



LIFELINK

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Mental Health Awareness Month: Check Your Work-Life Balance

May is Mental Health Month, and cultivating a healthy work-life balance is key to navigating the stress of Navy life. Unpredictable schedules, lengthy hours and assignments away from home are some of the challenges Sailors face. However, there are ways to optimize your work-life balance, no matter what your job in the Navy.

When professional demands prevent you from taking time for yourself, you're at risk of living in a state of chronic stress, and that can have major impact on your health. The **National Institute of Mental Health** (NIMH) cites digestive symptoms, headaches, sleeplessness and sadness as other potential consequences of ongoing stress.

So with all these consequences at risk, how can you improve work-life balance? We've gathered some of the top tips.

For Everyone:

- Prioritize and set manageable goals. When we have goals in place and are able to complete them, it helps our sense of accomplishment and control. Be realistic about your workload and deadlines. Don't forget to set personal goals as well! Choose one personal goal and consistently take one small step towards that goal – it can help you balance work demands if you are working towards something for yourself at the same time.
- Cut yourself some slack. You're allowed to be human and to make mistakes. Sometimes, everything won't get done as quickly as you'd like it. It happens to everyone. When you're feeling overwhelmed, take a deep breath and be kind to yourself.

For Sailors with Families:

- Don't take your work home. If possible, leave your work at work. Turn off e-mail notifications when you can – in fact, ditch the phone. Set boundaries around what you will be available for during off duty hours and stick to them.

- Nurture your personal network. There are a million ways to stay connected these days, so take advantage of them when you're away from home. Whether communicating in person or electronically, give those closest to you the undivided attention they deserve.

For Leaders:

- Listen to your team. Meet to discuss deadlines, workloads and overtime. You may not be able to change mission demands, but you can find common ground about meeting those demands. Be sure to regularly ask for feedback, and practice active listening skills when you receive it. Focusing closely on your team's responses will help build trust within your team, so they will be more likely to provide honest, thoughtful feedback.
- Send them home when you can. Some days will require your whole team for long hours. Most days won't. When possible, send people home early from time to time. You can expect them to give 100% when you really need them if you try to get them home when it counts most.

For additional resources to help Sailors, leaders and families navigate work and life stress, visit your local **Fleet and Family Support Center** or **schedule training** through Navy Operational Stress Control (OSC) Program's Mobile Training Teams (MTTs).



Lifelink Spotlight

Resilience Underway: Deployed Counselor Helps Sailors Thrive

Editor's Note: This is a courtesy article by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Apprentice Victoria Sutton, USS Harry Truman Public Affairs. Read the full story at <https://go.usa.gov/xmR3g>.

"I look at behavioral health like a closet. If you stuck a bunch of stuff in your closet and you never cleaned it out, it's always there. One day, you're going to open up the door and it's all going to come flying out at you."

Anissa Peoples, a deployed resiliency counselor, has been working with military personnel for 20 years and has been aboard the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) for just over a year.

"I think it's important to have a resiliency counselor aboard because of the stressful environment we are in while deployed," said Legalman 2nd Class Faith Guidry-Jackson, who met Peoples during a coping course. "It's great to know there is someone there to talk to, besides someone in the military."

Although Sailors have busy schedules while deployed, Peoples encourages them to take time for themselves to organize their thoughts and feelings. "Sometimes you just need to have somebody help you understand it's normal to have a bad day," said Peoples.

Peoples expressed her concern that Sailors think something is wrong with them when they're having normal emotions, because behavioral health is not normalized. Behavioral health is so significant, but Sailors tend to ignore their feelings and deny themselves the help they need, said Peoples.

"When you have an emotional reaction to something, things happen to your body. And the reason this stuff is just completely dismissed is because its behavioral health; it's all in your mind," said Peoples. "That concept has got to be debunked."

Sailors may enjoy and appreciate having a space where they can talk freely about their feelings without repercussions.

"Now I feel like I have someone that I can openly express myself to without fear of reprisal," said Rodriguez. "Sometimes you need someone to take you outside of the military mindset, and speak to you as a human being beyond being a Sailor."



