



SMSD Information and Resources

Service Members and Military Families

April 13, 2020

Sign-Up for the Marriage Minute



The Marriage Minute is the email newsletter from The Gottman Institute that will improve your marriage in 60 seconds or less. Over 40 years of research with thousands of couples has proven a simple fact: small things often can create big changes over time. <https://www.gottman.com/marriage-minute/>

Governor Evers Removes Barriers

The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) announced Governor Tony Evers has suspended several provisions of the Assistance to Needy Veterans Grant (ANVG) program, providing more low-income veterans access to emergency financial aid.

Current rules contain some requirements that would prevent, hinder, or delay payments to veterans who have experienced a loss of income due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A temporary suspension of these provisions will allow WDVA to take the necessary action to assist and protect the health and welfare of Wisconsin's veterans and their families.

The WDVA has requested the following temporary provisions to ease requirements, remove burdens, and reduce limitations on a veteran applying for assistance:

- Suspension of the requirement that applications include verification forms containing the signatures of a county or tribal veterans service officer or other authorized agent.
- Suspension of a rule limiting an applicant's eligibility if the applicant's income exceeds 180 percent of the federal poverty guidelines.
- Suspension of the deadline by which an applicant must submit an application and receive medical care by a health care provider following the loss of income.
- Suspension of the requirement that an applicant must provide proof that loss of income occurred due to an economic emergency.

The ANVG program provides financial assistance to veterans who have exhausted other sources of aid. The grants may be used for specified health care and subsistence needs up to maximum grant limits.

Apply online at: www.MyWisVets.com.

In person: Contact your local County Veterans Service Office or Tribal Veterans Service office.

Email scanned forms: VetsBenefitsGrants@dva.wisconsin.gov.

Email Questions: VetsBenefitsGrants@dva.wisconsin.gov.

Keep 'Er Movin'

As alluring as the couch, Netflix and bag of cheese puffs may be, the need to move for physical and mental health is worth acknowledging. Fitting more physical activity into the day can be as simple as observing the signs of spring by taking a walk around the block (a fluffy walking buddy is highly recommended). Perhaps you were acclimated to a more intense regimen, but lack the resources of a gym. The following resources offer some options to burn off some excess energy and get movin'!

A fun family cardio video by [PopSugar Fitness](#) offers 10 solid minutes of cardiovascular and stretching. These activities can be performed by the whole family and anyone of any fitness level.

[SELF](#) offers an entire gallery of self-paced fitness routines with their *Best At Home Workouts*. None of the workouts require special equipment and rely on using one's own bodyweight for resistance. The guides show GIFs of the moves allowing you to enjoy your own playlist. Workouts vary from beginner to advanced. Choose what works best for you.

If you are superhero intense about fitness, check out the Batman workout by [Nerd Fitness](#). This two part video guide is not for jokers.



USAA to return \$520 M to members. Members will automatically receive a credit applied to their bill. There is no need to call and no additional action is required. Learn more at USAA.com.

Enlisted Association of the National Guard Grant

The EANGUS "We Care for America" Foundation, Inc. offers an opportunity to apply for an [emergency grant](#), the "Soldier & Airman Relief Grant for Emergencies" to a current or former National Guard member who is in good standing and is an EANGUS dues paying member who has experienced a catastrophic financial hardship and/or personal property loss.

Executive Function Skills and Stress

My name is Sarah Dillinger and I am a Soldier and Family Readiness Specialist in Chippewa Falls. Before working for the Service Member Support Division, I provided technical assistance and continuing education for the early care and education field. During this time, I became interested in early brain development. From there, I quickly became interested in how the brain works and how that knowledge can be used to understand behavior and improve health and well-being. Topics I enjoy teaching others about include:

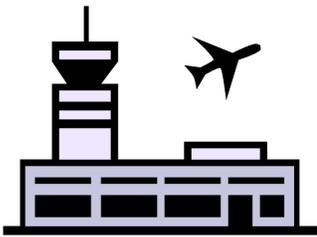
- ◆ The Stress Response and Well-Being
- ◆ Mindfulness
- ◆ Toxic Stress
- ◆ Adverse Childhood Experiences
- ◆ Trauma and Resiliency
- ◆ Early Experiences and Brain Development



Understanding the brain, as well as learning and practicing techniques to promote health and well-being have had an extremely positive impact on me, both professionally and personally. I love sharing this information with others and seeing the lightbulb moment when they understand the brain-behavior-health connection and can use the information to improve their life and/or the lives of others.

