



# LIFELINK NEWSLETTER

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## Celebrate This FITmas!

When you think about the holiday season, what comes to mind? Eating way too much and feeling like there's no time to exercise? Feeling stressed out, maybe because of money issues from holiday purchases? Worrying about how to deal with family without pulling all your hair out? Having a hard time feeling grateful because it seems like there's just always something that comes up to cause more stress? Okay, hopefully not all of that. But in spite of the great opportunity to reconnect with family and friends and share love, laughs, food, and fun, sometimes, the holidays can be a difficult time with unique challenges to navigate.

That's where 21 Days of Total Sailor FITmas come in! From December 14, 2017 through January 3, 2018, the **Every Sailor, Every Day** campaign will have tools, tips, and tricks to help you develop and continue to build healthy habits that you can sustain into the new year and beyond. "Healthy habits" may sound like eating well and doing cardio, but for the 21 Days of Total Sailor FITmas, it's much more than that. It's about taking proactive steps that can help you reach your goals related to physical fitness, behavioral health, financial responsibility, psychological and emotional well-being, family relationship strength, and spiritual wellness.

We will offer tips on maintaining your physical fitness routine when you're short on time and space, ways that journaling and gratitude can improve your mood, the positive impacts of mindfulness, links between nutrition and stress levels, how screen time isn't just something to worry about for toddlers, and much more. Practical and helpful action steps will allow you, friends and family members to learn things to incorporate into daily life to improve multiple facets of fitness and get a head start on those New Year's resolutions!

And, keeping with the holiday theme of connection, the 21 Days of Total Sailor FITmas will include tips from Navy partners in the 21st Century Sailor Office, the **Navy & Marine Corps Public Health Center**, the **Navy Chaplain Corps**, as well as **Guard Your Health, Real Warriors Campaign**, and the **Human Performance Resource Center**.

Unwrap new FITmas tools this season by following Navy Operational Stress Control on **Facebook**, on **Twitter** and

**Wordpress**. And don't be a Grinch! Share the resources and tips with your shipmates, friends and family, too!

What are you and your family grateful for this season? Kick off the 21 Days of Total Sailor FITmas by sharing your inspiration through the 1 Small ACT Photo Gallery:

1. Visit <http://go.usa.gov/x8qNu> to select and print a 1 Small ACT Sign from the Every Sailor, Every Day campaign webpage. Choose from a seasonal gratitude sign to share what you and/or your family are grateful for, or our Small ACT Selfie sign to share your commitment to be there for yourself or others.
2. Personalize your sign and take a photo with you and/or your family holding it.
3. Submit your photo to [navysuicideprevention@gmail.com](mailto:navysuicideprevention@gmail.com) or upload to Facebook and tag @U.S. Navy Operational Stress Control for inclusion in the gallery on **Facebook** and **Flickr**.

**The Every Sailor, Every Day campaign and Navy's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Sailor Office present...**

21 Days of Total Sailor FITmas

Follow us on [www.facebook.com/navstress](http://www.facebook.com/navstress), [www.twitter.com/navstress](http://www.twitter.com/navstress) and [navstress.wordpress.com](http://navstress.wordpress.com) to gift yourself with new tools to navigate stress this holiday season.

#Fitmas #FitmasTime



## Lifelink Spotlight

### Right Place and Right Time to Save a Life

Suicide prevention is everyone's responsibility. 1 Small ACT can save a life—and last month as Dr. Matthew Bruhin and his wife Elizabeth were driving on the Coronado Bay Bridge, it did.

While crossing the landmark bridge in San Diego, Dr. Bruhin and his wife noticed a man walking alone along the side. Concerned, the Bruhins decided to slow down and speak with the man to see what was going on. The man, visibly upset, according to the Bruhins, did not want to speak or even look at them in the eyes.

"He didn't make any response at all but I noticed he was crying and I know that isn't a good sign," Bruhin said in a **related story** published by NBC San Diego.

It turned out the man was a veteran and father to a young girl. He had just been turned away from a downtown-area homeless shelter earlier that evening because he had worked too late and was unable to arrive within the check-in time. That left him feeling hopeless amidst the numerous challenges and stressors he was already facing. This particular setback contributed to the man's decision to take his life. Fortunately, the Bruhins were able to spring into ACTion, seeking the help of local authorities immediately upon recognizing that the man was in imminent danger.

The police, with the assistance of the Bruhins, managed to convince the man to give himself another chance at life. He left the ledge and got into the Bruhins' car. It turns out that Dr. Bruhin is a licensed mental health clinician and CEO of a local drug and alcohol treatment center in San Diego. He offered the man services at his center at no cost for as long as it takes for him to get back on his feet.

"We forget sometimes that there are people out there who really need a hug, a smile, a touch, kindness," Bruhin said.

Thankfully, the Bruhins were in the right place at the right time. 1 Small ACT enabled them to "Be There" and help save a veteran's life.

For more information on veteran suicide, visit the VA's Suicide Prevention page ([here](#)). See more about this story ([here](#)).



