



LIFELINK NEWSLETTER

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New Training Helps Families Navigate Stress and Stay in the Green Zone

Stress is characteristic of service in the Navy, with deployments, reintegration and relocations causing tension for Sailors and their families. The ability to efficiently navigate stress and build resilience is an integral part of maintaining mission readiness and promoting psychological well-being. In addition to the stressors associated with military life, Navy families also deal with typical family stressors: raising children, maintaining their home, dealing with teenagers and handling conflicts with a spouse.

April is National Stress Awareness Month, and being cognizant of your stressors is essential. Stress can be helpful when it pushes us to make life improvements, reminds us of the importance of reaching out to others for support and helps us build **resilience** by growing and bouncing back from challenges. Adequately addressing stressors helps prevent chronic and prolonged exposure to stress as well as its adverse impacts on our health and overall well-being. Navy families now have a new training available from the Operational Stress Control (OSC) Program that addresses the impact stressors have on Navy families, focusing on challenges faced by Navy spouses and their children with tips on how to navigate them.

The Navigating Stress for Navy Families training emerged from needs directly expressed by Sailors and commanders. The training is aligned with the new **Navy Family Framework** which recognizes the importance of integrating Navy spouses and families into education and support services, and understands the role they play as part of the Navy community. The training is provided by veteran OSC Mobile Training Teams (MTTs) who have experienced similar challenges in military life. It is modeled after OSC-required trainings for deck plate and senior leaders which are also delivered by these MTTs.

Navigating Stress for Navy Families is an hour-long interactive conversation providing practical tools and techniques to families through realistic scenarios. The course aims to improve families' ability to navigate stress together by helping to strengthen relationships; identifying stress problems early; identifying best practices and developing skills for building resilience and stress mitigation; and identifying available resources to help with stress issues.

Early identification of stress problems is vital. The **Stress Continuum Model** helps Sailors and their families readily pinpoint their stress "zone" so they can take appropriate action, such as talking to a trusted friend when reacting to temporary stress. The earlier a Navy family identifies where they are within the Stress Continuum, the easier it is to bounce back. The goal is not to be 100% stress-free but to learn how to build resilience so stressors do not immediately move a family into the Red Zone. Sufficient sleep, open communication with **loved ones**, self-care and early help-seeking are all ways to navigate stress healthily and lessen the risk of stress injury or illness.

Navigating Stress for Navy Families is currently available via in-person training. OSC and Commander, Navy Installations Command (CNIC) are working to develop a webinar format for the course as well. For more information or to schedule training, email oscmteast@navy.mil or oscmwest@navy.mil. Additional OSC resources can be found on the program's **website**.

Follow OSC and the Every Sailor, Every Day campaign on **Facebook** and **Twitter** for daily tips, tricks and small acts to help you and your family stay in or get back to the Green.

Know Your Zone

ILL
Stress is constant and disabling. Ongoing trouble functioning. seek medical treatment

INJURED
Behavioral and emotional changes become more severe and more persistent. talk to a chaplain, counselor or medical provider

REACTING
Changes from normal behavior in response to temporary and mild distress. get adequate sleep, talk to someone you trust

READY
Not stress free, but mission ready. Emotionally and physically healthy. keep fit, eat right, relax

Every Sailor, Every Day navstress.wordpress.com



Lifelink Spotlight

Surfing the Waves for Psychological and Physical Health

This upcoming summer's warm weather and fun recreational activities can be a great way to alleviate psychological health concerns. For many, exercise proves to be great medicine for navigating stress and, naturally, for maintaining physical fitness. Naval Medical Center San Diego's surfing clinic helps service members recover from both physical and psychological injuries through surfing.

The program started about 10 years ago when a soldier from Hawaii expressed a desire to surf again. But, having lost an arm and leg in Iraq, the soldier was limited in his ability to pick up his old hobby. Betty Michalewicz-Kragh, exercise physiologist and manager of the program, did her research and found a Brazilian amputee who could assist in training the soldier to be able to surf again. Since then, more than 1,500 wounded, ill, and injured service members from all branches have received surf therapy through the program.

Of course, the physical benefits of surfing were immediately noticed by Michalewicz-Kragh, but she says that some psychological benefits became apparent as well. "We ended up realizing the benefit surfing has for post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health issues," she says. Navy researchers are currently studying these effects among patients.

Other forms of mind-body therapy are offered as well. Lori Christensen, the medical center's preventive medicine department head, teaches yoga on the beach for patients. She's seen some of them rave about how yoga is the only thing that has managed to help them feel better.

Volunteers help to make these programs possible, including former Air Force Sgt. Warren James, a Vietnam veteran. James believes that surf therapy helps by keeping the patients' minds off of the typical things they'd worry about at a medical visit. "I definitely suggest getting in the water, even if you have no experience at all," he says. "Just come to the beach."

For more information on the surf therapy program, visit <https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1364799/>.



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 April:

1. April is Stress Awareness Month. Stress is a normal part of life. Maintaining a fitness routine, getting adequate sleep, practicing self-care, or talking to a mental health provider can reduce the impacts of stress and keep you physically and psychologically fit. Learn how to recognize your own stress level and what to do at <https://navstress.wordpress.com/2016/04/18/stress-awareness-month-know-your-zone/>.
2. Just as suicide prevention is an all hands effort, so is sexual assault prevention. Regardless of the perpetrator's or survivor's gender, sexual assault can have lasting effects on the psychological health of those involved, including increased risk of stress injury and/or suicide related behavior. Know your part and do your part to reduce the threat of sexual violence. Find more information at <https://navstress.wordpress.com/2016/04/06/know-your-part-do-your-part/>.
3. During times of high stress, lethal means safety is critical. Having easy access to certain prescription medications can increase the risk of suicide related behaviors. Dispose of unused, unwanted, and expired prescription drugs safely and anonymously on Prescription Drug Take Back Day, April 28th. For more information, check out <https://takebackday.dea.gov>
4. Find the confidential support you need for your psychological health concerns 24/7 from the DoD BeThere Peer Support and Outreach Center. There are resources online at www.betherepeersupport.org or you can talk to a peer counselor via phone at 1-844-357-7337.

