



Communication Tool Kit

PHYSICAL, MENTAL, SPIRITUAL, SOCIAL, FINANCIAL



May

(Managing Stress while away from home)

Vignette:

You are eight days into your annual training and are absolutely exhausted. It has been raining the entire training, you are cold, wet, and miserable. You feel mentally and physically burned out. You felt unprepared leaving your family as they were stressed about you having to be gone for two weeks and managing childcare and other day to day needs. This is weighing on you and you notice your performance begin to slip. Your sleep has been minimal, and you feel distracted and are having difficulty concentrating on the tasks at hand. How would you handle this situation?

- A) Ignore it, you are over halfway done!
- B) Confide in someone, whether it be a battle buddy, unit leader, command, or a BH professional.
- C) Take out your stress on someone else.
- D) All of the above.

BEST ANSWER: B. Ignoring your stress will not make it go away and you could unintentionally be putting yourself or others at risk if you don't address this. Reach out to someone to help you through. You might find others that are struggling as well and can bring your unit closer together.

Discussion Q & A:

- . Have you gone through a similar experience before? If so, how can you help others through a similar situation?
- . What other experiences can you prepare for while at AT?
- . How do you manage things outside of your control (ex: weather conditions)?
- . What are some ways in which leadership can help prepare you for AT/deployment?
- . At what point would you turn to professional BH supports or refer another service member to BH?
- What steps can you take/action now that can help prepare you for AT/deployment settings?

Takeaways:

- This is a very common experience amongst service members. You are not alone!
- These symptoms described can be precursors to behavioral health conditions and diagnosis, if not addressed.
- Mentally prepare as much as possible in advance to alleviate stress during AT/deployments. Make a plan to have things taken care of at home so you can better focus on the mission.
- Being away and in an adverse environments is not easy. Support each other through this time.
- Think about bringing along things to soothe your senses. For example: ○ Sight: Pictures of loved ones or good memories, also things to read, or something to write/doodle/draw on and with

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Takeaways (cont.):

Touch: That favorite blanket, some dryer sheets stored away to help make things smell better, or a washcloth you can use to clean up with

- Smell: Pleasant smelling soaps, deodorants, lotions, wipes, essential oils
- Sound: Your electronics to listen to music, along with plenty of reserve batteries or portable chargers
- Taste: Your favorite snacks, within reason, and gum/mints
- In addition: books, card games (especially group games like Uno), puzzle books, small board games/group games, a football/baseball/soccer ball, etc

Follow-Up Resources

— 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](#)), 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

— Comprehensive Health and Wellness Courses: [CHW Courses – Wisconsin Service Member Support Division \(wisconsinmilitary.org\)](#)

— Military One Source: 1-800-342-9647

Feedback from the Field:

Thank you from the Operation Resilience Team!

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>
