

LIFELINK NEWSLETTER



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OCTOBER 2020



Considerations for Domestic Violence Awareness Month



Advances in digital technology have fundamentally transformed the way we communicate. Digital tools constantly collect information about our interactions, and those closest to us are often involved in shaping our digital interactions.

While increasing our ease of connectivity to our partners is often an advantage, many people do not understand what digital abuse is and are not able to recognize the signs of digital abuse between partners. **October marks Domestic Violence Awareness Month**, and as Richard McKeon, Ph.D., chief of the suicide prevention branch at the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) points out: "survivors of intimate partner violence are twice as likely to attempt suicide multiple times, and cases of murder suicide are most likely to occur in the context of abuse."

Although physical violence is more commonly linked to domestic violence, digital platforms and software are also now leveraged as mechanisms to transmit abuse. Using abusive language and intimidating partners – whether publicly or privately online – can be just as devastating as an act of physical violence. By controlling a partner's digital life, an abuser may find it an effective way to exercise control over someone's physical, financial and emotional well-being.

Here are a few considerations to make digital safety a priority for yourself, your friends and your family.

Increase your awareness of the information collected by digital tools. Several mobile apps and websites automatically default to settings that track your location. Digital stalking can be made even easier with GPS, with social media platforms' location tags often leaving a digital trail. Protect yourself and others by remaining

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aware of who has access to what devices, apps and accounts. Reset your passwords and contact information associated with your account on a routine basis for added security.

Recognize and understand the reach of digital tools. The Internet gives individuals a much broader platform to broadcast photos, screenshots of texts and documents that could potentially harm someone's personal or professional life. Abusive partners can use public shaming or humiliation to distort the truth.

Take note of any abrupt changes in a friend or family member's online behavior. If it seems like someone's posts, comments or replies have changed in content or frequency, ask them directly about the changes you've observed. Their partner may be imposing limits on who they can contact and what they can post. Connect those in your community with digital and in-person resources and let them know you are there for them.

While digital abuse is common among young people who are frequently using technology at high rates, it is important to know that anyone can be a victim of digital abuse. Share the following resources:

For anonymous, confidential help available 24/7, call the **DoD Safe Helpline** at 1-877-995-5247 and visit: <https://www.safehelpline.org/>

Call the **National Domestic Violence Hotline** at 1-800-799-7233 (SAFE) or 1-800-787-3224 (TTY) now.

Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN) which can be reached through the RAINN Hotline at 1-800-865-HOPE (4673) or through its website at <http://www.rainn.org/>



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LIFELINK SPOTLIGHT

Mindfulness With Murphy: A Novel Stress-Reduction Initiative

Courtesy of Navy.mil

At the start of spring, the coronavirus pandemic was in full swing. As the virus spread across the country, it forced adjustment to professional and personal lives to meet the new demands of a physically and socially distant environment. These changes and restrictions affect the availability of daily conveniences increasing the possibility of unusual stressors.

In behavioral health, mindfulness-based stress reduction training has gained increased attention in civilian and military medical settings. These programs help people improve strength and resilience by cultivating a new way of paying attention and interacting with one's experience, typically referred to as mindfulness.

April of 2020 presented an opportunity to apply training in mindfulness-based stress reduction techniques to help staff at Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command (NMRTC) New England find new ways to deal with stress amidst the pandemic. Research on mindfulness has shown that having a regular practice has been associated with reduced signs of chronic stress, such as improved focus, decreased job burnout, improved quality of sleep, and relationships. Given these benefits, Lt. Jonathan W. Murphy, Medical Service Corps, initiated a mindfulness program to help his shipmates learn more about mindfulness as a stress-reduction technique.



In collaboration with the command's Caregiver Occupational Stress Control team, Murphy designed a virtual mindfulness program called, "Mindfulness with Murphy."

"This program consisted of live training sessions offered two times per week, intended to reach both novices and experts," described Murphy. "Each session includes an overview of the basic purpose and elements of mindfulness practice as well as a 10-to-15-minute guided mindfulness activity."

The program is open to civilian and military staff assigned to Naval Station Newport and other clinics within NMRTC New England.

