



# LIFELINK

## NEWSLETTER

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### Connectedness: Relationships Strengthen Resilience

How connected are you? While self-reliance and grit are important, relationships are one of the **key principles of resilience**.

In its **Suicide Prevention Strategic Direction published in 2011**, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) defines connectedness as “the degree to which a person or group is socially close, interrelated, or shares resources with other persons or groups.” Connectedness can include relationships with friends, a spouse or other family members, as well as professional relationships and community ties. No matter what type of relationship is involved, the connection created can have significant positive effects on a person’s well-being. According to the **Suicide Prevention Resource Network (2019)**, “positive and supportive social relationships and community connections can help buffer the effects of risk factors in people’s lives.”

In today’s world, it appears like we are more connected than ever – at least with technology. Social media and mobile communication seem to make it easier to stay close to others. However, a **2018 survey** by global health company Cigna of more than 20,000 U.S. adults showed increasing levels of loneliness despite the ability to stay in touch. It’s important to find a balance between healthy use of social media, in-person social connection and opportunities to create new relationships. Check out **this article** from the NavyNavStress blog for tips to help you reset your relationship with social media and your relationship with yourself.

Belonging to a social group can increase a person’s sense of personal value and feelings of connectedness with others. A social group may be a formal organization, like a faith-based study group or a petty officer association. They can also be informal, like coworkers who grab lunch together or gym buddies who work out together a few times a week. What’s most important is that the social group is positive and

supportive for its members. For Sailors and their families, two resources to find opportunities for social connection are the **Fleet and Family Support Program (FFSP)** and the Navy **Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) program**.

A **romantic relationship** is the closest form of social connectedness for many. Conversely, the loss of a romantic partner can cause significant stress. Navy life can be tough on relationships. Unpredictable schedules, time apart and other factors can make it difficult to sustain and grow romantic partnerships. There are resources to help, though. One of the most productive options is to attend some form of counseling, and the Navy has several ways for Sailors and their loved ones to reclaim their connection. Those resources include non-medical counseling through **Military and Family Life Counseling, Navy Counseling, Advocacy and Prevention** services at Fleet and Family Support Centers (FFSCs); Navy chaplains and medical counseling available through a Military Treatment Facility.

**RELATIONSHIPS**  
**Stay Connected**

Interpersonal relationships are the glue that keeps units, families and communities together through rough seas. Loss of important relationships and a sense of belonging can increase stress and lead to cracks in one’s foundation of resilience.

**Every Sailor, Every Day**

navstress.wordpress.com



## Lifelink Spotlight

### Navy Changes Policy on Psychotropic Medications and Aviation

By Cmdr. Shawna Chee, Psy.D., ABPP, and Lt. Cmdr. Daniel CeCecchis, M.D., FAPA, Naval Aerospace Medical Institute, Pensacola, Fla. Full text of this article available on the [Psychological Health Center of Excellence \(PHCoE\) website](#).

Can a service member who has been diagnosed with a mental health disorder and is being treated with psychotropic medication maintain their military flight status while in treatment? YES! The use of psychotropic medications was disqualifying for U. S. Naval Aviators (pilots, flight officers, air traffic controllers and aircrew members) before Nov. 2018. After that date, the **U.S. Navy Aeromedical Reference and Waiver Guide (ARWG)** was updated to allow Navy and Marine Corps personnel who are on a stable dose of FDA-approved psychotropic medications to maintain their flight status during treatment.

Given that active symptoms of a mental health diagnosis means an aviator will be “grounded” from their flying duties until the symptoms are stable, a negative stigma has been strongly associated with mental health disorders in the aviation population. The prevalence of major depressive disorders and anxiety disorders in the U.S. is approximately seven percent, with a threefold higher prevalence of depression in 18-29 year-olds (the age range of most actively flying military personnel), so there was concern that many aviation personnel in the Navy and Marine Corps were either going without treatment, keeping any treatment they were seeking under wraps from their flight surgeons, or discontinuing therapy prematurely to regain flight status. This was a concern because untreated psychiatric symptoms are associated with a wide range of psychiatric sequelae that can negatively impact quality of life and social, emotional, and cognitive functioning.

The overall goal of this significant change in Navy policy is to help decrease barriers associated with help seeking behavior in Navy and Marine Corps personnel. Our hope is that military personnel will feel safe to seek recommended treatment in order to have a better quality of life.



