NAVY CORPSMAN WELLNESS GUIDE

Strategies for Building and Maintaining Resilience and Reducing Stress
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We’d like to thank the Navy corpsmen who took the time to talk to us about the most rewarding and challenging aspects of their job, and provided us with insights regarding ways they deal with stress in their jobs and lives. What we learned from corpsmen directly contributed to the development of this guide.

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Human subjects participated in this study after giving their free and informed consent. This research has been conducted in compliance with all applicable federal regulations governing the protection of human subjects in research (Protocol NHRC.2014.0034).
ABOUT THE GUIDE

The job of a Navy corpsman is both highly rewarding and demanding. Some of the positive aspects of this unique job are the satisfaction of helping fellow service members and the pride of being a Navy corpsman. Unique stressors of the job can include high levels of responsibility, intense time pressure, and an extremely heavy workload. These rewards and challenges are exemplified in a variety of corpsmen experiences, from serving in humanitarian missions, to working in the most advanced hospitals in the world, to caring for Marines suffering from combat injuries in forward-deployed settings.

It is sometimes difficult for people in caring professions to recognize they are under stress themselves. Because a corpsman’s job is to take care of others, they sometimes overlook their own stress, or feel like it is more important to help others than to deal with their own stress. Yet, corpsmen and other health care providers are not exempt from stress or the effects it can have on the mind and body. In fact, due to the built-in stress of their job responsibilities, corpsmen may be at higher risk for stress problems compared with deployed personnel in many other military occupations. In order to maintain your own well-being and personal wellness—as well as the readiness of the unit with which you serve—you, as a corpsman, should pay attention to your own stressors and how they affect you. By learning strategies to reduce stress, you help yourself to perform your job better. You can help others, such as coworkers, patients, international partners, and civilians, to better manage their stress.
Being aware of resources maximizes the tools you have for addressing stress in yourself and others. Getting help can take many different forms, from talking with a peer or leader to seeking more formal resources. Knowing about the different types of help available will prepare you if you or someone you know needs additional help for a stress-related problem.

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this guide is to assist Navy corpsmen to identify, reduce, and manage stress. Effectively managing your stress should ultimately increase your personal well-being and resilience, as well as enhance your professional performance and satisfaction as a corpsman.

This guide will provide you with:

- A review of scientific evidence about the effects of stress
- A framework for thinking about different types of stressors in both work and non-work environments
- Tools to assess your own level of stress for stressors that are common among caregivers, including burnout and secondary traumatic stress
- Tools to enhance your ability to maintain resilience and deal effectively with stressors
- Resources for getting help with stress concerns
GUIDED BY INPUT FROM CORPSMEN

This guide was developed by interviewing 40 Navy corpsmen with a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences in 2014–2015. We also surveyed these corpsmen about the most difficult aspects of their job and the strategies they found most helpful in managing stress. The top five most helpful ways to manage stress as rated by corpsmen were: engaging in physical activity, trying to learn from the experience, accepting the reality of the situation, taking action to improve the situation, and spending time with others. These approaches for dealing with stress were seen as more helpful than other strategies, such as having a positive attitude, and other potentially harmful strategies, such as avoiding the problem and negative coping.

The information we learned from talking with corpsmen influenced the selection of the stress management strategies in this guide, and corpsmen’s experiences and recommendations are highlighted throughout. You can think of this guide as advice from corpsmen to help their fellow corpsmen. The contents were also informed by the latest scientific evidence regarding effective stress reduction techniques.
HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This wellness guide is designed to be used as a reference and not to be read from cover to cover. Look at each topic within the sections of the guide and decide what might be most helpful to you right now. Delve as deeply as you need to at the moment, and use the resources to seek additional information. This guide was developed to help you and others, and is designed to assist corpsmen at all levels of experience.

If you are a seasoned corpsman, some of the information may be familiar, and you might use the guide to share information with others, or merely as a refresher. If you are a new corpsman, this information may give you some guidance about what to expect regarding stressors that caregivers typically experience and how to handle them.

Know that you won’t always be prepared for everything and that stress is part of the daily life of a corpsman. This guide will help you recognize stress in yourself and others, and will provide useful strategies for managing stress and building resilience.
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INTRODUCTION TO STRESS
WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is a response or reaction to the demands and changes of life, both positive and negative. Any life change requires us to adapt, which is challenging. For example, while getting married or having a baby are highly anticipated life events, they often lead to significant lifestyle changes resulting in stress.

THE BIOLOGY OF STRESS

Stress affects the mind and body through a complex chain of neurochemical reactions in the autonomic nervous system involving multiple organ systems. There are two complementary systems in the autonomic nervous system:

- The sympathetic nervous system starts the acute stress response. When this system is activated, heart rate increases and all five senses are heightened to allow you to quickly respond to danger. The acute stress response facilitates three types of responses:
  - Flight (escaping the situation),
  - Fight (confronting the stressor head-on), or
  - Freeze (becoming immobilized, unable to act).

- The parasympathetic nervous system controls the calming response. Once the stressor is removed, escaped from, or resolved, the parasympathetic nervous system attempts to return the body to a normal range of arousal. This is referred to as homeostasis.
The biological stress response.
When the brain perceives a stressor, the amygdala sends a distress signal to the hypothalamus, which activates the sympathetic nervous system (Figure 1). Signals are then sent to the adrenal glands, which release epinephrine (also known as adrenaline) into the bloodstream. Epinephrine causes a number of physiological changes that help supply a burst of energy.

After the initial increase in epinephrine, the hypothalamus begins a second response called the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis stress response. This response helps maintain the increased arousal necessary to be ready to respond to danger. The hypothalamus releases corticotropin-releasing hormone, which triggers the pituitary gland to release adrenocorticotropic hormone (ACTH). ACTH then stimulates the adrenal glands to release cortisol, which keeps the body on high alert. After the stressor or danger has passed, cortisol levels decrease and the parasympathetic nervous system acts to reduce the stress response.
EFFECTS OF STRESS

*Figure 2* provides an overview of some of the potential short- and long-term effects of stress on the body, which are described below.

- **Short-term effects.**  
  Low levels of stress may actually have beneficial effects. Challenges that are perceived as within our abilities can stimulate motivation, energy, and even excitement. However, the high levels of stress that arise when a challenge is perceived as extremely difficult, overwhelming, or impossible are likely to result in negative mental effects, including distress, tension, and anxiety. It also may lead to physical symptoms, such as tight muscles, shaking, headache, or upset stomach.²

- **Long-term effects.**  
  In prolonged periods of intense stress, the sympathetic nervous system continues to remain activated and the body systems remain aroused. This can weaken the immune system and reduce your ability to fight off illness.³⁴ Research has consistently shown that prolonged exposure to high levels of stress increases the risk of a wide range of health issues.

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN STRESS

The effects of stress vary from person to person. This is because the stress an individual experiences depends on how he or she perceives and reacts to external events. Everyone perceives and reacts to stress differently. For this reason, two people in the exact same situation may experience very different levels of stress.
Brain and Nerves: Headaches, feelings of despair, lack of energy, sadness, nervousness, anger, irritability, trouble concentrating, memory problems, difficulty sleeping, mental health disorders (anxiety, panic attacks, depression)

Heart: Faster heartbeat or palpitations, rise in blood pressure, increased risk of high cholesterol and heart attack

Stomach: Nausea, stomachache, heartburn, weight gain, increased or decreased appetite

Pancreas: Increased risk of diabetes

Intestines: Diarrhea, constipation, and other digestive problems

Reproductive Organs: For women - irregular or painful periods, reduced sexual desire. For men - impotence, low sperm production, reduced sexual desire

Other: Acne and other skin problems, muscle aches and tension, increased risk for low bone density and weakened immune system (making it harder to fight off or recover from illnesses)

Figure 2. Effects of stress on the body.

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WAYS TO CLASSIFY STRESSORS

Events or situations that cause stress are called stressors. One way to classify stressors is based on the domain, or part of life, in which they occur (e.g., work, relationships, finances, health). Besides coming from different parts of life, stressors also vary in severity. There are some experiences that most people would agree are potentially traumatic, such as being violently attacked, and others that most would agree are only mildly stressful, such as having a flat tire. Stressors within each domain can vary from very mild to very extreme in severity.

Another aspect of stress is how long the stressor lasts, or its duration. Short-term stressors are temporary or happen at a given point in time (for example, a car crash or encountering a rude clerk in a store). Chronic stressors are those that continue over a significant period of time (for example, an irritating coworker or ongoing abuse by a spouse).

Another way to classify stressors is based on whether you have the ability to control them. This has important implications for how you choose to handle the stressor.

WAYS TO CLASSIFY STRESSORS

• Domain (the part of your life they come from)
• Severity
• Duration (how long they last)
• How controllable they are
GENERAL LIFE STRESSORS

General life stressors may include:

• Work-related stress
• Relationship problems
• Financial problems
• Legal problems
• Health problems
• Natural disaster
• Motor vehicle crash
• Interpersonal violence victimization

MILITARY STRESSORS

There are some stressors that are specific and unique to service members. The most obvious military-specific stressors are related to deployment and combat exposure. However, not all military stress is specifically related to combat; many military-specific stressors are linked to the daily challenges of serving in the military. These include stressors associated with the military lifestyle, such as relocation, high operational tempo, and readiness demands.

CAREGIVER STRESSORS

Health professionals and, in particular, corpsmen, may experience stress related to caring for others. This can be in the form of burnout or secondary traumatic stress.

**Burnout**

Burnout is a feeling of struggling with work or in doing one’s job effectively. Burnout is usually associated with exhaustion, frustration, hopelessness, cynicism, anger, and sometimes depression. It can also make you feel like your efforts make no difference. Studies among civilian caregivers have found that an unsupportive working environment and a very heavy workload can trigger burnout.

**Secondary traumatic stress**

Another form of caregiver stress is secondary traumatic stress (also called vicarious traumatization). Secondary traumatic stress refers to the negative feeling caused by work-related, indirect exposure to trauma. Symptoms are similar to those that trauma victims experience, including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). They may include fear, trouble sleeping, hyperarousal, intrusive imagery or flashbacks about a particular event, and avoidance of thoughts about that event.
Most caregivers at some point experience burnout and/or secondary traumatic stress. These are normal reactions and a natural result of providing care.

This makes it very important to understand ways to deal with caregiver stress.
Secondary traumatic stress may affect both a corpsman’s work and his or her interpersonal relationships outside of work. Secondary traumatic stress is also connected to PTSD symptoms. A study of military veterans who worked in the medical field while on active duty found that exposure to mass causalities was associated with PTSD symptoms. Civilian studies of medical workers have also shown that work-related secondary trauma, such as seeing the death of a child, was associated with PTSD symptoms.

**CORPSMAN-SPECIFIC OCCUPATIONAL STRESSORS**

There are other specific stressors that are unique to particular occupational specialties. Depending on their type of duty station, corpsmen face similar stressors to those encountered by medical professionals in the civilian sector. For example, corpsmen working in a hospital or conducting sick call may experience stressors common among nurses and physicians, such as seeing patients suffer, dealing with life-or-death issues, lack of supplies, and problems with staffing.

Corpsmen in an operational setting may be more likely to encounter stressors that often affect emergency medical technicians and paramedics. These include medical emergencies, mass causalities, dealing with seriously injured people you know, time pressure during rescue operations, and working in a hazardous environment.

In addition to experiencing stressors common to medical professionals in the civilian sector, corpsmen also encounter stressors unique to military health care providers. Military health care providers commonly report seeing personnel wounded or killed, fearing for their own life, and coming under mortar/scud/artillery fire. In our study of corpsmen on which this guide is based, corpsmen reported that “life-or-death situations with patients” and “combat experience” were among their most stressful experiences.
1.3/
NOT ALL STRESSORS ARE CREATED EQUAL

Research evidence has shown that some types of stressors have worse effects than others. For example, interpersonal traumas that involve intentional or attempted harm of a person (such as childhood abuse or physical or sexual assault, as well as combat exposure) are more likely to lead to psychological problems than non-interpersonal traumas (such as natural disasters or motor vehicle crashes). Most people assume traumatic situations, like physical trauma or combat exposure, have a bigger impact on an individual’s well-being than minor stressors. However, research on deployed Sailors and Marines suggests that milder deployment-related stressors (e.g., concerns about problems back at home, problems with the chain of command, lack of privacy) may have a stronger impact on mental health than actual combat exposure does.

