



HOLISTIC WELLNESS CHALLENGE



HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS BUILD RESILIENCE

CHALLENGE your Service members to adopt at least one of the recommended resources to enhance their relationships

CONNECTION IS KEY



PARTNERS



FAMILY



FRIENDS



TEAMMATES

All types of relationships foster connectedness, which improve overall health and performance

FACTS & FIGURES: DID YOU KNOW?

Relationship problems were the **most common stressor** reported among National Guard members; more than financial, legal, or workplace stress

Relationship difficulties were reported in **42%** of suicides and **44%** of suicide attempts in the National Guard

A study of National Guard members found **lower relationship satisfaction** at six months post-deployment was significantly related to **greater suicide risk** at 12 months

STRONG TIES SUPPORT STRONG LIVES

- Less anxiety, depression, stress, and suicidal thoughts
- Better sleep, healing, and heart health
- Healthier food, alcohol, drug, and tobacco choices
- Greater sense of purpose and ability to cope

CONTACT US

For more information on healthy relationships or other wellness topics, email us at: ng.ncr.ngb.mbx.integrated-prevention-branch@army.mil

TIPS FOR STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS

- **Talk regularly.** Take 15 minutes a day to connect with one other
- **Listen intently.** Put down electronic devices and give your full attention
- **Share openly.** Express your thoughts and feelings
- **Think selflessly.** Keep the other person's needs in mind
- **Work together.** Divvy up chores and responsibilities
- **Have fun.** Do enjoyable activities together
- **Create rituals.** Establish traditions together
- **Give space.** Allow time for individual interests
- **Offer support.** Focus on encouraging statements vs. critical comments



PROMOTE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

What does it require?

- Mutual respect, support, and effective communication are the hallmarks of a healthy relationship

Why does it matter?

- Relationships are as important to overall health as diet, exercise, and sleep
- Connectedness forms a protective buffer that helps mitigate the risk of harm

What can you do?

- Talk to Service members about their relationships to create a supportive environment that promotes help seeking behaviors
- Remind them that whether it is a romantic, familial, or platonic relationship, those connections form the foundation of our lives; any strain in those relationships should be addressed and not dismissed
- Provide opportunities for Service members to connect with others to increase their sense of belonging, purpose, and hope
- Encourage them to reach to someone they trust (e.g., chaplain, Director of Psychological Health, or one of the recommended resources) to address relationship issues



RESOURCES TO RECOMMEND



- National Guard Family Program offers state-specific services and resources, to include Military and Family Life Counselors where available, to improve quality of life:

<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/resources/tools/national-guard-family-program-lookup>



- Army chaplain-led retreats to enhance relationships: <https://bsrt.army.mil>



- Air Force chaplain-led retreats to enhance relationships: <https://www.angstrongbonds.org/about-us>



- Military OneSource program provides support to rekindle, repair, or reset a relationship:

<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/relationships>



- Military OneSource program offers flexible, interactive tool to work through challenges:

<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/relationships/married-domestic-partner/military-relationships-support>



- Cohen Veterans Network delivers in-person and telehealth support to married and unmarried couples:

<https://www.cohenveteransnetwork.org>



SPOTLIGHT: ELECTRONIC PREVENTION & RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION PROGRAM (ePREP)

- ePREP combines online relationship education content with trained coaches to enhance communication and problem-solving skills
- Couples may complete the six modules together or separately
- After every two modules, participants practice learned skills with a coach online
- Initial evaluation being conducted by the Michigan National Guard in conjunction with Michigan State University demonstrates program effectiveness at improving communication, anxiety, depression and alcohol use
- For more information, email: ng.ncr.ngb-arng.mbx.ngb-j1-partnerships@army.mil

REFERENCES:

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2. What is social fitness? The basics of relationship health for military service members: <https://www.hprc-online.org/social-fitness/relationship-building/what-social-fitness-basics-relationship-health-military>
3. Blow, A. J., Farero, A., Ganoczy, D., Walters, H., Valenstein, M. (2019). Intimate relationships buffer suicidality in National Guard service members: A Longitudinal Study. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 49 (6), 1523-1540. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sltb.12537>