## 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 February:

1. The Every Sailor, Every Day campaign is featuring #WinningWinter tips on social media all this month. Get quick and easy ways to maximize your health, rest and well-being throughout February by following the campaign on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/navstress> and on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/navstress>.
2. It's almost Valentine's Day, and the Keep What You've Earned Campaign has a thoughtful and free gift you can share with that special someone. The “Give the Gift of a Designated Driver” pledge has been extended through Feb. 14. Sailors and family members can take the pledge to be a DD at <https://go.usa.gov/xnj86> and then download and print a Valentine's Day-themed card that promises a sober drive home. Get your gift card at <https://go.usa.gov/xPWPB>.
3. February is Heart Health Month and there are a variety of risk factors for heart disease, some of which may be out of your control, such as genetics and age. Other risk factors – such as lack of exercise, an unhealthy diet or unchecked stress – can be minimized through lifestyle changes. That's good news considering that heart disease is the leading cause of death for men and women in the United States. Learn more about how you can keep your heart healthy on the NavyNavStress blog at <https://navstress.wordpress.com/2017/02/08/how-stress-impacts-your-heart-health/>.
4. Whether on a ship or working shore duty, it can be challenging for Sailors to get outside and reap the benefits of natural sunlight, especially in winter. Many people face the “winter blues” – a generally mild sadness that's usually linked to something specific, like stressful holidays or reminders of absent friends or loved ones. The winter blues are unpleasant but usually short-term in duration. More severe sadness that sticks around longer may indicate that you are experiencing Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), and not just the winter blues. Learn the symptoms and differences between winter blues and SAD, and get strategies for both, on the NavyNavStress blog at <https://navstress.wordpress.com/2019/01/28/is-it-sad-or-the-winter-blues/>.

## News and Resources

Physical Activity may Help Diminish Mood Disorders  
[Naval Health Research Center](#)

Three Ways to Help People Reach New Year's Resolutions  
[Health.mil](#)

Dolphin Docs: Mental Health Providers Embedded in the Submarine Community  
[Psychological Health Center of Excellence](#)

Navy Corpsman: Carrying the Legacy  
[Health.mil](#)

Orlando Clinic Uses Virtual Reality to Treat PTSD in Veterans  
[Real Warriors](#)

Comparing Suicide Rates: Making an Apples to Apples Comparison  
[Injury Control Research Center for Suicide Prevention](#)

CSADD Chapter Leads the Way with Mentoring  
[SeaBee Magazine](#)

Yoga for the Mind, Body and Soul  
[NavyNavStress](#)

The Disturbing Link Between Opioids and Suicide  
[Suicide Prevention Resource Center](#)

Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center Annual Conference March 26-28  
[NMCPHC](#)

Five Small ACTs to Strengthen Your Mental Health  
[NavyNavStress](#)

Suicide in America: Frequently Asked Questions  
[National Institute of Health](#)

## Current and Upcoming Events

### SPC Training Webinars

Feb. 8, 6 p.m. CDT  
Feb. 21, 10 a.m., CDT  
[Register here](#)

## Rekindling Your Relationship with Money

Contributed by ESED partner,

Stacy Livingstone-Hoyte, AFC.

Money is one of life's most powerful partners and our relationship with it evolves similarly to any worthwhile relationship. First, we identify what we're seeking—our relationship goals—and set forth to pursue them. Then, we nurture our relationship's well-being with dedication and care. And finally, we must be committed for the long-haul, through good and bad times, pleasant surprises and unforeseen obstacles.

**The Pursuit.** Our personal relationships often begin with a spark or common interest, much like our financial ones. We have needs like shelter and food, and wants such as a vacation or a new car—and pursue paths to increase our cash flow as a means to achieve them. We've now entered into a relationship with money. Like any relationship, our image of success can be influenced by positive experiences (a bonus) and negative ones (unexpected home repairs). It's also common for blind spots to exist in our relationships, such as emotional overspending, failure to plan and not setting goals. Understanding our underlying reasons for the pursuit of money and having a balanced perspective of its value can thwart us from a relentless chase. Military OneSource has resources to help you get a better handle on your money relationship, like this article on **living within your means**.

**Satisfaction and Well-Being.** Healthy relationships are not just defined by current mutual feelings of satisfaction, but also by a positive outlook on the future. According to the **Consumer Financial Protection Bureau**, having financial well-being means that "a person can fully meet current and ongoing financial obligations, can feel secure in their financial future, and is able to make choices that allow enjoyment of life." Achieving well-being in your financial relationship is possible by applying the **Principles of Resilience**. Exercise *Predictability* by building an emergency financial plan tailored to your lifestyle. Build *Trust* in yourself through exploration of long-term savings and investment opportunities that can secure your financial future. And find *Meaning* by liberating yourself to make money decisions that will help you enjoy what life has to offer, exercising *Controllability*, of course!

**Overcoming Obstacles.** Challenges and hurdles will occur, but how we handle them can shape our relationship with money. Catastrophes, poor decision-making and lack of communication can all play a part in creating new financial realities for us. When these occur, obtaining guidance and advice from objective sources can light a hopeful path. Asking for help is the first step toward progress! Keep in mind that accepting a new reality and making personal progress require that we do not dwell on the past, but rather set in motion small steps aimed at a better future. Your local **Fleet and Family Support Center** can refer you to a Military Financial Counselor to minimize stress and get you back on track.

Nurturing your relationship with money takes commitment and recognizing the profound impact it can have in your life can be a powerful motivator for behavioral change. Sometimes we need nudges to jumpstart new habits and kick old ones, such as an accountability plan with rewards and consequences or calendar reminders to revisit our budgets and goals to assess progress. Constantly seek ways to improve your communication with money. Be a good listener when your accounts tell you that now may not be the right time to splurge, and find ways to support your financial well-being instead!