Gun Locks for Lethal Means Safety

Navy Suicide Prevention (OPNAV N171), the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Defense Suicide Prevention Office (DSPO) have partnered to provide gun locks to suicide prevention coordinators (SPCs) at CONUS Naval Hospitals and Naval Branch Medical Clinics. Patients assessed to be at risk for suicide who also own firearms should be given a gun lock and educated on the importance of reducing access to lethal means during periods of crisis. Providers are reminded of **NAVADMIN 263/14** when discussing high risk cases with commands. This evidence-based program is legally approved and there are no additional legal or administrative requirements for the command. Contact Mr. Vic Gooden with OPNAV N171 at 901-874-6613 or victor.gooden@navy.mil for more information.

News and Resources

Make Stress Your Ally
[Human Performance Resource Center](#)

Caregiver Support Resources
for You and Your Loved One
[Military OneSource](#)

Combat and Operational
Stress: A Natural Result of
Heavy Mental and Emotional
Work
[Real Warriors](#)

6 Tips on How to Drink
Responsibly
[Guard Your Health](#)

Respecting Your Sexual
Partner: Knowing what
Consent Is and Isn't
[Guard Your Health](#)

Dispelling Myths about
Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
[Real Warriors](#)

Finding a Job Overseas as a
Military Spouse
[Military OneSource](#)

Military Providers Seek
Tailored Approach to Treating
PTSD
[Health.mil](#)

Fraternization, Dating, and Sex
in your Unit: How Close is Too
Close?
[Human Performance Resource Center](#)

Current and Upcoming Events

Stress Awareness Month
April

**Sexual Assault Awareness
and Prevention Month**
April

Alcohol Awareness Month
April

Month of the Military Child
April

**National Prescription Drug
Take Back Day**
April 28
Information available [here](#).

Dialogue with DSPO
Apr. 11, 10 a.m. CDT
[Log in here](#)

SPC Training Webinars
Apr. 12, 10 a.m. CDT
Apr. 25, 12 p.m. CDT
[Register here](#)

Staying in the Moment during Alcohol Awareness Month

You've heard of mindful breathing...mindful eating...but what about mindful *drinking*? April is Alcohol Awareness Month, and awareness is key to the practice of mindful drinking.

Mindful drinking may sound like a new age buzz -phrase, but it's actually a way to feel greater happiness with and control over your drinking choices. It's a conscious approach to consuming alcohol. At its simplest, mindful drinking is focusing on the present moment and experience of consuming alcohol. Mindful drinkers may drink less, but the emphasis isn't on how much alcohol is consumed, rather an overall healthier relationship with it.

This month is a great time to check in with your drinking habits and practice a little mindfulness. Here are a few tips to get you started:

- Before attending an event where you'll consume alcohol, take a moment to reflect and center yourself. Visualize yourself enjoying the company of others and focus on how you want the event to unfold.
- If you're at a party and you have a drink, concentrate on the experience of each sip. Drink slowly and savor the taste and smell. Don't speed up out of anxiety or social pressure. Have a glass of water handy so that you can alternate between sips of alcohol to pace yourself.
- When you are drinking alcohol, stay attuned to the psychological and physical effects. Take notice of how you feel with each sip and each drink, and manage your consumption accordingly.

Avoiding excessive alcohol consumption can improve mood, sleep and job performance and also decrease weight gain due to liquid calories. Mindful drinking may also cause you to seek healthier ways to navigate stress rather than losing track of your beer count at the bar. Using alcohol in response to stress may spiral into social withdrawal, anger or rage, and decreased inhibitions—potentially increasing suicide risk.

Mindful drinking can also help protect your wallet. Savoring and enjoying one drink may prevent you from paying for several rounds. Reducing your alcohol consumption also puts you at reduced risk for Alcohol-Related Incidents (ARIs), which can impact your pay and derail your entire career.

Anyone can practice mindful drinking and it can make nights out (and mornings after) more enjoyable. If you drink alcohol, make the most of it by staying present in the moment and tuned in to your own mind and body.

The **Keep What You've Earned** Campaign's Pier Pressure mobile app has tools you need to integrate mindful drinking into your life. The app's "Resources" section features a blood alcohol content estimator to help you stay aware of the potential for alcohol to affect your mind and body, a calorie calculator for many popular drinks and one-click access to ride-sharing apps to plan ahead for a safe ride home. The app also features a quick and anonymous self-check to help you gauge your drinking habits and engage the right resources if you have concerns. The app is available on the [Apple App Store](#) and [Google Play](#).

There are several resources available to help you find appropriate treatment for alcohol misuse. Reach out to your health care provider at your local Military Treatment Facility, your command Drug and Alcohol Program Advisor (DAPA), chaplain or Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) counselor. Additionally, the Psychological Health Resource Center offers 24/7, free and confidential support provided by trained health resource consultants at 866-966-1020. For more information about Navy's non-disciplinary self-referral process, check out the Pier Pressure app or visit www.nadap.navy.mil.