Executive Functions

Executive function skills are the mental processes that enable us to plan, focus attention, remember instructions and juggle multiple tasks successfully. These processes take place in the pre-frontal cortex of the brain. You can think of this part of your brain as an air traffic control system at a busy airport, safely managing the arrivals and departures of many aircrafts on multiple runways.



What does stress have to do with executive functioning? When we experience a stressful situation, or are startled, the “fear center” of the brain, called the amygdala, activates the stress response system, also known as the *fight-or-flight* response. When this happens, it’s like pressing quickly on the gas pedal of a car. Blood is rushed to our limbs, heart rate and blood pressure increase, and our breathing quickens. The stress response system is automatic and keeps us alive during life-threatening situations.

Unfortunately, the body can also overreact to stressors that aren’t life threatening, such as an argument with a spouse or coworker or a traffic jam.

When in *fight-or flight* mode, our body shuts down everything not needed for survival. This includes the pre-frontal cortex, the part of the brain in charge of executive functioning. Have you ever lost control of your emotions and did or said something you later regretted? Or made a mistake at work, or wondered why you can’t concentrate when you’re upset? It’s because your executive functioning skills were not working. When this happens, you can think of it as an “amygdala hijack,” a term first used by psychologist Daniel Goleman.

The good news is that people can learn techniques to counter the stress response. The first step is to be aware of your symptoms when your fight-or-flight response has been activated. Does your heart race? Do you feel dizzy or feel pressure in your chest? Does your brain feel disorganized? When you are able to recognize these symptoms, you can begin to take action to get your brain back “online.” The quickest and easiest way to do this is to take slow and deep breaths. This can take practice! Be patient with yourself.

To learn more, visit:

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/understanding-the-stress-response>

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/six-relaxation-techniques-to-reduce-stress>

It's Not How the World Goes 'Round

Lisa Kluetz, Family Programs Director

Recently, we lost American folklore legend John Prine to COVID-19 complications. He was known for being an excellent story teller and he reflected on challenges faced in everyday life. He told these stories with humor, sadness and empathy. Through the decades, he tackled difficult topics such as substance abuse, anger, environmental destruction, life stressors, and domestic violence. These were chalked up to humanity's flaws, the progress of man, or more simply, "[That's the Way that the World Goes 'Round](#)." The song begins with a glimpse into the cycle of domestic violence and alcohol abuse in our society. Two very difficult concerns that many Americans may be struggling with during *Safer At Home* initiatives.

Many diehard fans know this tune as the "Happy Enchilada" song. How do we go from abuse to the "Happy Enchilada?" I want to take a few moments to address this point. [In concert](#), he stopped the song and began a discourse on the pitfalls of communication. Sometimes, what the listener hears is not what the sender said.



A fan wanted John to play her, "Favorite song about the enchilada." John sings about the ups and downs of life. When you're down, he sings, "It's a half an inch of water, and you think you're gonna drown." The fan had been singing "It's a happy enchilada and you think you're gonna drown." Much like the fan at the concert, we are often inattentive listeners. Inattentive to ourselves and to our partners. I started thinking about red flags for domestic violence. Could working on our communication skills diffuse potential domestic violence situations?

While, I am not a marriage therapist or expert on interpersonal violence, I have studied family violence in my post graduate research as a negative life event which impacts long-term quality of life. Research is often mixed regarding root causes and predictors of future violence. There is one certainty: the cycle is not normal. Verbally aggressive communication, inability to manage emotions, underlying mental health issues, substance abuse, poor stress coping, limited problem-solving skills, prior family violence, and high conflict topics, are a few factors that contribute to incidents. Most couples use successful two-way communication with neutral or low conflict topics. But high conflict topics are another story! These topics could be employment, substance abuse, finances, raising children, discipline, or some other topic that leads to dangerous thresholds. Studies of violent couples indicate high conflict topics escalate quickly to violence.