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 May:

1. May is Mental Health Awareness Month. The Military Health System (MHS) is emphasizing the importance of mental health and sharing resources with the theme of "Keep Your #MindMissionReady." Mental health, or psychological health, encompasses the well-being of mind, body and spirit. Learn more at <https://go.usa.gov/xmR39>.
2. The MyNavy Family App officially launches on Military Spouse Appreciation Day, May 10. The app enhances experiences of Navy spouses during specific Navy-related events as well as provides immediate, global connection to resources. The app is available through the Navy App Locker at <https://go.usa.gov/xmQPV> and also through the Apple and Google app stores.
3. Real Warriors Campaign encourages help-seeking behavior among service members, veterans and military families coping with invisible wounds. Real Warriors is an initiative of the DoD's Psychological Health Center of Excellence (PHCoE). The campaign's redesigned website launched May 8 with a fresh new look and easier access to the psychological health resources you trust. Visit <https://www.realwarriors.net> from your desktop, tablet or mobile device.
4. Psychological health concerns and crises deserve just as much attention as physical health concerns, illness or disease. Seeking help is the best thing a Sailor can do to protect their health and career. There is 24/7 support available from the Military Crisis Line online at <http://www.militarycrisisline.net>; by phone at 1-800-273-8255, press 1; or via text at 838255.
5. May is Physical Fitness Month. Exercise doesn't require a lot of space or gym equipment. Read more about how to work out on a time or equipment "budget" in this article from the Navy Physical Readiness Program on the NavyNavStress blog at <https://navstress.wordpress.com/2018/05/11/think-you-need-equipment-to-exercise-think-again/>.

News and Resources

Suicide: How You Can Make a Difference
[National Institute for Mental Health](#)

Being There for Others Starts with Being There for Yourself
[NavyNavStress](#)

Suicide Prevention Research In Action: Meeting People Where They Are
[American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)

Treating Mental Health Impacts of Sexual Assault in Service Members
[Psychological Health Center of Excellence](#)

Health Care Transition Looks to Improve Wartime Missions, Beneficiaries
[Health.mil](#)

Azimuth Check: Are You Living Your Values?
[Human Performance Resource Center](#)

4Mind4Body: Social Connections and Recreation
[Mental Health America](#)

Supporting Survivors of Traumatic Events
[Suicide Prevention Resource Center](#)

You Are Your Friend's Biggest Support
[Real Warriors Campaign](#)

Three African American Leaders Making an Impact on Mental Health in the Community
[SAMHSA](#)

Current and Upcoming Events

SPC Training Webinars

May 9, 6PM CDT
May 23, 10AM CDT
[Register here](#)

Mental Health Awareness Month

May

Physical Fitness Month

May

Mental Health America Offers Resources, Information

Mental Health America is the nation's leading community-based nonprofit dedicated to addressing the needs of those living with mental illness and to promoting the overall mental health of all Americans. The organization promotes mental health as a critical part of overall wellness and provides information on prevention services, early identification and intervention for those at risk.

Mental health is essential to everyone's overall health and well-being, and mental illnesses are common and treatable. Much of what we do physically impacts us mentally, so it's important to pay attention to both your physical health and your mental health, which can help you achieve overall wellness and set you on a path to recovery.

Very few people go through life without any chronic health challenges. Cancer, heart disease, chronic pain, diabetes, mental illnesses and more touch every family at some point. Often, mental illnesses and other chronic conditions co-occur. People with cancer often have depression; people with schizophrenia often have diabetes; and people with chronic pain often have both physical and behavioral health challenges.

The underlying environment – the “social determinants” of health – plays a role in the development of both physical and mental health conditions. Some common tools and strategies – such as animal companionship, humor, spirituality, work-life balance, recreation and social networking – can lead to improvements in both physical and mental health.

Mental Health America wants everyone to know that mental illnesses are real and recovery is always the goal. Living a healthy lifestyle may not be easy but can be achieved by gradually making small changes and building on those successes. Finding balance between work and play, the ups and downs of life, physical health and mental health, can help you on the path towards navigating these important topics.

The following resources from Mental Health America are free and available to help.

Live Your Life Well

The Live Your Life Well campaign provides **10 tools** to help you achieve wellness, including a **stress level quiz**, an **assessment of mood** and information on **dealing with change**.

Workplace Wellness

Most of us spend more time at work than at home and that can sometimes cause stress. If you have a mental health condition, it could impact your work. Learn all about workplace wellness [here](#).

Whole Health Focus

Our mental health ebbs and flows on a daily basis. Many things can impact this, including our physical health. Learn more about whole health and what you can do to improve your overall wellness through the **#4Mind4Body campaign**.

Read Up On Common Mental Health Topics

Mental Health America offers fact sheets on many common mental health topics, including **anxiety**, **bipolar disorder**, **depression** and **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**.

Get Immediate Help

If you or someone you know needs immediate help, reach out to a mental health provider at your command, installation or nearest military treatment facility, or seek confidential non-medical counseling from **Military OneSource**. If you feel hopeless or are thinking of suicide, get immediate help through the **Military Crisis Line** at 1-800-273-8255, press 1.



MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH 2019
#4MIND4BODY