- In a study of 1500 Marines, PTSD symptoms were more strongly associated with mild deployment-related stressors than with combat exposure (including feeling you could be killed at any time or seeing wounded or dead bodies).21

- In another study of both Sailors and Marines, lower-level deployment stressors compared with combat exposure were more strongly and consistently related to PTSD and depression symptoms, suicidal ideation, and substance abuse.22

MINOR STRESSORS MATTER!

Lower-level stressors may have a greater negative effect on mental and behavioral health than more serious traumatic stressors.
Studies on civilians have also found that lower-level stressors, often called “daily hassles,” have a bigger impact on people’s mood compared with major stressful or traumatic life events.\textsuperscript{23,24} One reason this might be is low-level stressors occur more often and last longer than traumatic stressors.

Although more research is needed to fully understand which stressors have the worst effects on health and well-being, one thing is clear: the effects of stress exposure are cumulative. That is, each additional stressor contributes to the individual’s stress burden, even if those stressors happen far apart in time. This means the same stressful incident or situation is likely to have a greater effect on someone who has experienced other life stressors than someone who has not.\textsuperscript{22,25,26}

Anything we can do to reduce stressors or improve our ability to deal with stressors has the potential to reduce our risk of developing stress-related mental and physical health problems.
HOW’S YOUR STRESS LEVEL?
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Even if you think your stress is not really affecting you, there may be more going on than you realize. Assessing your level of stress, and encouraging your fellow corpsmen to do the same, will help you stay aware and take steps to handle your stress before it starts to escalate.

The following stress assessments range from simple to more detailed. Because they measure different types of stress and cover different time frames, you may get a different rating for your stress depending on the assessment. For example, you may currently be in the Green Zone on the Naval Center for Combat and Operational Stress Control’s Stress Continuum, but you may score high on general life stress if several major events occurred in your life over the past year.

After assessing your stress level with one or more of the assessments on the following pages, and figuring out your sources of stress, you will be in a position to take steps to reduce or eliminate the stressor or reduce its effects on you.

- If your level of stress from a particular assessment is low, this may simply involve taking good care of yourself so that you are resilient when new stressors come along.

- If you are experiencing greater than minimal stress, you should consider ways to either:
  - Reduce your exposure to the types of stressors measured in the assessment, and/or
  - Improve the way you handle them.
Think of the results of these stress assessments as you would a lab test result from your doctor. An elevated stress score is an indicator there could be a problem. Sometimes a result will confirm what you already know; in other cases, it may provide you with new information about areas in your life that cause stress. Having a good sense of what is going on with you can help to identify areas in need of change and motivate you to make changes.
2.1/ STRESS ASSESSMENTS

SIMPLE STRESS ASSESSMENT

The simplest way to assess your current level of stress is to pay close attention to how you are feeling. Take a minute and think about that right now.

- Are you feeling tension in any part of your body?
- Are your shoulders or neck tight?
- Do your teeth feel clenched?
- Do you feel a high sense of arousal or emotional or psychological stress?

Rate your stress level on a scale from 1 (not at all stressed) to 10 (extremely stressed). The higher the rating, the more you should consider making changes to reduce or better manage your stress.

STRESS ASSESSMENT FOR SERVICE MEMBERS

The Navy’s Stress Continuum is a useful tool for service members to assess the impact that stress is having on them. You are likely already familiar with the Naval Center for Combat and Operational Stress Control model, so we present it here only briefly. The Stress Continuum was developed based on scientific research. It describes different levels of stress reaction that service members may experience in terms of four color-coded stress “zones.”
The Green Zone is the good-to-go zone. A service member in this zone is not necessarily stress free, but he or she is not feeling overwhelmed by stress and is coping with it in a healthy way.

The Yellow Zone is the stress reaction zone. A service member in this zone is experiencing some stress, but it is usually mild and not in need of intervention. It includes common worries that are usually mild, reversible, and require little, if any, intervention. If not monitored, though, additional stressors can add up and push you into the Orange Zone.

The Orange Zone is the stress injury zone. A service member in this zone is experiencing more severe and persistent stress resulting in significant effects, such as loss of function, nightmares, feelings of guilt or shame, and panic or rage attacks. Much less common than stress reactions in the Yellow Zone, these injuries are typically caused by life threats, loss (such as the death of a friend or a relationship breakup), inner conflicts, and continued wear and tear.

The Red Zone is the stress illness zone. A service member in this zone has experienced a level of stress that has resulted in significant distress and impairment. People in this zone are often experiencing stress-related disorders that should be diagnosed and treated by health professionals. Common examples of stress illnesses include posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and dependence on alcohol or drugs. Fortunately, effective treatments for stress illnesses exist.
The Stress Continuum Model

Ready
Adaptive coping
Optimal functioning
Wellness

Features
Well trained and prepared
Fit and focused
In control
Optimally effective
Behaving ethically

Reacting
Mild and transient distress or loss of optimal functioning
Temporary & reversible
Low risk for illness

Features
Irritable, angry
Anxious or depressed
Physically too pumped up or tired
Reduced self-control
Poor focus
Poor sleep

Injured
More severe and persistent distress or loss
Higher risk for illness

Causes
Life threat, Loss, Inner conflict, Wear and tear

Features
Panic or rage
Loss of control of body / mind
Can’t sleep
Recurrent nightmares / bad memories
Persistent shame, guilt or blame
Loss of moral values and beliefs

Ill
Persistent and disabling distress or loss of function
Unhealed stress injuries
Mental disorder

Types
PTSD
Major Depression
Anxiety
Substance abuse

Features
Symptoms and disability persist over many weeks
Symptoms and disability get worse over time

Unit Leader Responsibilities
Individual, Peer, Family Responsibilities
Caregiver Responsibilities
This continuum highlights the importance of early recognition and intervention for stress-related problems. The earlier these problems are caught and addressed, the less severe their effects will be on service members. Thus, awareness of your level of stress and how it is affecting you is key to stopping it from escalating.

Building your resilience by expanding your tools for dealing with stress can also play an important role in keeping you in the Green to Yellow Zones of the Stress Continuum. For more information on Navy and Marine Corps Combat and Operational Stress Control programs, including Caregiver Occupational Stress Control, see the Resources section.

There are effective evidence-based treatments for Red Zone illnesses.

Getting treatment as early as possible is key.

The majority of Sailors and Marines who are treated finish their tours of duty and many continue to serve.
2.1/
DETERMINE THE SOURCES OF YOUR STRESS

Taking stock of how stressed you feel is an important step toward controlling the effects of stress in your life. The next step is to identify where the stress is coming from. The following are two, more detailed assessments of sources of stress in your life. The first is a measure of general life stressors, and the second measures stress associated with working as a health care professional.

GENERAL LIFE STRESS

Major life events, both positive and negative, can be stressful. The Social Readjustment Rating Scale is a tool (see below) that allows you to identify significant life changes you have recently experienced. For Navy personnel, as for civilians, higher scores on this scale are associated with an increased risk of future illness and greater medical care utilization.29-31

Social Readjustment Rating Scale

Instructions: Circle the value of any life event you have experienced in the past year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIFE EVENT</th>
<th>VALUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Death of spouse</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorce</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital separation</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imprisonment</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death of close family member</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal injury or illness</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital reconciliation</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dismissal from work</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIFE EVENT</th>
<th>VALUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child leaving home</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trouble with in-laws</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outstanding personal achievement</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse begins or stops work</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin or end school</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in living conditions</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revision of personal habits</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trouble with boss</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in work hours or conditions</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in residence</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Social Readjustment Rating Scale continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIFE EVENT</th>
<th>VALUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change in health of family member</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual difficulties</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain of new family member</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business readjustment</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in financial state</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death of close friend</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change to different line of work</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in number of spousal arguments</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major mortgage or loan</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreclosure on mortgage or loan</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in responsibilities at work</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL _____**

### Scoring Guide: Add up your score at the end and see the following score interpretation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOCIAL READJUSTMENT RATING SCALE TOTAL SCORE</th>
<th>LIKELIHOOD OF ILLNESS IN NEAR FUTURE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>300 or above</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150-299</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 150</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** This is only one in a set of tools to help you determine your stress level. While a high score on this assessment indicates the potential for illness, everyone processes events and decisions differently. Therefore, this scale is only an estimate and is subject to variability.
One of several measures of caregiver well-being that are available is the Professional Quality of Life (ProQOL) scale. This scale was developed for people in health- and care-related professions, such as corpsmen and other medical service providers. It includes negative aspects of work life, including burnout and secondary traumatic stress (see page 15). It also includes a positive aspect of work called compassion satisfaction. This is the positive feeling that results from being able to help others and being an effective caregiver.

Complete the ProQOL self-assessment to see if your level of compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress are low, average, or high for caregivers.
Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL)

Instructions: When you help people, you have direct contact with their lives. As you may have found, your compassion for those you help can affect you in positive and negative ways. Below are some questions about your experiences, both positive and negative, as a corpsman. Consider each of the following questions about you and your current work situation. Select the number that honestly reflects how frequently you experienced these things in the last 30 days.

1=NEVER  2=RARELY  3=SOMETIMES  4=OFTEN  5=VERY OFTEN

1. I am happy.
2. I am preoccupied with more than one person I provide services for.
3. I get satisfaction from being able to help people.
4. I feel connected to others.
5. I jump or am startled by unexpected sounds.
6. I feel invigorated after working with those I help.
7. I find it difficult to separate my personal life from my life as a service provider.
8. I am not as productive at work because I am losing sleep over traumatic experiences of a person I provide services for.
9. I think that I might have been affected by the traumatic stress of those I help.
10. I feel trapped by my job as a service provider.
11. Because of my job, I have felt "on edge" about various things.
12. I like my work as a corpsman.
13. I feel depressed because of the traumatic experiences of the people I help.
14. I feel as though I am experiencing the trauma of someone I have helped.
15. I have beliefs that sustain me.
16. I am pleased with how I am able to keep up with medical techniques and protocols.
17. I am the person I always wanted to be.
18. My work makes me feel satisfied.
Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL) continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1=NEVER</th>
<th>2=RARELY</th>
<th>3=SOMETIMES</th>
<th>4=OFTEN</th>
<th>5=VERY OFTEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>I feel worn out because of my work as a service provider.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>I have happy thoughts and feelings about those I help and how I could help them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>I feel overwhelmed because my workload seems endless.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>I believe I can make a difference through my work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>I avoid certain activities or situations because they remind me of frightening experiences of the people I provide service for.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>I am proud of what I can do to help others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>As a result of my helping others, I have intrusive, frightening thoughts.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>I feel &quot;bogged down&quot; by the system.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>I have thoughts that I am a &quot;success&quot; as a service provider.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>I can't recall important parts of my work with trauma victims.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>I am a very caring person.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>I am happy that I chose to do this work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is my ProQOL Score and What Does it Mean?
In this section, you will score the ProQOL so you understand the interpretation for you. To find your score on each section, total the questions listed on the left and then find your score in the table on the right of the section.