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 October:

1. Conversations around psychological, mental and emotional health are evolving. While stigma still exists in some communities when it comes to discussing mental health, we all play a role in reducing these barriers. Learn more about mental resilience at <https://navstress.wordpress.com/2020/06/17/5-ideas-to-boost-your-mental-resilience/>.
2. October 8th is National Depression Screening Day, so help yourself and others by taking a few minutes to take a self-assessment and follow up with a primary care physician. Find out more at <https://www.pdhealth.mil/clinical-guidance/clinical-conditions/depression/screening-and-screening-tools>.
3. Whether you're talking to your fellow Sailors in-person about the latest updates or connecting with friends and family digitally, concern about the impact of COVID-19 remains widespread across the globe. For World Mental Health Day, on October 10th, take time to check in on yourself and your shipmates. Review tips for your well-being at <https://navstress.wordpress.com/2020/03/26/tips-for-staying-positive-during-uncertain-times/>.
4. October 24th is National Prescription Drug Take Back Day. Safely disposing of unused or expired prescription medication keeps you and your family safe. Review these tips from the Drug Enforcement Agency - DEA at <https://www.getsmartaboutdrugs.gov/content/national-take-back-day>.
5. What activities or traditions are important to you? Consider creative ways to celebrate rituals with your friends or family in a physically-distanced environment - whether it's a weekly dinner, virtual book club or game night, having things to look forward helps keep us grounded. Remember: strong social connections are just as important to your psychological health as fitness and sleep are to your physical health. 1 Small ACT can make a huge difference – reach out to a friend and make a plan to do something fun and feel connected. Read more about creative ways to show you care at <https://navstress.wordpress.com/2020/02/20/15-simple-ways-to-show-someone-you-care/>.

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NEWS & RESOURCES

NEPMU-2 Sailors Stay Physically and Mentally Fit During a Global Pandemic through Cubicle and At-Home Workout Challenge

[DVIDS and Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center](#)

Dialogue Continues As Naval Postgraduate School Advances Inclusion, Diversity Discussions Virtually
[Navy.mil](#)

7 Myths and Facts About Mental Toughness
[Human Performance Resources Center](#)

Keeping Your Mind Psychologically Fit
[Real Warriors Campaign](#)

We Can All Prevent Suicide
[The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)

Promoting Psychological Health and Suicide Prevention among Adults during COVID-19
[Suicide Prevention Resource Center](#)

How to Start (and Continue!) a Conversation About Mental Health
[American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)

Suicide Prevention Resources: Take Care of Yourself and Each Other
[TRICARE](#)

CURRENT & UPCOMING EVENTS

Domestic Violence Awareness Month, Depression and Mental Screening Month
1 October—31 October

World Mental Health Day
Oct. 10

SPC Training Webinars
Oct 8, 10AM CDT
Oct 22, 6PM CDT
[Register here](#)

Encouraging Help-Seeking Behavior

Has anyone ever figuratively (or literally) patted you on the shoulder for being a “tough cookie” after bouncing back from challenging situation? This may feel nice in the moment, but navigating difficult events alone may result in increased levels of stress over time. Whether we’re comfortable admitting it or not, we all need help and people in our lives to lean on. Even if we feel more at ease turning inward instead of toward each other nine times out of ten, there are still moments that will require – or benefit from – the insight of others. Since **October is National Depression and Mental Health Screening Month**, now is a great time to ask for help and encourage others to do the same.



Asking for help is not a sign of weakness. Reframing help-seeking behavior as a sign of strength is important, on both an individual and community level. When asking for help, focus on transparency and directness. Be open in your “ask” so others feel assured they can give you the care you actually need. By asking for help, you may even empower people around you to come forward and request support themselves. The more connections we have in our lives, the stronger we become. Having each other’s back when times gets tough helps us address common goals and may help fuel a culture where everyone feels valued, respected and confident.

If asking for help still feels tough for you, take the approach of curiosity: encourage a friend to share their ideas for improving different hypothetical situations or ask a family member to share a story of overcoming a stressor. Like any good skill, asking for help takes time and practice. The more you do it, the more habitual it’ll become. Remember: you are not alone.

SIGNS TO HELP RECOGNIZE WHEN YOU’RE STRESSED:



PHYSICAL SIGNS
change in energy level, muscle tension, etc.



EMOTIONAL SIGNS
negative thoughts, feeling overwhelmed, easily agitated, etc.



SOCIAL OR BEHAVIORAL SIGNS
spending less time with friends/family, increased use of alcohol or tobacco, etc.



#BeThere for Every Sailor, Every Day.

The Navy’s Suicide Prevention Program empowers Sailors to reach out to their shipmates and ACT (Ask, Care, Treat) if they notice something out of the norm. **Even just one conversation – 1 Small ACT – can open the door for support. For more stress navigation resources, check out the Stress Navigation Plan in the [1 Small ACT Toolkit](#).**

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