



Communication Tool Kit

PHYSICAL, MENTAL, SPIRITUAL, SOCIAL, FINANCIAL





BRAIN OvErLoAd

Vignette:

You have been serving in the Wisconsin National Guard for the past 5 years – recently you have started to take on more responsibilities and are often viewed as the ‘go to’ person to accomplish last-minute tasks. You are also seen as being the one

who keeps others informed and can make decisions to get a job done efficiently. It is near the end of Annual Training; you are physically and mentally exhausted. As you are about to head to bed for the evening, your Commander informs you of a new task and you are expected to inform your team, as well as find out a way to complete the job. You are given 48-hours to come up with a plan and brief leadership on next steps. You are mentally and physically exhausted. You are finding it difficult to focus or even comprehend what you have been tasked with, much less what to do next. You feel like your brain is on overload and you are uncertain how to proceed.

- A) Tell your Commander that you will not be able to complete the task as you are “too tired”.
- B) B) Assure the Commander that you will get the job done and immediately start coming up with a plan and notifying your peers.
- C) Assure your Commander that you will complete the task and will start coming up with a plan in the morning after you get some rest.
- D) Ask your Commander for clarification and questions you might have to ensure you understand the task. Wait until the morning and ask for assistance from your peers who may have more experience.
- E) Task someone else to complete the task- you have too much to do and it doesn’t seem that important.

BEST ANSWER: C & D. Taking a moment to get some rest and to clear your mind and be able to start fresh can aid greatly when you are experiencing brain overload. Letting your Commander know that you will complete the task and you plan to ask for others assistance is a great option. Your Commander will appreciate your willingness to complete a job as well as the desire to do so with the support and help from your peers.

August (Brain Overload)

Discussion Q & A:

- ⇒ Have you gone through a similar experience before? If so, how can you help others through a similar situation?
- ⇒ When you are experiencing brain overload- what are some steps you take to mitigate this?
- ⇒ How would you approach your peers in this situation? How would you notify your Commander that you may need assistance?
- ⇒ Do you think Social Media plays a part in brain overload? Why? Why not?
- ⇒ If you were to experience brain overload wherein it started to affect your ability to make decisions- would you speak to someone about this? Who would you speak to?

Takeaways:

- Brain overload is very common- particularly in this day in age wherein people have multiple types of information being fed to them in multiple ways nearly 24/7 (via Social Media, television, advertising campaigns, internet...etc.)
- Know yourself and when you should ask for help. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness or a reflection of poor leadership- in fact asking for help is a sign of strength and good leadership while knowing your own limitations.
- Think of brain overload like that of hitting a wall and not being able to make a decision as to how to get over it. Without learning how to overcome brain overload and looking into options- this could lead to no decisions being made. Which in the military- could be detrimental depending on the mission.
- Other ways that might help with brain overload are:
 - Breaking up tasks into more manageable time increments (i.e. 45 minutes with a 15 minute break)
 - Write down key pieces of information or instructions given to complete as task. If need be- you can refer back to these and ask for clarification and follow up questions
 - Practice deep breathing to recenter and refocus your mind.
 - When in doubt- quality sleep routines and proper diet are always a good rule of thumb. Both of which allows for your brain to do a “reset” and be able to clear itself to focus on a task at hand!

Follow-Up Resources:

- Army Director of Psychological Health (DPH): 1-877-504-2358
- Air DPH: Emily Barrett 115FW (608-400-5275) & Jane Collingwood, 128ARW (414-944-8256
- Army Military and Family Life Counselor (ACS :: Ft. McCoy :: US Army MWR), 352-801-2742
- Air Military & Family Life Counselor: Alicia Zenk, 608-215-3037
- Soldier and Family Readiness Specialist Number: 1-800-292-9464 (Option 1)
- Airman Family Readiness: Jerry Hook (115FW/Volk), 608-245-4654 & Amy Thompson (128ARW), 414-944-8249
- Army Chaplin: 608.630.1660
- Comprehensive Health and Wellness: wisconsinmilitary.org & Military OneSource: 1-800-342-9647