Compassion Satisfaction Scale

Copy your rating on each of these questions on to this table and add them up. When you have added them up, you can find your score on the table to the right.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL: _____

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. THE SUM OF MY COMPASSION SATISFACTION QUESTIONS IS</th>
<th>SO MY SCORE EQUALS</th>
<th>MY COMPASSION SATISFACTION LEVEL IS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22 or less</td>
<td>43 or less</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 23 and 41</td>
<td>Around 50</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42 or more</td>
<td>57 or more</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Burnout Scale

On the burnout scale you will need to take an extra step. Starred (*) items are “reverse scored.” If you scored the item 1, change it to 5 (see bottom right table). Scientifically, the measure works better when these questions are asked in a positive way, though they can tell us more about their negative form. For example, “I am happy” tells us more about the effects of helping when you are not happy so you reverse the score.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>*15.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>*17.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL: _____

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. THE SUM OF MY BURNOUT QUESTION IS</th>
<th>SO MY SCORE EQUALS</th>
<th>MY BURNOUT LEVEL IS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22 or less</td>
<td>43 or less</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 23 and 41</td>
<td>Around 50</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42 or more</td>
<td>57 or more</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YOU WROTE</th>
<th>CHANGE TO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale

Just like you did on Compassion Satisfaction, copy your rating on each of these questions on to this table and add them up. When you have added them up, you can find your score on the table to the right.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.</th>
<th>5.</th>
<th>7.</th>
<th>9.</th>
<th>11.</th>
<th>13.</th>
<th>14.</th>
<th>23.</th>
<th>25.</th>
<th>28.</th>
<th>TOTAL:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE SUM OF MY SECONDARY TRAUMA QUESTIONS IS</th>
<th>22 or less</th>
<th>43 or less</th>
<th>MY SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS LEVEL IS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SO MY SCORE EQUALS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Secondary Traumatic Stress Level is</td>
<td>Between 23 and 41</td>
<td>Around 50</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42 or more</td>
<td>57 or more</td>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Your Scores on the ProQOL Screening**

Based on your responses, place your personal scores below. If you have any concerns, you should discuss them with a physical or mental health care professional.

**Compassion Satisfaction**

Compassion satisfaction is about the pleasure you derive from being able to do your work well. For example, you may feel like it is a pleasure to help others through your work. You may feel positively about your colleagues or your ability to contribute to the work setting or even the greater good of society. Higher scores on this scale represent a greater satisfaction related to your ability to be an effective caregiver in your job.

The average score is 50 (standard deviation 10; alpha scale reliability .88). About 25% of people score higher than 57, and approximately 25% of people score below 43. If you are in the higher range, you probably derive a good deal of professional satisfaction from your position. If your scores are below 40, you may either find problems with your job or there may be some other reason—for example, you might derive your satisfaction from activities other than your job.
**Burnout**

Most people have an intuitive idea of what burnout is. From the research perspective, burnout is one of the elements of compassion fatigue. It is associated with feelings of hopelessness and difficulties in dealing with work or in doing your job effectively. These negative feelings usually have a gradual onset. They can reflect the feeling that your efforts make no difference, or they can be associated with a very high workload or a non-supportive work environment. Higher scores on this scale mean that you are at higher risk for burnout.

The average score on the burnout scale is 50 (standard deviation 10; alpha scale reliability .75). About 25% of people score above 57, and approximately 25% of people score below 43. If your score is below 43, this probably reflects positive feelings about your ability to be effective in your work. If you score above 57 you may wish to think about what at work makes you feel like you are not effective in your position. Your score may reflect your mood; perhaps you were having a “bad day” or are in need of some time off. If the high score persists or if it is reflective of other worries, it may be a cause for concern.

**Secondary Traumatic Stress**

The second component of compassion fatigue is secondary traumatic stress. It is about your work-related, secondary exposure to extremely or traumatically stressful events. Developing problems due to exposure to other’s trauma is somewhat rare, but does happen to many people who care for those who have experienced extremely or traumatically stressful events.

For example, you may repeatedly hear stories about the traumatic things that happen to other people, commonly called vicarious traumatization. (If your work puts you directly in the path of danger, for example, field work in a war or area of civil violence, this is not secondary exposure; your exposure is primary.) However, if you are exposed to others’ traumatic events as a result of your work, for example, as a therapist or an emergency worker, this is secondary exposure.

The symptoms are usually rapid in onset and associated with a particular event. They may include being afraid, having difficulty sleeping, having images of the upsetting event pop into your mind, or avoiding things that remind you of the event.

The average score on this scale is 50 (standard deviation 10; alpha scale reliability .81). About 25% of people score below 43, and approximately 25% of people score above 57. If your score is above 57, you may want to take some time to think about what at work may be frightening to you or if there is some other reason for the elevated score. While higher scores do not mean you have a problem, they are an indication you may want to examine how you feel about your work and your work environment. You may wish to discuss this with your supervisor, a colleague, or a health care professional.

3/

STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING AND MAINTAINING RESILIENCE
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Personal resilience is an individual’s ability to recover quickly from stress or adversity. It is associated with a balanced and healthy lifestyle in all life areas: physical, mental, social, and spiritual. Enhancing your physical health and building skills for dealing with stress can increase resilience. The following practices can help to build and maintain resilience:

• Maintaining routines, such as healthy patterns of sleeping, exercising, and eating

• Engaging in mind–body practices to reduce stress

• Enhancing your life skills

Developing and practicing healthy routines will prepare you for the additive effect of everyday stressors. These skills can also prepare you to handle more major stressors that may occur. This section overviews a variety of practices to help build resilience and make you better able to handle stress. Links to more information on each of these strategies are provided in the Resources section of this guide.

Remember that not all stress management strategies will work for everyone. The important thing is to find what works best for you. You can use any strategy or combination of strategies to build your resilience. You can also teach the strategies to others to help them deal with stress.
Try to keep things in perspective and be honest about what stresses you out and how you’re dealing with it. Be open to maybe doing things differently. Maybe you need to change something about what you do in order to make the situation change.

Corpsman with over 20 years of service
3.1/ Healthy Routines

Healthy routines can help reduce stress reactions and increase your resilience. The three types of healthy routines we discuss here are sleeping, physical training, and eating. Certain military settings and schedules may make it difficult to find time for quality sleep, optimal exercise, or healthy meals. It can take creativity to find ways to keep healthy in these situations. The suggestions in this section are intended to help you focus on how to adapt your healthy routines even during deployment or other challenging situations.

Sleep

Sleep problems are a common reaction to stress that may affect your ability to cope. This can lead to a downward spiral of physical and mental health problems. Therefore, improving sleep may be a necessary first step toward developing effective stress reduction strategies.

Getting good sleep as a Navy corpsman can be a challenge. A recent RAND report on sleep in the military indicated that military caregivers may be at a high risk for sleep problems. Work assignments can affect your sleeping patterns. For example, assignment to a hospital emergency department may require you to work shift schedules in order to provide around-the-clock care to patients. Or, if you’ve been deployed in support and sustainment units with exposure to traumatic medical emergencies, you may have memories and nightmares that wake you from sleep. No matter where you are in your career, there is a good chance that you have some difficulty falling and/or staying asleep.

What is healthy sleep?
The National Sleep Foundation recommends 7–8 hours per night of sleep for adults. In addition, when it comes to sleep, quality is just as important as quantity. That means, even if you are getting 7 or more hours of sleep, it may not be good enough if it is poor in quality.
Being in Iraq and being the sole provider 24 hours a day, I had people who needed IV meds throughout the night. One time, I had to get up every 3 hours and give a kid his meds. Getting up in the morning and still having to go out and do my regular job during the day was stressful.

Corpsman
Negative consequences of not getting healthy sleep

A lack of healthy sleep can lead to significant problems. Just a sampling of the many physical, mental, and emotional health effects of insufficient sleep are listed in the box to the left. As you can see, many of these consequences reduce readiness and performance.

Assessing your sleep health

Studies have shown that when sleep deprived, we are actually very bad at knowing how our health is affected from lack of sleep. So, how do you know if you are getting enough high-quality sleep?

Well, think about how you usually feel. Are you alert? Or do you sometimes feel in a fog? Do you need a lot of caffeine to make it through the day? Do you sleep in whenever you can? If you’re still not sure whether you’re getting the sleep you need, on the next page is a tool that can help. The Epworth Sleepiness Scale measures how likely you are to fall asleep in different situations. Your score tells how well you are sleeping and whether you need to take additional steps toward improving your sleep health.
Epworth Sleepiness Scale\textsuperscript{39}

\textbf{Instructions:} How likely are you to doze off or fall asleep in the situations described below, in contrast to just feeling tired? Think about your normal tendencies. Even if you have not done some of the activities recently, try to imagine how you would probably react. Use the following scale to choose the most appropriate number for each situation. It is important that you answer each question as best as you can.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHANCE OF DOZING WHILE:</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
<th>SLIGHT</th>
<th>MODERATE</th>
<th>HIGH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sitting and reading</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching TV</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sitting inactive in a public place (e.g., a theater or meeting)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a passenger in a car for an hour without a break</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lying down to rest in the afternoon when circumstances permit</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sitting and talking to someone</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sitting quietly after a lunch without alcohol</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a car, while stopped for a few minutes in traffic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textbf{TOTAL SCORE:} ________

\textbf{Scoring Guide:} If your total score is between 0–10, you are in the normal range; 10–12 you are borderline; 12–24 may indicate you are sleep deprived.
Ways to optimize your sleep health

There are several things you can do now that may help improve your sleep.40

During the day:
• Set a regular sleep schedule, even on weekends. Going to bed and waking up around the same time every day normalizes your circadian rhythm, the biological process that regulates sleep and wake cycles.41
• Avoid caffeine (e.g., coffee, soda, energy drinks) 4–6 hours before bedtime. Caffeine can prevent you from falling asleep at the desired time.
• Avoid too much alcohol. Alcohol may seem like it helps you to fall asleep, but your sleep will likely be less restful.
• Exercise daily but not too close to bedtime. Exercise can promote restful sleep; however, exercising within 2 hours of bedtime may make it more difficult to fall asleep, so try to do your exercise earlier in the day.42

Getting ready for bed:
• Make your bedroom a sleep haven. Keep your bedroom dark, cool, and free of distractions. Reserve your bed for sleeping and sex only, and consider doing other activities, such as work or watching television, in a different room.
• Avoid electronics. Blue light from televisions, lap tops, smartphones, e-readers, and tablets prevents the release of melatonin, the hormone that helps regulate circadian rhythm.43 If you use these devices close to bedtime, dim the display light as much as possible, and consider using an app that alters the color composition to minimize sleep disruption (such as f.lux).
• Clear your head. Many people who are stressed lay awake at night. Taking 10 minutes to write down your thoughts before bed may help to get the stressors off of your mind and may help you fall asleep.

If you have a demanding work schedule:
Sometimes your schedule demands that you stay up for long periods of time and/or work irregular hours. Did you know that performance and alertness begin to decline after only 16 hours of sustained wakefulness?44 If a regular sleep routine isn’t possible because of your work schedule, there are still a few things you can do to reduce the problems that could result from a disruption to your sleep cycle.
"Having to worry about other people’s lives and being half asleep is kind of one of the negative sides of being a corpsman."

New Corpsman
• If you have an irregular shift cycle, make sleep your priority when you’ve ended your shift.

• If you’ve just come off of 12 hours of duty or more, try to get some sleep as soon as possible, even if it’s only a nap.

• If possible, avoid caffeine in the last few hours of your shift.

• If you are working nights and have to sleep during the day, be very firm about protecting your sleep time and sleeping environment; don’t let daytime distractions intrude on your sleep time.

When sleep disturbance is a bigger problem
There are some sleep problems that will not get better with simple changes and, instead, require medical help. Common sleep disturbances include:

• Insomnia: Difficulty falling and/or staying asleep

• Anxiety: Feeling anxious or not being able to stop or control worrying for more than 2 weeks

• Circadian sleep disorders: A mismatch between the circadian timing system and sleep–wake patterns (as may happen with jet lag and shift work)

• Sleep apnea: Relaxation of the throat muscles and tongue during sleep, which causes the airway to become partially or even fully blocked; this disruption can prevent you from entering the deeper stages of sleep which is important for sleep health. (See the Resources section for a link to an online sleep apnea screening.)

Get help!
If you think you are not getting good sleep, you may need to see a physician for additional evaluation and treatment. A lack of quality sleep is a risk factor for developing a wide range of other health problems. Also, sleep problems, if not addressed, become more difficult to treat over time.
PHYSICAL TRAINING

As a medical service professional in the Navy, you already know that exercise has significant health benefits. In addition to its long-term protection against heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and numerous other chronic health conditions, exercise can instantly improve mood and reduce stress through the release of endorphins. Exercise also promotes restful sleep and protects against depression and anxiety disorders.

In our study of corpsmen on which this guide is based, corpsmen rated physical activity as the most helpful way of dealing with stress.