## 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 December:*

1. Could you use a little bit of help navigating the unique stress that you may encounter this holiday season? The 21 Days of Total Sailor FITmas will help you stay on track with your "FITmas" goals by offering tips on maintaining emotional, physical, family, spiritual and financial wellness. Keep up on the Navy Operational Stress Control Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/navstress](http://www.facebook.com/navstress)), Twitter page ([www.twitter.com/navstress](http://www.twitter.com/navstress)) and Wordpress ([navstress.wordpress.com](http://navstress.wordpress.com)).
2. Tradition is an important part of the holiday season that can help families feel connected and promote continuity. Life changes, such as deployments or changes to family structure, can make it difficult to maintain family traditions. Read some tips on how to keep family traditions alive even in times of immense change at [navstress.wordpress.com/2016/12/16/finding-comfort-and-joy-in-family-tradition/](http://navstress.wordpress.com/2016/12/16/finding-comfort-and-joy-in-family-tradition/).
3. A DUI is guaranteed to bring additional stress and likely to result in unwanted expenses. This holiday season, keep the times merry and help keep yourself and the people you care about safe by giving the gift of a designated driver (DD). Go to <https://go.usa.gov/xnj86> to take the Keep What You've Earned campaign's quick and anonymous pledge to serve as a designated driver any time from now through New Year's Eve. Find printable gift certificates to give to friends, family, and fellow Sailors at [www.nadap.navy.mil](http://www.nadap.navy.mil).
4. Feeling disconnected from friends and family during the holidays? Struggling with keeping your finances in the black? The Be There Call and Outreach Center offers resources for all of life's everyday and seasonal challenges 24/7/365 via phone at 844-357-7337 or

## Bravo Zulu, Naval Air Station Whidbey Island!

Congratulations to Naval Air Station Whidbey Island for being recognized as the Navy recipient for the Department of Defense 2017 Suicide Prevention Outreach Recognition. Their outstanding efforts during 2017 Navy Suicide Prevention Month are commendable! Navy Suicide Prevention Branch would like to extend our gratitude to all who submitted for DoD recognition for both the Installation and Individual-level awards and to all Sailors, families and members of the Navy community who strive to #BeThere for *Every Sailor, Every Day*.

## News and Resources

Easing Holiday and Reintegration Stress  
[Real Warriors](#)

The Surprising Power of Gratitude  
[Psychological Health Center of Excellence](#)

Overcome Your Anxiety  
[Guard Your Health](#)

Grief and Loss of a Loved One, The Days Ahead  
[Military OneSource](#)

Combat Holiday Stress!  
[NMCPHC](#)

Five Tips to Make Healthy Habits Last  
[Defense Centers of Excellence](#)

Help Your Kids Manage Their Anger  
[Human Performance Resource Center](#)

Nap to Be at Your Best Mentally  
[Human Performance Resource Center](#)

Support & Resources for Single Service Members  
[Real Warriors](#)

High-Stress Holidays Can Leave Their Mark with Anxiety, Depression  
[Health.mil](#)

## Current and Upcoming Events

**Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day**  
Dec. 7

**Army National Guard's Birthday**  
Dec. 13

**Impaired Driving Prevention Month**  
December

**21 Days of Total Sailor FITmas**

Dec. 14 - Jan. 3  
Like us on Facebook  
([www.facebook.com/navstress](http://www.facebook.com/navstress)) for more details

**Dialogue with DSPO**  
Dec. 13, 10 a.m. CST  
[Log in here](#)

**SPC Training Webinars**  
Dec. 6, 10 a.m. CST  
Jan. 11, 10 a.m. CST  
Jan. 24, 2 p.m. CST  
[Register here](#)

## Stress Reduction Techniques for High-Stress Operations

The following article was contributed by the Real Warriors Campaign. View this article in its entirety [here](#).

Any role in the military can be stressful. However, for those like special operators, explosive ordnance technicians, submariners, aviators and others, stress is a significant part of the job. The extreme stress faced by these warriors, and others, can lead to psychological health concerns.

Recent research focusing on special operations forces (SOF) highlights the **risks faced by service members working in any high-stress role**. Heavy physical, mental and emotional strain can lead to psychological health concerns. These can include depression, anxiety or posttraumatic stress disorder.

It is important for all warriors to learn stress-management techniques. Stress can cause anxiety, depression, trouble sleeping, irritability, heavy drinking or other concerns. If you experience any of these symptoms, or have other concerns, talk to a health care provider now. Your provider can address your concerns and help you develop a stress-management plan. Getting care early helps you stay mission ready. It also avoids new or worsening symptoms.

### The Effects of Stress on SOF

SOF personnel are an example of service members supporting high-stress operations. The nature of their work is sensitive, and they make frequent deployments, often on short notice. They have strong resilience skills because of SOF selection screenings and their follow-on training. However, they aren't immune to the **effects of high-stress operations**. In one survey about **twice as many members of SOF units reported symptoms associated with PTSD** when compared to members of conventional units.

Others, like **drone pilots**, face similar stressors. Executing critical missions, dealing with life-and-death decisions and safeguarding classified information all adds up. That makes robust skills for managing stress crucial if you're in these types of roles.

### Skills That Aid Job Performance Under High Stress

The ability to perform under high stress is critical to mission readiness. Service members, like special operators, use stress inoculation training to stay focused and effective when the going gets tough. This type of training teaches you skills to **manage stress responses at critical times** by:

- **Controlling emotions.** Reduce negative thinking and fear. This avoids distracting thoughts during a critical mission.
- **Calming physical reactions to stress.** Use regular, **slow breathing from your diaphragm** and **progressive muscle relaxation**. This reduces your heart rate and anxiety.
- **Training with repetition.** Repeat tasks that require a consistent response until you can do them on autopilot.
- **Visualizing tasks.** Envision successfully using your skills in action right before you need them.
- **Building team skills.** Communicate, give constructive feedback, coordinate group efforts and ask for help when needed.

Additional skills woven into service-specific trainings for high-stress operations include goal-setting, persistence, situational awareness, attentional conditioning, muscle control and stress reduction techniques.

All warriors with high-stress jobs can benefit from **basic stress-reduction techniques**. To reduce stress, exercise regularly, **get good sleep**, eat healthy, participate in relaxing activities and **stay connected**.

If you or a loved one needs additional support, contact the Psychological Health Resource Center 24/7 to confidentially speak with trained health resource consultants, call 866-966-1020 or use the **Real Warriors Live Chat**.