maintaining strong bonds with family, friends, peers, and your community are essential to long term psychological and emotional well-being and physical health.

Maintaining relationships

The relationships you built before and during your treatment and recovery may change, but often remain your primary support system after your recovery. Maintaining these relationships does take effort, but they can provide you with immediate and future rewards that last a lifetime.

Your significant other

Nurturing your relationship with your significant other during this time of change is important. Finding a balance between spending time together and making time for yourself can be a challenge for both you and your partner. If you find that one or both of you are withdrawing, go on a date or set aside time for each other away from the hospital, home, or other causes of stress. Seek out new activities and hobbies that can be a source of enjoyment for both of you. Plan out when you are going to socialize and then stick with your plan even when you'd rather be alone.

Family and Friends

A vital part of sustaining relationships with family, friends, and peers is reaching out to them and accepting their gestures to connect with you. Communication doesn't always have to be in person – social media, video chatting, text, and phone calls are all methods of communication that can help you maintain contact with your social network. Be honest with those you care about regarding what to expect, and how to talk about your wound, illness, or injury. Sharing your perspective with others is a good way to prevent misunderstandings and opens the door for honest communication.

Expanding your social network

Forming new relationships and exploring new interests allows you to learn about yourself, increase engagement in your community, and participate in enjoyable activities. Consider the following activities to help you engage in your current relationships and establish new ones.

Exercise, sports, and recreation

Sports and recreational activities can provide entertainment as well as an opportunity to socialize. Talk to your healthcare provider about the best options for exercise and recreation. Look into local activity clubs, Navy and Marine Corps and Wounded Warrior leagues, or talk to your MWR coordinator to find out what is available in your area.

Volunteer

Community involvement can help you meet new people, and find new hobbies, interests, or causes. Volunteering is a good way to boost your mood – the feeling of helping others can give you a sense of accomplishment and positivity. There are hundreds of opportunities to support local and federal non-profit organizations, including those that serve Navy and Marine Corps service members and families.

Continuing education

Community colleges and adult learning institutions are a great place to learn a new skill or pursue your education while interacting with others who share your interests. Course options often include a foreign language, sport, art, film, cooking, or even music lessons.

Support groups

It can also be helpful to connect with someone who is going through or has experienced a situation similar to yours. Support groups can be a place (online or in person) to find others who you can relate to and understand your circumstances. Support groups may be specific to your wound, illness, injury, or branch of service.

See the Resource Guide below for services and organizations that support social activities and support for wounded, ill, and injured Soldiers.

Resource Guide

Sites and Organizations that Provide Multiple Services

- **The Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center, Wounded, Ill, and Injured (WII)** <http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/wounded-ill-and-injured/Pages/wii.aspx> works to enhance the readiness, resilience and recovery of WII Sailors and Marines by offering tailored informational tools and materials for healthy living.
 - **Traumatic Brain Injury Resources** <http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/Pages/Wii-tbi.aspx>
 - **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Resources** <http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/Pages/Wii-ptsd.aspx>
 - **Relationships and Intimacy Resources** <http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/Pages/Wii-relationships-intimacy.aspx>
 - **Caregiver Support Resources** <http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/Pages/Wii-caregiver-support.aspx>
- **The National Resource Directory** www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/nrd connects service members, Veterans, their families, and their caregivers with local resources for the support you need.
- **Military OneSource** www.militaryonesource.mil is a confidential Department of Defense-funded program providing comprehensive information on every aspect of military life at no cost to Active Duty, National Guard and Reserve Component members, and their families. The services include information on family or individual therapy, deployment, reunion, relationship, grief, spouse employment and education, parenting, childhood development, and financial management. Military OneSource also offers 24/7 confidential non-medical counseling services online, via telephone, or face to face. Visit the website or call **800-342-9647**.
- **After Deployment** <http://afterdeployment.dcoe.mil> provides self-care solutions targeting post-traumatic stress, depression, and other common challenges faced after a deployment and with daily living.
- **Wounded Warrior Project** www.WoundedWarriorProject.org is a website that can provide resources and information for you whether you wounded, injured, or ill. They have different sections to meet individual needs; including mind, body, economic empowerment, and engagement (ensuring service members stay connected).

Crisis and Peer Support Lines

- **Military Crisis Line** www.militarycrisisline.net provides confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year for service members in crisis. You can access the Military Crisis Line is accessible by phone, online chat, or text message and is staffed by caring, qualified responders from VA—many of whom have served in the military themselves.
- **Marine Corps DSTRESS Line** www.dstressline.com was developed by the Corps to provide professional, anonymous counseling for Marines, attached Sailors, and families. You can call 1-877-476-7734 to speak to a peer.
- **Real Warriors Message Board** www.realwarriors.net/forum/ is a part of the Real Warriors Campaign to encourage help-seeking behavior among service members, veterans, and military families coping with invisible wounds. The message boards include spaces for Active Duty, Veterans, and military families.
- **Vets4Warriors** www.vets4warriors.com provides Active Duty service members, National Guard and Reserve members and their families worldwide with 24/7 peer-to-peer support by phone (855-838-8255), email, or live online chat.