For relationships with a history of verbal aggression, violence and miscommunication are signs of trouble. High conflict discussion topics should be considered red flags for couples during the *Stay at Home* executive order. Red flags, because you and your partner are already experiencing a stressful situation. Perpetrators are more likely to use aggressive forms of communication including being more critical, ridiculing, threatening, denying responsibility, complaining, accusing and use name calling toward their partner. This is when situations could escalate. If you and your partner are talking about difficult subjects, practice good communication skills (accepting responsibility, compromising, and reflecting). If you and your partner are not using these skills, end the conversation. Listen to your inner voice if you are approaching dangerous thresholds. Reach out for help! You are not alone and domestic violence is not a normal coping mechanism to deal with the current stressors associated with COVID-19 or any other negative life event. Simply put, it's *not* the way the world goes round.

If you are in a violent relationship, help is available at 1-800-799-SAFE or www.hotline.org. Local resources can be found at www.endabuse.wi.org/get-help/. Or for additional information, resources, and referral services, you may contact the Service Member Support Division at 1-800-292-9464 option 1.



MONTH OF THE MILITARY CHILD

April is the **#MonthoftheMilitaryChild** in which we recognize the sacrifices and bravery of military kids who often deal with frequently moving, often being the new kid, dealing with separations from parent(s) and/or having parent(s) deployed. Military children are strong and resilient!



Birthday Shout Out

Operation: Birthday SHOUT OUT! Private Message Wisconsin USO your child's name and birthday along with a short message and they will post on the [Wisconsin USO Facebook page!](#)

Pink Sunrise Breakfast Smoothie

Looking for a healthy way to get your children to eat their fruits and vegetables? Smoothies are a great way to sneak in a few surprise ingredients. Allowing your children to come up with the combinations will add to the fun!

Wisconsin USO Movie Night

Join the USO as they host a Sunday Family Movie Night by watching [Mary Poppins Returns](#) virtually. Movies start at 7pm on 4/19.

- Step 1. Visit <https://www.netflixparty.com/>
Add the extension to your device. To install Netflix Party, start by clicking the "install Netflix Party" button on this page. Once you are redirected to the Chrome Web store, click "add to chrome" to finish installing
- Step 2. Join a Netflix party: (look for the link on [Facebook USO Wisconsin](#))
To join a party click on a party URL, which will redirect to Netflix's website. Then click on the "NP" button next to the address bar, and you should automatically join the party.

This healthy, vibrant strawberry smoothie is perfect for breakfast! Called "Pink Sunrise" it will brighten up your morning and get it off to a good start! Root veggies are great for smoothies. They blend pretty well in a high-speed blender and they are sweet. Beets have a bit of an earthy flavor, but adding citrus and berries helps mask it for picky eaters. Beets help your liver do its job detoxing your body, plus the gorgeous color can't be "beet!" (Sorry.) Then there are all those vitamins, minerals, fiber, and natural sweetness. Such a good thing to eat on a daily basis. **Lots of vitamin C.**

Coconut milk can be used to complement the flavor. This smoothie works as a meal replacement. You could add a big spoonful of chia or hemp hearts for added protein and to make it more filling.

~Adapted from Lindsey Johnson

#MonthoftheMilitaryChild Activities

APRIL 14

- Military Kids Are Funny
-Show CYP your comic
- Gear up for Purple Up Pictures

APRIL 21 Purple Up Day

- Military Kids are Connected
-Write a letter
- Show-off your purple on Facebook

APRIL 28

- Military Kids are Creative



Blend the following:

- ½ cup frozen strawberries
- 1 cup frozen raspberries
- 1 orange, peeled
- 1 small beet, peeled and quartered 2 medium carrots, chopped
- 1½ cups milk or coconut milk

Pour into a tall glass, add a straw, and enjoy!



Follow the WI National Guard [Child and Youth Program](#) and the [Family Programs](#) pages on Facebook for more fantastic ideas during this special month!

WWW.WISCONSINMILITARY.ORG/CYP
1-800-292-9464 OPTION 1