

LIFELINK NEWSLETTER

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JULY 2020



The Critical Links Between Sleep and Health

Sleep and health are inextricably connected, and that includes mental health. If you're not sleeping well, nothing is functioning at optimal levels. Your risk rises and so does your vulnerability to physical and mental challenges. Sleep lays the foundation for health, and lack of sleep impacts performance. Sleep deprivation can compromise your ability to think, manage your emotions and handle stress in many ways, including the following, from [Human Performance Resources by CHAMP](#).

Lack of sleep hurts your brain's performance. Sleep loss seriously impacts your brain function, including decreased working memory, ability to concentrate, situational and battlefield awareness, focus, and response time. Lack of sleep is equivalent to being drunk. In fact, after being awake for 18–20 hours, you'd function as if you had a blood-alcohol content of .1% (about 4 drinks for a 150-pound person). Little or no sleep decreases your hand-eye coordination, reaction time, and multitasking abilities and also increases your tendency to be distracted or overwhelmed by emotions.

Lack of sleep can increase stress. Sleep and stress are often connected in a vicious cycle: Stress causes sleep loss, making you feel more vulnerable to stress, which leads to even more sleep loss. Without enough rest and recovery, it's more likely that your emotional and psychological coping mechanisms that help manage stress won't be working as well as they should.

Lack of sleep can hurt your relationships. Sleep loss gets in the way of your ability to accurately interpret people's facial expressions—specifically, if they're happy, frustrated, or calm—making it harder to identify what they're feeling. It also lowers your ability to interact and communicate effectively with those around you. Therefore, sleep loss can impede your ability to understand where others are coming from (that is, to empathize and comprehend what they're expressing) and maintain healthy relationships.

Lack of sleep can impact your physical performance. Sleep is essential to physical recovery and gains in physical performance. However, sleep problems increase

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your risk of physical illnesses and debilitating health conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, and chronic pain. Sleep loss can reduce your motivation to exercise. You also might have less coordination and poor physical performance, which can compromise your physical readiness and increase injury risk.

Sleep impacts your eating habits. You're more likely to crave junk food when you're operating with little sleep. Sleep deprivation can cause hormonal imbalances that regulate your hunger and appetite. It can also increase your risk of getting diabetes and gaining unwanted weight. Weight gain can cause sleep apnea and other issues that hurt sleep.

How can you get better sleep? There are some practices that most experts recommend, including establishing a routine, meditating in a way that works for you and avoiding caffeine or other triggers. Importantly, try not to let sleeplessness turn into an additional source of anxiety. If you can't sleep, don't stay in bed and get more and more frustrated when sleep doesn't come. Get up and try a calming activity in another location, like reading a book or doing light cleaning, until you are ready to try and sleep again. More tips for better sleep can be found at [Real Warriors Campaign](#), the [Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center](#) and on the [NavyNavStress blog](#).



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LIFELINK SPOTLIGHT

Navy Wounded Warrior Enrollee Shares PTSD Journey
*By Shannon Revelle, Commander, Navy Installations
Command Commercial Sponsorship Program Public Affairs*

WASHINGTON (NNS) - Post-traumatic stress disorder is a mental health disorder that develops after experiencing or witnessing a life-threatening event, like combat, a natural disaster, a car accident, or sexual assault. Information Systems Technician 2nd Class Tiffany Hamilton shares her personal story of recovery to bring awareness and hope to others.

Diagnosed with PTSD in 2017, Hamilton enrolled in the Navy Wounded Warrior Program. She credits the program for its instrumental and life-changing effect in her recovery process.

"When I was diagnosed, I was in a dark place both mentally and physically," Hamilton recalled. "I was extremely nervous about my transition, especially being a single mom and a full-time student. I know, without a doubt, I would not have come this far in my recovery process without the assistance from the Navy Wounded Warrior Program. I continue to advocate for our Navy Wounded Warrior Program and I have personally referred 10 Sailors to receive tailored support."

Through the program, CNIC assigns enrollees recovery care coordinators to help wounded ill and injured service members, their caregivers and their families navigate the recovery, rehabilitation, and reintegration process. Along with the development of a comprehensive recovery plan, recovery care coordinators identify resources needed to achieve goals, such as assistive technology, education, employment or housing.

"My recovery care coordinator connected me with valuable resources, such as Operation Homefront, and this was one of my greatest blessings," said Hamilton. "In obtaining transitional housing, I was able to prepare me and my son for our future in ways that I never could have imagined. I am now on my way to a healthy transition from the Navy and I will be attending college classes at Azusa Pacific University in pursuit of employment in the medical field."

NWW has enrolled nearly 1,300 service members with a primary diagnosis of PTSD, and that number does not account for those who are coping with a secondary diagnosis of PTSD.

NWW is the Navy's sole organization for coordinating the non-medical care of seriously wounded, ill and injured Sailors and Coast Guardsmen. The program provides tailored assistance designed to optimize the success of the wounded warriors' recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration. To learn more, visit www.navywoundedwarrior.com.

