



# Communication Tool Kit

PHYSICAL, MENTAL, SPIRITUAL, SOCIAL, FINANCIAL

FY23: December (Managing Worry and Concern)

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**Vignette:** Congratulations! You were recently promoted in the Wisconsin National Guard. As part of the promotion, you are now taking on new responsibilities. You're really enjoying the unit that you are currently assigned to; however, you find that the anticipated annual training schedule coming up will add additional hours of planning with your leadership team in addition to drill weekends. You're someone who schedules your time spent outside of the home to ensure your significant other has access to a shared vehicle. You foresee that he/she won't be happy if you change the days you'll be going into the Armory/Air Base. You've both recently asked your supervisors to work opposite shifts in order to free up the car for both of you to use. You're both enjoying the new hours, but slowly you begin to find that having only one vehicle and not having the freedom to get from A to B at a moment's notice is making it tough to fulfill your WING responsibilities. Your military leader is also new to the position. He lacks confidence to make recommendations and is frequently asking you for advice and impromptu meetings before his own leadership meetings. Wanting to be a team player, you find yourself agreeing to frequently meet with him, often multiple times the week leading up to drill, and working after hours. You notice that you and your partner are starting to be short with one another and the newly agreed upon "driving schedule" isn't always working with one car. When you're at your civilian job, you're often concerned about being taken advantage of by your military leader. Your supervisor has commented that you are distracted and missing details. You want to do a good job for your unit and show that you can provide great ideas for the planning team, but you're also finding yourself constantly worrying about when the phone will ring. Your partner has also commented that you no longer appear to be "as excited" about the promotion and new role as you were a few months ago. What are some ways you can cope with some of these stressors you are experiencing?

- A) Keep juggling everything and let your partner and employer know you'll do better and that you're just "adjusting" to your new role.
- B) Stop answering the phone when the military leader calls you and hope that he will stop asking for your input.
- C) Connect with a Military and Family Life Counselor (MFLC).
- D) Have a talk with your military leader and let him know that you are feeling some pressure with juggling home, work and drill schedules. Be open with your partner regarding your concerns with your military leader and the need for transportation more frequently than originally planned out.
- E) Stay after hours with your military associates and talk about how you're struggling with the extra hours for drill hoping someone can help.

**BEST answer: C & D! Talk openly with your leadership and your partner. They will gain a better understanding of where your concerns are coming from and its the first step to finding a solution to the situation. MFLCs are also a great resource for providing problem solving ideas and support to you and your family. Do not be afraid to ask for help!**

## Discussion Q&A:

- Can you relate to the scenario above in any way? What might be some concerns with having that conversation with the Platoon Sergeant?
- Why is ignoring the situation not the best option?
- How would you approach this conversation with your Platoon Sergeant? With your partner?
- At what point would you reach out to a behavioral health expert or a Chaplain for additional assistance?
- What are some coping techniques that you use when you find yourself worrying or concerned with an issue?



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## Takeaways:

- It is important to establish boundaries for yourself and being OK to say “No”. Particularly when a supervisor, friend, family member, colleague or whomever is always relying on you at the expense of your mental health. If you have a good relationship with your chain of command, they will respect your decision, but it is important to have the conversation with them.
- Prioritize daily and weekly responsibilities and identify how much time each week you need to designate to those tasks. This can help you understand what needs to come first when taking on new obligations.
- Write down all things that you are concerned about so you can eliminate things that may really aren’t an issue. This can go a long way to reducing the feeling of being overwhelmed by a perceived “mountain of issues.” A list of concerns can guide you with discussions with those involved. This is also a great way to stay on topic if you’re nervous about the conversation you need to have with others!
- “Mental Health” days are key-and can consist of anything that works for you. This could include: date night with your significant other, finally catching up on household chores, meal prepping, taking your dog to the park or hanging out with a friend for a few hours. Anything that allows your mind and body to decompress!
- Avoid using alcohol and other substances when trying to “do it all with a smile.” Alcohol is a negative coping skill and can lead to a slippery slope of becoming reliant on it.
- Stress is a part of life and will always be present-however there are ways to cope with daily worries. Do not be afraid to reach out to a behavioral health expert or a Chaplain if you would like ideas and/or some additional assistance managing your worry and concern.

## Follow-Up Resources:

- [CDC Coping with Worry-https://www.cdc.gov/howrightnow/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/howrightnow/index.html)
- Army Director of Psychological Health (DPH): 1-877-504-2358
- Air Director of Psychological Health (DPH): Patricia Weiner (608-234-8820) & Emily Barrett (608-400-5275)
- Chaplain: 608-630-1660
- Army Military and Family Life Counselor ([ACS :: Ft. McCoy :: US Army MWR](#))
- Air Military & Family Life Counselor: Alicia Zenk, 608-215-3037
- Soldier and Family Readiness Number: 1-800-292-9464 (Option 1)



## **Feedback From the Field:**

We know your time is valuable and we want to thank you for setting aside some time to talk over these topics. Your feedback is highly encouraged and welcomed.

We would love to hear your thoughts and ideas as to how well these discussions were implemented as well as how well they were received. For feedback, suggestions or even any success stories that you would like to share, a survey can be completed at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SMSD2021>