It can be challenging to fit in a workout when your typical PT routine is not an option, as can happen due to a change in your work environment or workload. While a long run or other strenuous cardio routine is a great way to stay in shape and clear your mind, you can still reap the benefits of physical training with shorter, less demanding workouts.

The Navy has designed a program called the Navy Operational Fitness and Fueling System (NOFFS; http://www.navyfitness.org/fitness/noffs-training/noffs-overview/equipment), which includes both group and individual workouts. It also has recommended workouts that are designed for specific naval environments, including large deck ships, surface ships, and submarines. Most of the workouts use the Fit Kit, a compact system which contains various resistance bands, mini-bands, stretching straps, and Lex Loops (http://www.navyfitness.org/fitness/noffs-training/noffs-overview/equipment). Dumbbells and other equipment are also used where available.

- The Submarine Series is designed to focus on workouts that can be done in small spaces, with Fit Kit and minimal cardio equipment.
- The Surface Ship Series is designed for moderate space, with Fit Kit and full equipment options, and cardio equipment.
- The Large Deck Series takes into consideration larger spaces for training, with Fit Kit and full equipment options, and cardio equipment.
- The Group Training Series allows progressions for different levels of ability.
For each type of workout, you select one of three levels and choose the desired workout length: short (30 minutes), medium (45 minutes), or long (60 minutes). Each workout includes five sections: pillar preparation, movement preparation, strength, cardiovascular, and recovery.

The workouts are available on standard page-sized cards or for downloading in printable form. They also come in the form of a mobile app. The NOFFS also includes nutritional recommendations to properly fuel for these workouts.

When your typical PT routine is not an option, another option for fitting in a workout is the 7 minute workout. It provides a quick, but comprehensive conditioning routine using just your body weight, a wall, and a chair. Perform each exercise shown in Figure 3 for 30 seconds (about 15–20 repetitions), taking 10 seconds to rest, and transition to the next exercise. The circuit can be repeated 2–3 times depending on your available workout time.

![Figure 3. 7 minute workout routine.](image)
STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING AND MAINTAINING RESILIENCE

WALL SIT

PUSH-UP

STEP-UP ONTO CHAIR

SQUAT

PLANK

HIGH KNEES RUNNING IN PLACE

PUSH-UP AND ROTATION

SIDE PLANK
PTing is a very easy way for me to relieve stress, whether I’m lifting weights or getting on the treadmill or whatever. If I’m able to PT during the day, I see that my stress level is a lot lower. If I don’t get it in or go 2 or 3 days without PTing, I can see that stress is starting to build and build.

Corpsman
EATING

When some people are feeling stressed, they want to eat comfort foods, like ice cream, pancakes, and French fries. These foods are often high in sugar and fat, both of which induce lethargy and sluggishness shortly after eating. Instead of making you feel better, these foods actually make you feel worse.

If you’re seeking stress relief in the form of food, first, listen to your body. Are you actually hungry or are you just looking for a way to deal with or distract from stress? If you can’t decide, try drinking a glass of water or doing some other activity for 10 minutes (e.g., call a friend, go on a short walk, or read). If you still feel hungry after that, grab a healthy snack.

Healthy snacks specifically recommended for stress reduction include fruits, vegetables, nuts, and complex carbohydrates, which have the nutrients (rows) and positive health effects (columns) shown in the chart on the next page.51
**Nutrients and Health Effects**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>REGULATES BLOOD SUGAR AND MOOD</th>
<th>IMPROVES CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH</th>
<th>AIDS IN DIGESTION</th>
<th>STRENGTHENS THE NERVOUS SYSTEM</th>
<th>COMBATS CELL DAMAGE AND OSTEOPOROSIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calcium</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiber</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folic acid</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnesium</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potassium</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probiotics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin B6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin B12</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin C</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin E</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* This is not an exhaustive list of nutrients or health effects, but rather a sampling.

You may notice that no single nutrient provides all of the listed health benefits. That’s why it’s important to eat a combination of healthy foods to get the maximum benefits. While you may not always have a lot of choices depending on your work environment, the next page contains some suggested healthy snack foods.
Healthy Snack Foods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SNACK</th>
<th>NUTRIENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole wheat toast with mashed avocado</td>
<td>Fiber, folic acid, magnesium, potassium, vitamin B6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banana with peanut butter</td>
<td>Fiber, potassium, vitamin B6, vitamin C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yogurt with blueberries</td>
<td>Calcium, potassium, probiotics, vitamin C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handful of almonds, pistachios, or walnuts</td>
<td>Magnesium, vitamin B6, vitamin B12, vitamin E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrots or broccoli with hummus</td>
<td>Fiber, magnesium, potassium, vitamin C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An orange</td>
<td>Calcium, potassium, vitamin C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broccoli with low-fat ranch dressing</td>
<td>Calcium, folic acid, vitamin C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You can also indulge in healthy comfort foods to combat cravings for sugar, salt, and caffeine. Some examples include:

- Plain oatmeal with fruit, or a small piece of dark chocolate, instead of desserts or candy
- Air-popped popcorn, instead of potato chips
- Tea, instead of coffee or an energy drink

Healthy eating habits will help keep your body resilient and help you withstand the physiological impacts of stress. For current dietary and healthy eating guidelines, see the links listed in the nutrition subsection in the Resources section. In addition, eating smaller portions more often and less processed foods will help you to feel better and less drained. This will provide the strength you can rely on during stressful situations.

The NOFFS suggests that you think of nutrition as fuel. They also provide guidelines that will sync your meal content with your workout (http://www.navyfitness.org/nutrition/noffs-fueling-series). One tip is to power up before workouts with a potassium-packed banana and juice. This is also a great way to replace energy needs after a long workout.
Importantly, the NOFFS also emphasizes hydration. Dehydration can affect your cognition, mood, and how you feel physically. This can affect your ability to react properly to stressors. Drink plenty of water before, during, and after physical activity to prevent dehydration. It doesn’t take much water loss to affect performance. The NOFFS recommends that you drink 0.5–1 ounce of fluid per pound of body weight, with most of that being water.

The recommendations are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BODY WEIGHT</th>
<th>OUNCES OF FLUID PER DAY</th>
<th>LITERS PER DAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>120 pounds</td>
<td>60–120</td>
<td>2–4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150 pounds</td>
<td>75–150</td>
<td>2.5–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>175 pounds</td>
<td>90–175</td>
<td>3–6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200 pounds</td>
<td>100–200</td>
<td>3.5–7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>225 pounds</td>
<td>115–225</td>
<td>4–8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250 pounds</td>
<td>125–200</td>
<td>4.5–9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lastly, the following are some additional tips for you to maintain healthy eating habits in a military environment.

- Most Navy and Marine Corps galleys provide measured spoons to help with portions. Usually, the serving spoons are ½ cup in size, so a scoop equals ½ serving. If you aren’t sure, look on the handle or ask a staff member.

- If you PT in the morning and can’t make time for breakfast, ask for a bag or meal to go. Then go through the food line and pick up yogurt, cottage cheese, boiled eggs, cereal, milk, and fruit.

- Fruits and vegetables are perfect snacks. They’re easy to pack, and you can eat them anytime or anywhere. Dried fruit can sometimes be the perfect option. It’s lightweight and doesn’t need to be refrigerated. Half a cup of dried fruit is considered one serving of fruit.

- When you’re deployed and only MREs are available, make sure you take the fruit or juice supplements when offered. If you’re eating in a chow hall or galley, try a cup of vegetable soup as a starter. Another smart choice is to add a salad to your meal or just make a large salad your main meal. Remember to use low-fat dressing.

- If your fruit and vegetable choices are limited, bring it to the attention of the menu planning board or dining facility council or put a note in the suggestion box.
3.2/ MIND–BODY PRACTICES

Stress affects both your mind and body. You can build resilience through practices that involve both. The mind–body practices that we discuss in this section are strategies you can practice now to build resilience for the future. Many of these mind–body practices can also be used to reduce stress in the immediate situation in which it occurs.

This section covers a broad range of techniques that can help you to relax, discipline your thoughts, and focus on positive rather than negative aspects of situations. Try a variety of these approaches to find the ones that work best for you, and then put them into practice. This way you will have the tools you can use to be resilient when faced with challenging situations. Practicing these skills regularly, even for only a minute or two at a time, can help reduce stress and prepare you for challenging situations.

Keep in mind that just like healthy routines and professional skills, practice is a critical part of successfully adopting these mind–body strategies. You need to try them and get comfortable with them to make them a part of what you routinely do. With some, like progressive muscle relaxation, you may see an immediate difference. With others, like mindfulness, more practice is usually required before you feel the benefits.

You may not realize it, but there are probably several times throughout the day when you could practice some of the mind–body stress management techniques described in this section. For example, time spent waiting in line—whether at the bank, medical, commissary, or grocery store—can be used to practice skills such as deep breathing and meditation. Getting in the habit of practicing these strategies in small windows of time is an easy way to incorporate them into your daily routines.

The table on the following page gives you some ideas for situations when you might use specific mind–body practices.
Progressive muscle relaxation techniques are designed to teach you to recognize and release muscle tension in your body through methodical tensing and releasing of each major muscle group.\textsuperscript{54,55} Doing this helps you focus on the difference between muscle tension and relaxation. As you practice this technique and become more aware of these physical sensations, you can make a conscious effort to identify and relax specific muscles that may be tense.

Sample progressive muscle relaxation files can be found at: \url{http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/psychological-emotional-wellbeing/relax-relax/pages/progressive_muscle_relaxation.html}. (Providing this link does not mean that the DoD, the Navy, or the authors endorse this site.)

Many progressive muscle relaxation audio files can be downloaded where you usually download apps and music.
## Progressive Muscle Relaxation

**How it works:**
- Set aside 10 minutes to relax, alone and without any distractions
- Take a few long breaths (taking a normal breath in then and a long, slow breath out)
- Gradually tense the muscles in a specific part of your body (see list to the right), hold for 5 seconds, and exhale as you slowly release the muscles
- Take another breath
- Repeat the sequence with the next part of your body

**Work your way up the body in this order:**

### Legs (do one side at a time)
- Feet: curl toes downward
- Calves: flex foot upward
- Thighs: squeeze thigh muscle

### Abdomen
- Buttocks: squeeze gluteus maximus muscles
- Stomach: suck in stomach
- Chest: tighten by taking a deep breath

### Arms (do one side at a time)
- Hands: clench fist
- Arms: make a bicep curl motion
- Shoulders: shrug shoulder

### Face
- Mouth: open mouth as wide as possible
- Eyes: squeeze eyelids shut
- Forehead: raise eyebrows
**MINDFULNESS**

Mindfulness involves focusing completely on what you are experiencing at the present moment in a nonjudgmental way. Mindfulness practices often involve meditation and focus on breathing and physical sensations, as well as an awareness of one’s emotions and thoughts. Regular practice of mindfulness can increase control of your mental processes and reduce stress. This became part of stress management practices in the 1970s and has become more common in recent years.\(^{56}\)

There have been several studies on the effects of mindfulness-related practices on reducing stress, pain, and living with mild traumatic brain injury, among other conditions.\(^{57-59}\) It has also been studied among those in the health care professions.\(^{60-62}\) Mindfulness-based training has also been used with military reservists to build resilience prior to deployment\(^{63}\) and veterans to deal with post-service pain management.\(^{64}\)

Several programs within the Veterans Health Administration offer treatments that incorporate mindfulness practices.\(^{65}\) Individual Marine reservists reported improvement in concentration, dealing with post-deployment issues, and relationships after participating in a unit-based mindfulness program.\(^{63}\)

While it is ideal to take a mindfulness-based stress reduction class or talk to a provider about mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, you can also teach yourself the basic concepts of mindfulness and use them when you are stressed. Becoming familiar with these basic concepts may inspire you to further explore more extensive mindfulness training or incorporate daily mindfulness practices.

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**Mindfulness involves focusing completely on what you are experiencing at the present moment in a nonjudgmental way.**

*You can benefit from using the basics of mindfulness when you are stressed.*

**These are the basic concepts of mindfulness:**

- **Intentional and full focus on the present moment.** You don’t have to think of it as meditation, but rather as taking a little time to stay fully in the present moment. Often, stress is related to worrying about future events (even those unlikely to happen) or negative feelings about events that have already happened. Sometimes focusing on
what you are experiencing in the moment can help you to see what a situation actually is and separate reality from what you may be layering onto it with emotion, physical reaction, and/or judgment. This can help you refocus and feel less stressed about a situation. It might also clear your head enough to help you understand what to do next.

- **Simple meditation.** While meditation and mindfulness are not the same, meditation is a big part of mindfulness practices. If you are not ready to start a mindfulness practice, try doing basic meditation on a routine basis. There are brief guided meditations available online that can help you with this (see example in the Resources section).

- **Focus on breathing.** Paying attention to your breathing, which is rhythmic, can help keep your mind in the moment. As you focus on your breathing, you may notice that it becomes slower and more relaxed even though you are not trying to change it.

- **Focus on physical sensations.** Focusing on physical sensations can alert you to tension that you were not aware you had. It can also help you learn to fully concentrate on what you are experiencing in the moment.

For example, if you are in pain, it may help to focus on the physical sensation of pain to distinguish what the components of the sensation are (e.g., pressure, heat, sharpness). Then you can try to separate out what is the actual pain and what is the emotion (e.g., sadness, anger, frustration) that is adding to the sensation. This can help you to better understand the physical sensation and make it more bearable.

- **Be aware and nonjudgmental about your emotions and thoughts.** As mentioned in the example above, emotions, thoughts, and other beliefs can become commingled with physical sensations. Being able to separate them out and observe them nonjudgmentally can help to understand what is going on with you in the moment. Emotions and thoughts can often cause stress; observing as you experience them can help you learn to separate their effects from what is really happening in the moment.

Mindfulness is related to other topics in this guide including Body Scanning (page 60), Changing the Way You See a Situation (page 63), and Replacing Unrealistic Thoughts (page 65). Each of these mind–body practices can help you to gain a more objective understanding of a situation and reduce stress.
BODY SCANNING

Body scanning is a meditative process that focuses on breathing and paying attention to the sensations in specific parts of the body, while clearing the mind of other thoughts. It is often used with mindfulness meditation, but it can also be used as a stand-alone stress reduction technique. Body scanning guided by a 20-minute audio recording has been shown to reduce heart rate and slow respiration more than progressive muscle relaxation. This study was among people who had not previously tried meditation, which suggests body scanning is beneficial even for beginners.

Another study using only a 10-minute body scan with smokers found immediate decreases in cigarette cravings and irritability. These studies and others show that body scanning has the potential to quickly reduce stress even if you’ve never done it before. Using body scanning regularly may build greater mental control and awareness, and lead to even greater benefits.

You can use this strategy by setting aside a small block of time where you will be uninterrupted and able to focus. Using an audio recording for guidance will help to center your awareness on your breath and the sensations in different parts of your body. The best breathing technique is to take a normal breath in and then a long, slow breath out. You will become more aware of whether there is tension, pain, or any other sensation in your body. The point is to focus on each area of the body as you breathe. You are not necessarily trying to change the sensations in your body, as you would in progressive relaxation; you are just trying to notice and understand them.

A sample body scan meditation script can be found at: http://www.mindingthebedside.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Body-Scan-script.pdf. (Providing this link does not mean that the DoD, the Navy, or the authors endorse this site.)

Body scan meditations can be as short as 6 minutes and as long as 40 minutes. Brief body scan audio files of different lengths can be found where you usually download apps and music.
GUIDED IMAGERY

Guided Imagery is a type of meditation that uses visualization to create mental images and sensations in the mind. It can be used to help you deal with stressful events, prepare for an upcoming task (like a presentation or athletic competition), and increase comfort with unfamiliar situations. Sometimes imagery can help you work through the smaller actions required to accomplish a larger task. By performing the task in your mind before doing it in reality, you can become familiar with and more comfortable and confident performing the task. You can also use guided imagery to project your mind into a more pleasant situation to help you relax, or it can be used to visualize a specific event in advance to make dealing with it in reality easier. Guided imagery can give you time to help clear your mind from daily hassles by focusing on a relaxing place or theme.

You can use this strategy by setting aside a small block of time and finding a comfortable place to sit down that is free of distractions. Use an audio file to guide you in correct breathing techniques and visualization to feel renewed and relaxed. If there is a specific situation you want to visualize to improve your comfort with it, you can listen to a few audio files to become at ease with the technique and then make your own recording of the situation you want to visualize.

A sample guided imagery script and mp3 file can be found at: http://www.mckinley.illinois.edu/units/health_ed/stress_audio/beach_txt.html (“Trip to the Beach”). (Providing this link does not mean that the DoD, the Navy, or the authors endorse this site.)

Additional guided imagery audio files can be found where you usually download apps and music.
What I’ve been through has made me what I am today. Everything, whether bad or good, has made me who I am now. Even the worst scenarios that you may encounter, you take something away from that. And whether you decide to hold on to the negative and not see the positive, that’s entirely up to you. At some point in time you can reflect on that. Use it to your advantage and make it a positive experience and see the negative for what it is. What can you take away from this to make this a positive experience, as opposed to dwelling on the negative?

Corpsman with over 20 years of service
CHANGING THE WAY YOU SEE A SITUATION

Bad situations are often unavoidable. You may not be able to control the situation itself, but you can control your perception of the situation and your reaction to it. For example, deployment can be a major stressor; it takes you away from your family and potentially puts you in danger. At the same time, it may also allow you to put your triage skills into action and be involved in rewarding work, including possibly saving lives. Another example is being in port. While life in port may lend itself to more predictable work stressors, it also allows you to see family and friends and maintain a normal lifestyle routine. The effects that these different situations have on you depend, in part, on how you look at them. Do you focus on the positive or the negative aspects of a situation? Sometimes, if you focus on the negative, the situation will become more negative, and if you focus on the positive, the situation will become more positive. This is, in part, due to the way you feel and the choices you will make. (There is more on this in the Problem Solving section on page 78, along with a scale to help you learn more about your tendencies.)

It may be hard to change your pattern of thinking, but awareness is the first step. So, the next time you find yourself viewing a situation negatively, try to catch yourself. For example, say you’re dreading an upcoming meeting with an aggressive supervisor. If you walk into the meeting anticipating problems and mentally prepare yourself for that, this could make you appear hostile. This starts a pattern—you expected the meeting to go poorly and this caused you to interpret the meeting in a negative way. You have the power to stop this pattern with your attitude.

When something happens (let’s call this the event), you tell yourself something about the event—those are your beliefs. Your beliefs then lead to your feelings, and we call this the consequence. Ask yourself if the beliefs you have about an event are accurate or realistic. In the aforementioned example, if instead you approached the meeting without negative expectations, you may have been able to think more clearly and have a thoughtful conversation with your supervisor without feeling anxious or agitated.
You can use the simple chart below when a stressful event happens. First, under “EVENT,” describe what happened as objectively as you can. Then, think about what beliefs you have about the situation that affect how you feel and respond. Write this under “BELIEF.” Then under “CONSEQUENCE,” record how your beliefs made you feel about the event. Finally, consider other possible ways to think about the event that would lead you to feel and respond in a more positive way. From this exercise, you can see how your attitude affects your experience and learn new ways of handling difficult situations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVENT</th>
<th>BELIEF</th>
<th>CONSEQUENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(SOMETHING HAPPENS)</td>
<td>(I TELL MYSELF SOMETHING)</td>
<td>(I FEEL SOMETHING)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REPLACING UNREALISTIC THOUGHTS

Identifying unrealistic negative thoughts and replacing them with more realistic ones can reduce stress. This strategy focuses on using a realistic approach as you think through a situation to address your concerns rather than focusing on worst-case scenarios.

Understandably, in an unpredictable environment, such as being deployed to a combat zone, it is a critical survival skill to walk through worst-case scenarios. It allows warriors and caregivers alike to anticipate and prepare for even the most catastrophic events. However, there is a difference between thinking through what could happen in a constructive way and expecting the most negative outcome. In most situations, consistently thinking negative consequences are probably going to happen—even when there is little or no evidence to support those thoughts—can stress you out and prohibit you from helping others to the best of your ability.

Research has shown an association between negative thinking patterns and developing stress reactions after experiencing a traumatic event. In addition, such negative thinking about something specific, like pain, has been associated with increased perceived severity of pain. This shows negative thinking, which is often made up of unrealistic thoughts, can not only increase the amount of stress you feel, but can actually make the situation worse than it otherwise would be.

Realistic thinking focuses on what is most likely to happen, not on what could happen. When faced with a particular concern or problem, try to distinguish between what is possible and what is probable. Ask yourself, "What is the real likelihood that this will happen?" Write notes about the possible and probable, as visualizing the differences might be helpful. You can guide your thinking and decision-making process by eliminating unrealistic negative outcomes.

If a negative outcome is indeed realistic and probable, then you can prepare for it. If not, then you can work toward moving your focus away from the catastrophic thinking that increases your stress to seeing the situation for what it is.
When I was deployed, I got numb to the stress. I know that I was stressed out, but mentally I didn’t even pay attention to it because you’re just getting done what you know needs to be done. I didn’t really realize a problem until I came home and compared how I reacted to stress in garrison vs. combat deployment. I noticed that someone didn’t lock a door that they were supposed to have locked, and I’m pissed off that this door didn’t get locked. I’m freaking out, you know, like this is a big deal.

Then I realized that there should be a difference in the way I was thinking in these two settings. It was possible that the unlocked door could lead to a dangerous situation, but it would most probably not result in any urgent, negative consequences. It’s good to be aware of your surroundings and everything, but that unlocked door did not mean that all was lost.

Corpsman
The quote to the left is an example of how the transition from an intense deployed setting to home is a time when one should be even more aware of unrealistic or negative thought patterns that may be contributing to stress. The same event (unlocked door) that might have been a greater risk on deployment is not as threatening while in garrison. Regardless of the situation, you can learn to identify negative unrealistic thoughts that may affect how you react, and replace them with more realistic thoughts. This can be a helpful strategy to reduce stress.

**OPTIMISM**

Optimism is the favorable interpretation of a situation and the belief that good things will happen in the future. Research has documented a substantial number of physical and behavioral health benefits of optimism, including more emotional resilience, better health habits, higher alertness, stronger connection to other people, and even shorter recovery time from injuries and surgery.

Optimism also encourages people to be open to new ideas and actively create positive changes in their lives. Even small decisions are fueled by optimism. For example, you start a new exercise routine because you are optimistic that doing so will improve your health and well-being. Optimism also prevents people from giving up when they hit a rough patch and inspires them to keep moving forward, even when a goal may seem unattainable.
How Do I Become More Optimistic?

- **Be aware of the tone of your self-talk.** Start by following one simple rule: don’t say anything to or about yourself that you would not say about someone you respected. Be supportive of yourself and try to stay objective in the way that you would if you were helping a friend through a tough situation.

- **Surround yourself with other positive people** and observe how they approach difficult situations.

- **Consider that every difficult situation builds character** and makes you a stronger person who is better able to cope with future problems. Embrace challenges!

- **Come up with a calming ritual.** Whether it’s meditating, going for a run, or just taking 5 slow breaths, calming rituals allow you to react more rationally to stressful situations.73

- **Celebrate small victories.** If you wait until a big life moment to be happy, you miss out on a lot of positive things that happen each day.

- **Be realistic while maintaining positive thinking.** Optimism and realism are not mutually exclusive. You can be optimistic, yet also accept reality and recognize when it may be best to adjust your course.74
The most rewarding part of my job as a Navy corpsman is the respect you get from your patients, your Marines. They regard you as high as a brother, father, mentor, teacher, someone they can rely on and they can turn to.

Corpsman
The Marines thanking me means a lot. It goes to my heart and I’ll never forget that, even when the spouses thank me. I had a Marine that almost died on one deployment. I never saw him again after he was evacuated. I happened to see his wife and she thanked me. It was like she knew who I was just based on what she had heard from her husband. I almost teared up like right there. That’s just one of the many gratifying experiences that I’ve had as a corpsman.

Corpsman
GRATITUDE

Gratitude is the feeling of appreciation and reverence for what you have. Research has shown that activities to reflect upon or express gratitude, such as those listed under Quick Tips (page 72), are associated with greater well-being and positive emotion.\textsuperscript{75,76} Whether simply taking a moment each day to reflect on things you are grateful for or keeping a gratitude journal, spending some time on gratitude can reduce your stress.

You may feel appreciation for things like:

- **People:** Family, friends, fellow service members, significant other

- **Job:** Being a Navy corpsman allows you to help people

- **Circumstances:** Health, job security, ability to pursue education

- **Experiences and memories:** These can be extraordinary (e.g., your wedding or the birth of your child) or everyday (e.g., a movie that made you laugh, watching the sunset)\textsuperscript{77}
Quick Tips on Gratitude

• When you’re stressed or having a bad day, write down a list of 10 things you’re grateful for, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant.78

• Think of a person for whom you are grateful and why. In what specific way has that person made a difference in your life or changed your outlook? Can you be that person for someone else?

• Practice random acts of kindness, both small (e.g., smile at strangers, compliment someone) and large (e.g., put money in an expiring parking meter, tell a restaurant manager about an exemplary waiter or waitress).79
You have the opportunity to change lives. I’m a surgical tech and I was working in oral surgery, so we used to fix people’s grills and we worked with a lot of civilians and dependents. The coolest thing we do was called the ‘summertime rush’ and that’s when a lot of teenagers in general would come and we would fix deformities and different things in oral surgery. You fix them up, they use the summer to heal and go through the process, and by the time they go back to school they have almost a brand new face, a brand new smile, and they look different. It’s a new confidence about them. When you give a teenager who may have had low self-esteem a new sense of confidence, I think that was probably the most rewarding thing.

Junior Corpsman
I had a Marine that I MedEvaced in theater. He made it back and he was okay. A couple of weeks later, I got a postcard in the mail while I was still deployed. His wife sent me the postcard and it said, ‘Thank you. Even though you said you were just doing your job, you didn’t just save a Marine, you saved a father and a husband.’ That was one of the biggest rewards that I’ve gotten being a corpsman.

Corpsman
ASSESSING YOUR CHARACTER STRENGTHS

Everyone has unique positive qualities, also called character strengths. Character strength is a distinctive trait that affects how you live your daily life and view the world. Although you may have similar strengths as other people, the pattern of qualities you have is completely unique to you—there is no one else exactly like you. Research has shown that using your character strengths is essential to well-being and resilience.80

Review the list of character strengths on the following pages,81-83 and consider these questions:

- What do you think are your top five character strengths?

- What character strengths have helped you the most as a corpsman so far? (These can be any strengths on the list—not just your top five strengths.)

- What character strengths do you think will help the most in stressful situations? (These can be any strengths on the list—not just your top five strengths.)

- Think about the character strengths you already possess and how you might be able to use them more often in your daily life to address challenging situations.

- Think about the character strengths that are not currently your top strengths, but that you would like to develop more fully. Try to use them more often in your daily life to address challenging situations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHARACTER STRENGTH</th>
<th>DEFINITION (ALTERNATE TERMS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Thinking of new ways to do things. (Originality, imagination)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curiosity</td>
<td>Always wanting to know more. (Interest, discovery, exploration)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-mindedness</td>
<td>Thinking things through and examining them from all sides. (Critical thinking, judgment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love of learning</td>
<td>Being excited to learn new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective</td>
<td>Being able to provide wise advice to others. (Wisdom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bravery</td>
<td>Taking action to help others in spite of risk or danger. (Courage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistence</td>
<td>Finishing what you start even when faced with obstacles; hard-working. (Determination, industriousness)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>Presenting oneself in a genuine way; taking responsibility for one’s feelings and actions, keeping promises. (Honesty, sincerity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitality</td>
<td>Seeing life as an adventure. (Enthusiasm, energy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Valuing close relationships with others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindness</td>
<td>Doing favors and good deeds without expecting anything in return. (Generosity, compassion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social understanding</td>
<td>Striving to make people feel comfortable and welcomed, no matter the situation. Noticing other people’s moods, needs, and motivations. (Social awareness)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Being loyal and dedicated to the organizations you are a part of; working hard for the success of the group. (Social responsibility, loyalty)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>Treating all individuals the same regardless of your personal feelings. (Justice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Motivating and guiding members of a group to achieve a common goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHARACTER STRENGTH</td>
<td>DEFINITION (ALTERNATE TERMS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgiveness</td>
<td>Forgiving those who have done wrong; giving others a second chance. (Mercy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humility</td>
<td>Allowing your accomplishments to speak for themselves without seeking the spotlight. (Modesty)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicality</td>
<td>Being careful about your choices – not taking unnecessary risks and keeping long-term goals in mind when making short-term decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-control</td>
<td>Able to control your emotions and what you do. Holding your desires, needs, and impulses in check. (Discipline)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation of beauty and</td>
<td>Appreciating beauty, excellence, and skilled performance in various domains of life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>excellence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gratitude</td>
<td>Being aware of and thankful for the good things in life. (Appreciation, thankfulness)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it. (Optimism, positivity, future-mindedness)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humor</td>
<td>Finding enjoyment in laughter and making others happy; seeing the lighter side of life. (Playfulness)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirituality</td>
<td>Having strong beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe. Your beliefs shape your actions and comfort you. (Faith, religion, purpose)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3/ 
ENHANCING ADAPTIVE SKILLS

One thing that weakens resilience is not having the right skills to bounce back from stressful situations. The skills discussed in this section, problem solving and communication, can enhance resilience by helping you handle stressful situations better and often prevent a situation from becoming stressful. These tips for improving your interpersonal activities will help to improve your life balance and bolster your ability to manage stress.

PROBLEM SOLVING

In simple terms, problem solving is how you handle life’s issues. Your ability to address these issues can affect your overall stress levels. Military personnel (and particularly corpsmen) experience many stressful situations both on and off duty. Stressors can come from the military environment, family, patients, coworkers, operational risks, or a variety of other sources.

Even issues like running late for an appointment are problems and can cause stress. That is the “problem” part; the “solving” part lies in how you react to the situation or problem, and how you come up with ways to handle it. In our study of corpsmen on which this guide is based, corpsmen said taking action to handle a situation or improve it was one of the most helpful ways to deal with stress.
When researchers talk about social problem solving, they tend to look at two components: problem orientation and problem-solving style.

- **Problem orientation** is how you view a problem. Do you see it positively, like a challenge or opportunity, or do you see it negatively, like an obstacle or threat?

- **Problem-solving style** is how you go about overcoming the problem and finding the solution. Less effective problem-solving styles have been shown to be associated with depression, stress, and lower life satisfaction.84,85

Problem-solving training helps to change the way one views and handles problems, which can reduce perceived stress.86 The training provides tools to work through problems in a planned, well thought out, and structured manner.

Problem-solving training has been conducted among veteran populations in a classroom and web-based format through the Department of Veterans Affairs. These trainings have been shown to increase the use of effective problem-solving skills, improve self-reported resilience, and decrease depressive symptoms.87 People who take this training learn about how they tend to view problems (problem orientation) and their preferred way of handling stressors (problem-solving style). The training also provides specific strategies to help with multi-tasking, decreasing emotional reactions to problems, and determining and implementing the best solution through a structured and planful process.

The following is an assessment to help determine how you deal with problems and give a better understanding of your strengths and weaknesses in this area.88
What Type of Problem-Solver Are You?

Although you may react to problems differently in a variety of situations, it is still helpful to understand what type of problem-solver you are in general. This will help you identify your strengths and weaknesses. Answer each question honestly to learn more about the type of problem-solver you are. *Circle one value on the scale of 1-5 for each statement.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NOT AT ALL TRUE</th>
<th>SOMEWHAT TRUE</th>
<th>MODERATELY TRUE</th>
<th>TRUE</th>
<th>VERY TRUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1. I get nervous and unsure of myself when I have to make an important decision.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2. Sometimes difficult problems can have a way of improving my life.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3. When faced with a problem, I usually try to understand why it is a problem by sorting it out and breaking it down.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4. Difficult problems usually make me very upset.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5. When I have a decision to make, I usually think about the positive and negative consequences of each possible option before I act.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6. When I am trying to solve a problem, I often go with the first good idea that comes to mind.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7. When I am upset, I just want to run away and be left alone.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8. I try to stop negative feelings as quickly as I can.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9. I avoid trouble with others in order to keep problems to a minimum.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10. I believe emotions, even negative ones, can be helpful in my efforts at solving a problem.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scoring:
Points for each item are: Not at all true=1, Somewhat True=2, Moderately True=3, True=4, Very True=5. Add the points for the questions as directed below to get your scores on problem-solving attitude and approach.

Your Problem-Solving Attitude

Optimistic problem-solving attitude:

Q2 _____ + Q10 _____ = _____

If your score for Optimistic Problem-Solving Attitude is greater than 6, this shows that you see the positive side of problems and can grow from them. This is a strength that can help you to feel less stressed about problems you encounter.

Pessimistic problem-solving attitude:

Q1 _____ + Q4 _____ = _____

If your score for Pessimistic Problem-Solving Attitude is greater than 6, this shows that you tend to think the worst when it comes to problems. This is a weakness that can increase the amount of stress you feel about problems you encounter. It is not a permanent trait but a tendency, and you can learn to overcome it and change the way you view problems.
Your Problem-Solving Approach

The “Thoughtful Planner” problem-solving approach:

Q3 _____ + Q5 _____ = _____

If your score for Thoughtful Planner Problem-Solving Approach is greater than 6, this shows that you tend to think through your problems to try to find the best solution to solve them. This is a strength and you can enhance your ability to solve problems in a planned manner by learning more.

The “Quick-Fixer” problem-solving approach:

Q6 _____ + Q8 _____ = _____

If your score for Quick-Fixer Problem-Solving Approach is greater than 6, this shows that you tend to react to problems immediately rather than thinking through your actions to find the best solution. This is a weakness and can lead to overlooking parts of the situation and making rash judgments. It is not permanent, but a tendency that can be changed by learning more.

The “Avoider”:

Q7 _____ + Q9 _____ = _____

If your score for Avoider is greater than 6, this shows that you tend to try to ignore problems and hope they will go away. Avoidance is actually not a problem-solving approach, but a form a denial that tends to lead to problems getting worse. It is not permanent, but a tendency that can be changed by learning more.
You can take problem-solving training to help you with capitalizing on the strengths and overcoming weaknesses that this assessment may have revealed at http://www.veterantraining.va.gov/apps/movingforward/index.html. While neither the DoD nor the Department of the Navy endorse the program provided by this website, it has been tailored for people with military experience and has helped people enhance their problem-solving skills. There is also an app for both iPhones and Androids that accompanies this problem-solving training program.

COMMUNICATION

Communication can cause stress or be used as a way to reduce it. This section begins with several areas where stress may be related to communication issues and ends with communication as a way to manage stress.

Sources of Stress

Three common sources of communication-related stress are patient communication, dealing with conflict, and upward communication.

Patient communication. The way you talk with patients can vary because there isn’t a single way that works with all patients about all issues. What might work best with one patient or situation may not work with another. Some barriers in communicating with patients include low self-confidence, cultural differences, discomfort in sensitive situations, negative opinions about the interaction’s value, and negative self-talk that gets in the way of listening. Any of these can lead to anxiety and stress, but all can be overcome with guidance and practice. Many corpsmen enter the field to help people, and that same desire to help should be integrated into patient communication.

To improve patient communication:

- **Listen** to the patient
- **Be clear** about what you need to tell the patient; if you are not comfortable, practice this with other corpsmen
- **Reassure** your patient of confidentiality

Communication and conflict. Many forms of conflict may happen in the workplace, which can be a source of stress. This could include conflict with coworkers or supervisors. Sometimes it may be easier to address conflict with coworkers because you’re on equal footing than with supervisors, where you may have little power.
One type of conflict, called emotional tyranny, occurs when a person, usually a supervisor, is emotionally abusive to people in the workplace. Examples of these behaviors include discounting, ridiculing, shaming, silencing, or embarrassing subordinates. Emotional tyranny can also take the form of intimidating workers, inappropriate rants, or emotional outbursts. One way to deal with emotional tyranny is to develop social support in the workplace.

Workplace bullying is another form of conflict that can be very difficult to resolve. It includes many different types of negative communication and behavior, such as abusive supervision, verbal abuse and aggressiveness, and social undermining. It is important to use the chain of command to address workplace bullying.

It is best to handle workplace or personal conflict mindfully and strategically rather than just by reacting to it. If you are emotional or angry, it will be more difficult to find a solution.

Here are some communication strategies for managing conflict:

- **Negotiation tactics:** Show a willingness to cooperate and manage the problem by accepting responsibility, being open to a compromise, listening to the other person, and sharing feelings about the conflict.

- **Nonconfrontation tactics:** Delay directly addressing the issue with the person until a better time. Strategies include using humor to defuse a potentially explosive situation or creating a distraction from the problem. Taking care of oneself and others is ideal when working toward a solution.

Avoid negative tactics, such as hostility, put-downs, or attempting to make others feel guilty; these are competitive and disruptive approaches where winning, rather than finding a solution, is the main focus.

**Upward communication.** Sometimes military personnel have a hard time communicating their needs to those above them in the chain of command. For some corpsmen working in hospital or clinic settings, this can include active duty personnel in their chain of command, other service members, and civilian physicians or administrators. In some cases, lack of communication is one of the most disruptive stressors corpsmen may experience.
Here are some tips for improving upward communication:

- **Clearly and respectfully discuss what is needed** to do your job effectively with your supervisor. He or she may not be aware of a communication issue, your workload, or work pressure.⁹⁴

- If the communication problem happens often, be prepared to **provide examples and suggest solutions** for improvements.

- Also, try using some of the **negotiation tactics** previously discussed.
To deal with stress, you gotta talk to people about it. You need to find someone who is going to help you vent, somebody who’s not going to judge, and give you good advice, someone who may have been through that same type of situation in the past. It’s the only way to really work through it.

Corpsman
Communicate to Relieve Stress

Solution-focused talk versus venting. Sometimes talking about a stressful situation is a good way to get a better understanding of the situation and figure out how to handle it. In interviews with corpsmen, venting was among the most frequently reported ways of handling work stress; however, typical venting is not the best way to handle stress. If the conversation revolves mostly around problems without a focus toward a solution (as in some venting), this can actually cause more stress and reduce the protective effect of social support on job burnout and stress.95 Talking about work problems with other corpsmen can be helpful if it is working toward improving the situation or creating a more positive outlook.

Try these solution-focused ways of talking about problems to reduce stress:

- Work with people to solve problems directly and work through an issue together
- Communicate with your peers to gain social support to get another perspective on a problem
- Determine if others are having similar experiences and how they may have handled them

Overall tips for improving communication and relieving stress. A study on providers found that those who felt they had not been adequately trained in communication skills were less likely to report being satisfied with their relationships with patients and other staff.96 They also reported higher levels of disconnect and lower levels of personal accomplishment when compared with those who felt they had been adequately trained in communication skills. Communication may be more important for military medical professionals, like corpsmen, than for civilian providers. Corpsmen have the added layer of communicating within rank structures, in addition to patients, and, in many cases, with civilians. See the following list for tips for improving communication and the Resources section for additional information.
**Tips for Improving Communication**

- **Active listening** is a way to fully understand the content and intent of the speaker. It involves listening without distraction and then repeating back in your own words what you’ve heard to make sure you understand the speaker’s point. It allows the other person to correct you if you have misunderstood something.

- **Rehearsing conversations** can be helpful for potentially challenging conversations (for example, talking to a supervisor about a problem or delivering difficult news to a patient). You can rehearse the conversation alone and brainstorm different examples of what you think the other person might say, so as to be fully prepared to handle them, or you can get someone you trust to role play with you. Just as your medical skills required practice, your communication skills will also improve with practice.

- **Speaking clearly** will help to improve others’ understanding of what you are saying and help you to be less stressed about your conversation. You can practice improving the clarity of your speaking by knowing what weaknesses you have (e.g., speaking too quickly or too softly) and being conscious of those issues. This is also an area where it pays to be aware of your level of emotion and how it may affect the clarity of what you’re saying.

- **Use “I” statements** when you are in an intense conversation. Be specific and do not make generalizations such as “You always...,” or “You never...” Begin with, “When you _____ ... I feel ____.” Follow this with, “In the future I’d like you to ____.” For example, instead of saying, “You never finish the paperwork at the end of the day,” try something like, “When you don’t finish the paperwork at the end of the day, I feel like you take for granted that I will do it for you. In the future, I’d like you to finish the paperwork before you leave or we can discuss some other options.”
LIFE BALANCE

Life balance means different things to different people. Most people think of it as keeping a balance between work and personal time, and that is a part of it. Personal activities, like spending time with friends, family, or a romantic partner, or staying active with recreational activities that you enjoy, are great ways to maintain the personal part of life balance. In fact, the corpsmen in our study on which this guide is based included time with others as one of the more helpful ways to deal with stress. Taking up hobbies and building social networks have been shown to provide a multitude of health benefits, from preventing depression\textsuperscript{97} to chronic disease survival.\textsuperscript{98} Social support has also been shown to decrease allostatic load, or “wear and tear” on the body that results from the repeated activation of biological stress response.\textsuperscript{99,100}

In addition to personal time versus work, life balance also includes balancing activity versus rest, and time for others versus time for yourself. The right balance will vary for different people, but how you feel can be one factor that tells you when you need to make adjustments. We understand that this can be difficult, particularly with the duties, deployments, and hours that corpsmen work, but it is possible. There will be times when the scale swings beyond your control, but you need to make a conscious effort as soon as you can to return your life to a balance that is healthy for you and maintains your readiness.

Engaging in a social group or activity does not have to be time-consuming or demanding; it can be as simple as catching up with loved ones over a quick phone call or volunteering at a local community organization for a few hours each month. Other ideas to stay active and involved include:

- Signing up for a recreational sports league
- Training for a race (5K, 10K, marathon)
- Going for a walk, hike, or bike ride
- Trying a new activity (e.g., indoor rock climbing, tennis, ultimate frisbee)
Off duty, it’s great having family. Being able to talk to your spouse, play with your kids, it’s always de-stressing, no matter how bad a day you had at work. When you can come home to something like that, it’s always great.

Corpsman
Having a social support network of people who understand your military experiences can be particularly helpful in dealing with stressors related to military life. Keeping in touch with friends and colleagues who are at different duty stations using social media, email, video chat, and other technologies is becoming easier. You can stay connected to people you may have deployed or served with who have common interests, even if you are geographically separated. Take advantage of social networking to find friends who may be stationed where you are now, as well as to keep in touch with those who are farther away. Join groups on your local base that revolve around your interests so you can be around other military personnel who like to do the things you do. Remember to reach out to people in person, as well as electronically, so your social network can include face time.

When talking with your former colleagues or others who have had shared experiences, remember to focus on the positive as well as the negative, the present and the past. If you are talking about your problems, let your friends help you with finding solutions rather than just turning it into a complaint session (see the Solution-focused talk versus venting subsection in the Communicate to Relieve Stress section on page 87). Talking with your family and spending time with them can help you with life balance, too.

The bottom line is that being active and social can make you more resilient to stress and can help when you are feeling stressed.
STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING STRESS
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  Breathing to Relax 97
  Stepping Away From the Situation 97
  Focus on Only the Things You Can Control 99
This section covers strategies for dealing with stress in-the-moment. Being ready and resilient is the best way to be prepared for dealing with stress; however, some situations call for an immediate strategy to manage stress, such as stepping away from the situation if possible or practical, or using quick stress relief techniques.
When you are trying to solve something and someone is yelling in your face, you’re going to react. Allow yourself some time to get away from all of that outside influence, outside noise, and then you can concentrate on the problem. That seems to work.

Corpsman with over 20 years of service
QUICK STRESS RELIEF TECHNIQUES

Got 1 minute?
- **Take 10 breaths**: Focusing on breathing normally, in through your nose and slowly out through your mouth, forces both your body and mind to slow down.\(^{54}\)
- **Smell something good**: Scents like peppermint and citrus have been linked to improved mood and concentration,\(^{101}\) so pop a mint, brew some tea,\(^{102}\) or peel an orange to instantly feel refreshed
- **Clean up**: Clearing clutter around you helps you to stay focused, calm, and organized

Got 10 minutes?
- **Listen to upbeat or relaxing music**\(^{103}\)
- **Laugh**: Watch a movie clip, web video, or read a funny article
- **Unplug**: Turn off the computer, television, and phone, and just listen to the ambient noise (or silence) around you
- **Do something creative**: Draw, write, paint, or do anything that requires you to focus on something other than the stressor(s)\(^{104}\)
- **Meditate**: There are many meditation techniques, but a good starting point is to just close your eyes, turn on soothing music, and focus on breathing (taking a normal breath in, then a long, slow breath out)\(^{105}\)
- **Take a walk or stretch**
- **Use progressive muscle relaxation** (see page 56)
BREATHING TO RELAX

It is often said that you “take a deep breath” when you’re feeling anxious or overwhelmed. However, there is a tendency for many people to hold their breath while breathing deeply, which can actually increase anxiety or cause them to hyperventilate. Breathing slowly, rather than deeply, may be a more helpful way to think about this process.106

Breathing retraining is a quick exercise that can help you slow down your breathing and has been shown to be effective with conditions like posttraumatic stress, panic disorder, generalized anxiety, and asthma.106-110

STEPPING AWAY FROM THE SITUATION

When you find yourself in a stressful situation, try to get away or remove yourself from the stressor when possible or practical. This doesn’t mean that you shouldn’t also try to manage the way you react to the situation using other strategies, such as mindfulness or improved communication skills. Rather, it is an immediate action you can take during some stressful situations to get away from the source of stress.

Breathing Retraining Exercise

1. Take a normal breath in through your nose, keeping your mouth closed.
2. Exhale slowly through your mouth.
3. While you exhale, silently say to yourself the word “calm” or “relax” very slowly. For example: c-a-a-a-a-a-alm.
4. Pause and count to 4 before you inhale again.
5. Repeat 10 times.
If I get extremely stressed on the job, sometimes I have to just put things down and walk away. I say, ‘what I need is some time; give me 10 or 15 minutes.’ I can come back to it, but at a certain point it’s so stressful that I need a break. There are times when I get so frustrated, I can’t deal with it. I need to take a deep breath, walk away, and come back to it. Whatever is going on is not going anywhere. Just take the few minutes and then deal with it.

Corpsman
Stepping away from the situation gives you a chance to calm down or clear your head if needed, and it gives you time to think of a plan to best handle the situation. For example, if your family argues during the holidays, give yourself a breather and step away by going out for a walk or drive. If the stressor is something that happens often, think about how you may be able to systematically avoid being in that situation until you have a more direct solution. Naturally, there are many circumstances where you just can’t avoid a stressor or walk away from it; however, removing yourself is a very simple and effective way to reduce stress in the moment.

FOCUS ON ONLY THE THINGS YOU CAN CONTROL

Many causes of stress are things people have no control over. This may include situations from your past that you can’t change, events you think may happen, or situations going on somewhere completely away from you. One way to decrease the impact of these types of things is to (1) recognize you are focusing on something you can’t control, and (2) think about what aspects you can control in that particular situation.

You can control:

- Your attitude about the situation, and
- What you choose to do about it.

A good example of this would be an upcoming deployment. It is a stressful situation that you cannot control. You can’t change the timing or the length of the deployment, or even the duties that you will be assigned. What you can control is your attitude about it, your level of preparedness, and the actions you take leading up to it. You can even have some control over how you feel about it and try to influence others to be positive about it.

Not dwelling on things you can’t change and putting your energy into things you can affect will reduce feelings of helplessness, being overwhelmed, and the stress of certain situations. Recognizing situations and things you can control is related to strategic problem solving. See the Problem Solving section on page 78 for more help.
WAYS TO GET HELP
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  Leadership 105
  Family and Friends 105
  Chaplain or Religious Program Specialist 106
  Support Groups 106
  Mental Health Providers 106
Reaching out and getting help for stress problems can take many forms. It doesn’t always mean going to a mental health professional for treatment. While meeting with a professional is sometimes necessary, there are many types of resources available, from seeking the support of fellow corpsmen to seeing a counselor or participating in a support group.

Resources are often more effective when used in combination. Each person must evaluate and use the combination of resources that works best for them. If you can’t decide which options for getting help are best, consult a trusted resource to help you figure it out and make a plan.
I have to say that I have a high tolerance for stressful situations, but what helps me the most is knowing that should I need them, I have resources to go to. There is comfort in knowing that there are resources. They don’t necessarily have to be major resources. One resource is talking to somebody in your chain of command. We tend to take care of our own very well.

Corpsman
"I always tell Sailors if you are having stress, if you can’t handle it yourself, talk to someone. You don’t want to keep it bottled up, and then all of a sudden you’re just gonna snap. I usually tell them that, and it also helps them to know that I am there if they need someone to talk to."

Corpsman
5/ GETTING HELP

5.1/ WAYS TO GET HELP

PEERS
Your fellow corpsmen know what you’ve been through and continue to deal with each day, especially those who have served with you. Talking with others who’ve shared your experience may help prevent stress concerns from progressing into a more serious problem. Peers may also help you determine the best source of additional help, if needed. Peer support may be useful early on, but, if the signs of stress worsen, trained providers are more likely a better option.

LEADERSHIP
You may choose to talk with leadership about your concerns. Your leaders are concerned about your well-being. In addition, good leaders support the early detection of stress issues and are often knowledgeable about resources for getting help.

FAMILY AND FRIENDS
While talking to family and friends may not solve all problems associated with stress, they can be a source of help. They can assist you with finding the right form of help for you or serve as a support system while you receive other help.
CHAPLAIN OR RELIGIOUS PROGRAM SPECIALIST

Your spiritual counselors have specialized training to assist if you have a stress injury and help you deal with stressors in general. They are excellent listeners.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Attending support groups with other service members who’ve had similar experiences can be helpful. You don’t need to have a stress injury to go to a support group; they can also help you deal with more general stress you may be experiencing before it becomes severe. A counselor or other professional may run these groups.

MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS

Psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, counselors, and other mental health professionals have specialized training to help clients deal with stress and military lifestyle issues. They provide clinical treatment or therapy. They will assess the problem and work with you to get the help you need. You don’t have to have a stress injury to benefit from the guidance they provide. There are mental health providers available to help you both within and outside of the military system.

See the military and civilian sources listed in the Resources section.
To go see a psychologist is a big step. It kind of toys with your mind. You might think, ‘I have a mental defect.’ But, once you get there, you’re going to feel such a relief. If you choose to see a psychologist, you’re going to feel such a relief of stress because you can just get it all out. You’ll learn to be able to trust people and to open up with them more freely.

Corpsman
6/ RESOURCES
SUICIDE PREVENTION

Military Crisis Line (800-273-8255, press 1)
https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/ActiveDuty.aspx
Connects service members and their families in crisis with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline. They can also chat online, or send a text message to 838255 to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800-273-TALK or 800-273-8255)
http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/
A 24/7 toll-free, confidential suicide prevention and crisis counseling hotline available to anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress.

STRESS CONTROL

Military OneSource (800-342-9647)
www.militaryonesource.mil
A 24/7 phone and internet-based assistance program offering confidential, personalized advice and support to active duty, National Guard, and reserve personnel and families.

Talk to a Chaplain 24/7 (1-855-NAVY-311 [1-855-628-9311]) or text: navy311@navy.mil in the “to” line
All active and reserve Sailors, Marines, Coast Guardsmen, and their family members can request chaplain support and are guaranteed a response within 24 hours.
**DSTRESS Line (1-877-476-7734)**  
[www.dstressline.com](http://www.dstressline.com)

24/7 anonymous counseling for everyday and deployment-related stressors, including alcohol and drug issues, for Marines, attached Sailors, and families; callers speak with veteran Marines, former corpsmen, or licensed counselors specifically trained in Marine Corps culture and ethos.

**Real Warriors Campaign**  
[http://www.realwarriors.net/](http://www.realwarriors.net/)

This campaign supports active duty, veterans, and their families. Its website includes a live chat feature with health counselors.

**Operational Stress Control (OSC) – Navy Personnel Command**  

The OSC Program promotes an understanding of stress, awareness of support resources, and provides practical tools to help build resilience of Sailors, families, and commands.

**Operational Stress Control (OSC) Materials**  

On the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center website, there are many links to OSC presentations, videos, handouts, posters, and more.
Naval Center for Combat & Operational Stress Control (NCCOSC)
www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcsd/nccosc
NCCOSC is dedicated to the mental health and well-being of Navy and Marine Corps service members and their families. The website provides resources and tools relating to combat and operational stress control, including the Stress Continuum, Navy and Marine Corps Combat and Operational Stress Control Doctrine, 5 Core Leader Functions, Combat and Operational Stress First Aid, and much more.

Navy Fleet and Family Support Centers (FFSCs)
https://ffsp.navy.mil
Click on “Regions and Installations” to find contact information for your local center. FFSCs provide free counseling for individuals, couples, and children. In addition to one-on-one sessions, there are workshops, classes, and support groups for everything from debt management to effective parenting to Individual Augmentee support.

Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS) Forward – The Unit, Personal and Family Readiness Program
http://www.usmc-mccs.org/index.cfm/services/family/unit-personal-and-family-readiness/
The Family Readiness Officer (FRO) provides necessary support to the unit Marines, Sailors, and families to maintain a constant state of family readiness. A FRO is assigned to each Marine Corps unit and is an important contact for any counseling need. MCCS operates counseling centers on all Marine Corps bases.
Families OverComing Under Stress (FOCUS)

www.focusproject.org

FOCUS provides resiliency training to military families. The free program, which operates at designated Navy and Marine Corps sites, teaches practical skills to meet the challenges of deployment and reintegration, communication, problem solving, and setting family goals. FOCUS is sponsored by the Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery.

Navy Medicine

http://www.med.navy.mil/SitelInfo/Pages/default.aspx

Locator with website links to naval medical centers and hospitals.

The Docs (graphic novel)


Online graphic novel about four Navy corpsmen deployed to Iraq; serves to prepare corpsmen and Marines psychologically by realistically portraying common stress concerns faced in war zones.

Breathe2Relax (mobile app), National Center for Telehealth & Technology (T2)

http://t2health.dcoe.mil/apps/breathe2relax

Breathe2Relax is a portable stress management tool that guides you through breathing exercises. For a full list of behavioral health-related mobile applications for service members from T2, see http://t2health.dcoe.mil/products/mobile-apps.
Office of the Chief of Naval Operations Instruction 6520.1
Operational Stress Control Program
Policy to standardize the Operational Stress Control (OSC) Program across the Navy and to establish OSC training requirements.

STRESS ASSESSMENTS

Professional Quality of Life Stress Assessment
www.proqol.org
A stress assessment for caregivers - Professional Quality of Life: Compassion Satisfaction and Fatigue Version 5 (ProQOL).

The Stress Continuum –
Naval Center for Combat & Operational Stress Control
The Stress Continuum model identifies how Sailors and Marines react under stressful situations.

SLEEP

Epworth Sleepiness Scale
http://ummidtown.org/~media/systemhospitals/midtown/pdfs/centers/sleep/epworth_sleepiness_scale.pdf?la=en
The Sleep Disorders Center at the University of Maryland Medical Center Midtown Campus offers this scale for measuring your daytime sleepiness to determine if you need to improve your sleep.
Sleep Tips: 7 Steps to Better Sleep – Mayo Clinic
http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/sleep/art-20048379
Tips to improve sleep quality.

Screening for Obstructive Sleep Apnea – University Health Network
http://www.stopbang.ca/osa/screening.php
An online screening tool to determine your risk for sleep apnea.

PHYSICAL TRAINING

Navy Operational Fitness and Fueling System (NOFFS), Operational Series Review
http://www.navyfitness.org/fitness/noffs-training/operational-series/downloads
The NOFFS project provides a “best in class” physical fitness and nutrition performance resource for Sailors and Navy health and fitness professionals. There are four distinct series, each designed for specific platforms. The site contains downloads, a virtual trainer, and more.

NUTRITION

Fitness, Sports and Deployed Forces Support – Nutrition
http://www.navyfitness.org/nutrition
Information and resources on nutrition, including performance nutrition topics and an overview of the Mission Nutrition course.

Healthy Eating – Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
http://www.dietaryguidelines.gov
Dietary guidelines from the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.
Choose My Plate – United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)
http://www.choosemyplate.gov/MyPlate
Healthy eating guidelines from the USDA. The website also explains how to understand and use nutrition fact labels.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Navy Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention
The site offers information and assistance to support individual and command alcohol abuse and drug use prevention efforts.

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism
http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/
A branch of the National Institutes of Health that provides a wide range of information on alcohol and health.

National Institute on Drug Abuse
http://www.drugabuse.gov/
A branch of the National Institutes of Health that provides comprehensive information and up-to-date research on the prevention and treatment of drug abuse.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
www.samhsa.gov
This site provides information on behavioral health, as well as information on related services and research.

Tobacco Cessation – Military Health System
TRICARE Cessation Quit lines (toll free): North Region: 1-866-459-8766; South Region: 1-877-414-9949; West Region: 1-888-713-4597
Tobacco-Free Living Guide


Tobacco Cessation

National Quitline: 1-(800)-QUIT-NOW or (1-800-784-8669)

The National Quitline is a coaching service operated by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and available through the toll-free telephone number. Also, NCI lists mobile apps for quitting at http://smokefree.gov/apps.

WELLNESS

21st Century Sailor and Marine Initiative

http://www.21stcentury.navy.mil/Pages/default.aspx

This website contains a set of objectives and policies and leverages programs across a spectrum of wellness that maximizes each Sailor’s and Marine’s personal readiness.

DoD Instruction 1010.10 Health Promotion and Disease Prevention


Department of Defense policy to enhance mission readiness, unit performance, and the health and fitness of members of the Military Services, medical beneficiaries, and civilian DoD employees through health promotion and disease prevention programs.
MIND-BODY PRACTICES

Guided Meditations – UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center
http://marc.ucla.edu/body.cfm?id=22
Introductory guided meditations that you can practice on your own.

Mindfulness Coach (mobile app), National Center for Telehealth & Technology (T2)
http://t2health.dcoe.mil/apps/MindfulnessCoach
The Mindfulness Coach mobile app was created to introduce the concept of mindfulness, which has been shown to be effective for reducing stress. For a full list of behavioral health-related mobile applications for service members from T2, see http://t2health.dcoe.mil/products/mobile-apps.

Body Scanning
A sample body scan meditation script.

Guided Imagery
http://mckinley.illinois.edu/health-education/stress-management/relaxation-techniques/relaxation-exercises
Downloadable guided imagery exercises.

VIA Institute on Character – Survey
https://www.viacharacter.org/survey/account/register
Assess your character strengths on this website.
Complementary Health Approaches –
National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health
https://nccih.nih.gov/health/integrative-health
This site provides information on stress reduction strategies such as yoga, acupuncture, and other complementary health approaches not covered in this guide.

ADAPTIVE SKILLS

Moving Forward Overcoming Life’s Challenges –
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
http://www.veterantraining.va.gov/apps/movingforward/index.html
Problem-solving training tailored for people with military experience.

Communication Skills for Healthy Relationships – LifeCare, Inc.
http://www.wfm.noaa.gov/workplace/EffectivePresentation_Handout_1.pdf
A guide that provides strategies to help foster effective communication skills.

Conflict Resolution Skills – HelpGuide.org
https://www.helpguide.org/articles/relationships/conflict-resolution-skills.htm
Information on how to build skills that can turn conflicts into opportunities.

Families and Friendships: Conflict Resolution – AfterDeployment.org
Communication tips for resolving conflict.
Finding Balance – AfterDeployment.org
General facts about life balance.

Balancing Work and Life As a Dual Military Couple – MilitaryOneSource
http://www.militaryonesource.mil/health-wellness/marriage?content_id=269212
Techniques for balancing work and family life specifically for dual military couples.

Work–Life Balance – Mayo Clinic
Tips for striking a better work–life balance.