PLAN OF THE WEEK NOTES

Below are sample Plan of the Week notes aligning with topics covered by the Every Sailor, Every Day campaign during the month of July:

1. The 101 Critical Days of Summer are always a time to focus on safety—responsible drinking, boating safety, swimming safety and more—but suicide prevention efforts aren't always included as a focus. The causes of suicide are complex, and while seasonality and weather are not significant risk factors, researchers have observed some associations between warm weather and suicide rates. Additionally, the stresses of military moves and accompanying separation from known support networks can be very difficult during this time of year. For these reasons and more, suicide prevention efforts are an important part of summer safety. Learn more at <https://navstress.wordpress.com/2019/07/24/summer-safety-suicide-prevention-during-the-101-critical-days-of-summer/>.
2. As Sailors, sleep can seem like a luxury or low priority relative to mission demands and surviving off of little to no sleep is often worn like a badge of honor. However, the amount of sleep the body needs doesn't vary by individual—seven to eight hours of uninterrupted sleep per night is ideal for all Sailors. Get more tips at https://www.cdc.gov/sleep/about_sleep/sleep_hygiene.html.
3. The COVID-19 pandemic may be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about a new disease and what could happen can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions. Public health actions, such as social distancing, can make people feel isolated and lonely and can increase stress and anxiety. Coping with stress in a healthy way will make you, the people you care about and your community stronger. Learn more at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>
4. Connection helps us grow both personally and professionally. Fostering an open and inclusive environment improves our well-being—whether we're empowering our shipmates to succeed, deepening our bonds with our friends with humor or expressing empathy with our family members when they're going through a rough patch. Showing someone you care and respect them can go a long way in helping others feel included and supported. <https://navstress.wordpress.com/2020/06/05/celebrating-inclusion-makes-us-stronger/>

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NEWS & RESOURCES

COVID-19 Updates

[Navy Live](#)

July Toolkit

[Health.mil](#)

Coping with Stress

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

COVID-19 HOPE: Resources for Military

Service Members and their Families

[Human Performance Resources by CHAMP](#)

Quarantine is a Mood

[American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)

How to Keep Family Stress Away While

Everyone Is Home

[Military OneSource](#)

Keep Calm with COVID Coach

[Military OneSource](#)

Taking Care of Your Mental Health in the

Face of Uncertainty

[American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)

Identifying Warning Signs of Suicide on

Social Media

[Real Warriors Campaign](#)

Lethal Means Safety and Suicide Prevention

[The Action Alliance](#)

CURRENT & UPCOMING EVENTS

101 Critical Days of Summer

Memorial Day—Labor Day

SPC Training Webinars

Jul 23, 10AM CDT

[Register here](#)

Eating to Boost Energy and Stay Alert

When we talk about the 101 Critical Days of Summer, we normally think of specific things like boating safety, responsible drinking and other behavioral health priorities. Alertness and energy are two things that can make a difference in safety for not only those specific activities, but in many facets of life. Eating the right foods can give us energy and help us stay more alert when we feel sleepy. In some situations this is important to be safe.



One or two studies have suggested that our levels of alertness and fatigue throughout the day may be related to what we eat. Results of these studies have found that highly processed food and saturated fat consumption is associated with increased daytime fatigue, while fresh, nutrient-rich food intake was associated with increased alertness.

The same recommendations for healthy eating habits also apply to maintaining higher energy levels: eat a balanced diet that includes minimally-processed food sources, with an emphasis on vegetables, fruits, whole grains and healthy oils. Foods like whole grains and healthy fats will help supply the energy reserves our brains and bodies need to draw on throughout the day. Energy boosting foods include fruits, grains, legumes, protein and fish high in omega-3 fatty acids such as bananas, avocados, apples, strawberries, salmon, oatmeal, quinoa, eggs, beans, etc.

Some additional tips for healthy eating to keep your energy and alertness levels high:

Eat small, frequent meals.

When it comes to energy levels, eating smaller meals and snacks throughout the day is better than consuming three large meals per day. Eating smaller meals can reduce fatigue because the brain, which has very few of its own energy reserves, requires a consistent supply of nutrients for optimal function. Luckily, it doesn't take much to "feed" the brain—a piece of fruit or a few nuts is all that's needed to give the brain a boost.

Limit alcohol.

Avoiding the five o'clock happy hour cocktail can help ensure you have energy in the evening to pursue a hobby, work out or spend time with your family. Also, avoiding alcohol before bed can help prevent insomnia as even minimal drinking can disrupt normal sleep patterns. If you do choose to drink alcohol, do so at a time when you don't mind having your energy wind down.

Hydrate. Hydrate. Hydrate.

Water is the main component of blood and is essential for carrying nutrients to the cells and taking away waste products. If your body is short on fluids, one of the first signs is feeling fatigue. Some ideas for staying hydrated during the summer include eating fruit, making your own popsicles, limiting caffeine to one or two cups per day and drinking water before you feel thirsty.

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