Counseling Services

- **Medical Treatment Facilities (MTFs)** <http://www.tricare.mil/mtf> each have services for therapy and counseling.
- **Fleet and Family Support Centers** www.cnic.navy.mil/ffr/family_readiness/fleet_and_family_support_program.html provides customer-focused, consistent, and efficient FFSP programs and counseling services to support sustained mission and Navy readiness.
- **National Intrepid Center of Excellence (NICoE)** www.fallenheroesfund.org is designed to provide clinical and therapeutic services for military personnel and veterans with Traumatic Brain Injury, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and/or complex psychological health issues.
- **Community Counseling Centers** are on-base resources that provide Marines with counseling, group counseling, assessments, case management, and referrals. Marines can find their on-base centers by asking a health professional chaplain, peer, or on the base website.
- **Military Family Life Consultants** https://www.mhngs.com/app/programsandservices/mflc_program.content connect licensed clinical providers with Service Members and their families to assist with issues they may face throughout the cycle of deployment.

Non-Medical Case Management and Care Support

- **Navy Wounded Warrior – Safe Harbor** <http://safeharbor.navylive.dodlive.mil/> is the Navy’s organization for coordinating the non-medical care of seriously wounded, ill, and injured Sailors, and providing resources and support to their families.
- **Marine Wounded Warrior Regiment** www.woundedwarriorregiment.org provides and enables assistance to wounded, ill, and injured Marines and Sailors and their family members in order to assist them as they return to duty or transition to civilian life.
- **Chaplains** are there to provide spiritual guidance and counseling to Sailors, Marines, and their families. Contact your local chaplain in the field or at home for confidential support.

Activity Resources

- **Navy Wounded Warrior Adaptive Athletic Reconditioning** safeharbor.navylive.dodlive.mil/transition/adaptive-athletics/ Adaptive athletic reconditioning – athletic activities that are modified to meet the abilities of injured or ill individuals – are essential to the recuperation of wounded warriors. All enrollees in Navy Wounded Warrior – Safe Harbor are encouraged to make athletics a key component of their recovery and rehabilitation plans.
- **Disabled Sports USA (DSUSA)** <http://www.disabledsportsusa.org/> provides adaptive sports opportunities for people with disabilities to develop independence, confidence and fitness through sports. DSUSA also has multiple state and regional sites.
- **Wounded Warriors, Physical Health and Wellness** www.woundedwarriorproject.org/programs/physical-health-wellness/ Physical Health & Wellness (PH&W) programs are designed to reduce stress, combat depression, and promote an overall healthy and active lifestyle by encouraging participation in fun, educational activities. Physical Health & Wellness has something to offer warriors in every stage of recovery.

TBI/PTSD Resources

- **The Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE)** www.dcoe.mil maintains a 24/7 outreach center staffed by health resource consultants who provide psychological health and TBI information, resources and referrals for service members, Veterans and their families as well. They also have resources on the website.
- **National Center for PTSD** <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/> provides information for service members, veterans, and their families about combat stress/PTSD.

- **Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center** <http://dvbic.dcoe.mil/audience/service-members-veterans> serves active duty military, their beneficiaries, and Veterans with traumatic brain injuries through state-of-the-art clinical care, innovative clinical research initiatives and educational programs, and support for force health protection services.

Appendix A: Social Engagement Conversation Guide

Are you isolating yourself? The Conversation Guide below can help you think about how your wound, illness, or injury might have affected your social engagement. The questions ask if you engage in social activities more often, the same amount, or less often than before your wound, illness, or injury. Review the questions below on your own, with your caregiver, or with your health care provider. This is only the beginning of a conversation about social isolation.

Please circle the answer that fits you best.

1. I go see movies with others.

More than before About the same amount Less than before

2. I go on dates with my significant other or if single, someone new.

More than before About the same amount Less than before

3. I go to concerts or other live shows.

More than before About the same amount Less than before

4. I talk on the phone or use social media to connect with family, friends, and relatives.

More than before About the same amount Less than before

5. I go see local sporting events.

More than before About the same amount Less than before

6. I make an effort to meet new people.

More than before About the same amount Less than before

7. I attend faith-based services or social functions.

More than before About the same amount Less than before

8. I volunteer in my community.

More than before About the same amount Less than before

9. I play board games or video games with family or friends.

More than before About the same amount Less than before

10. I have guests over to my house for a dinner or party.

More than before About the same amount Less than before

11. I participate in casual sports games or group physical activity.

More than before About the same amount Less than before

12. I am intimate with my significant other.

More than before About the same amount Less than before

13. I go out to eat with my family and friends.

More than before About the same amount Less than before

14. I spend time outdoors.

More than before About the same amount Less than before

15. I reach out to close friends to hang out and catch up.

More than before About the same amount Less than before

Please write in any other activities you like such as going to the gym, museums, historical sites, playing music, travel, or participating in holiday traditions.

16. I _____

More than before About the same amount Less than before

17. I _____

More than before About the same amount Less than before

18. I _____

More than before About the same amount Less than before

19. I _____

More than before About the same amount Less than before

Appendix B: Plan of Action Worksheet for Service Members

Plan of Action Worksheet (to be used with Social Engagement Conversation Guide)

Start Date: _____

| SMART Goals | Obstacles | Strategies/Next Steps | Progress Notes (include dates) | | | | | |
|-------------|-----------|-----------------------|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| 1. | | | <table border="1"> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> </table> | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 2. | | | <table border="1"> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> </table> | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 3. | | | <table border="1"> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> </table> | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| 4. | | | <table border="1"> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> </table> | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |