



The Resilience Factor *Special Seasonal Edition 2022*

To all the Airmen we serve,

As you look back on 2022, ask yourself "What am I grateful for?" When life is crowded with school & work obligations, parenting or being parented, tending to your relationships, maintaining your health and home, and more; when do you get the chance to notice and appreciate what brings you joy and satisfaction? Gratitude is a game changer & will shift your entire life experience. It nurtures a sense of positivity and wellbeing, you'll find life is more satisfying, and your physical health will improve.

When Emily and I look back over the past year, we are deeply grateful for you. The crowding in our lives slips away the moment you step through our door, virtual or real, & you become the most important part of our day. You have trusted us with your vulnerability, moved us with your stories, and taught us the real meaning of bravery. You have rewarded us with your strength, persistence, and resilience.

We wish you peace, well-being, and good fortune in 2023.—Trish & Emily



Lighting the Way

The Winter Solstice, Dec 21, is the shortest day of the year, with less than 8 hours of sunlight. Noticing the loss of daylight as we approach the solstice and slowly gaining it back, it makes sense why so many holidays and gatherings that occur during the fall and winter months are filled with light. Lighted trees & homes, candles in windows & on tables, wood burning in fireplaces; all are symbols of hope & warmth, and something to look forward to when the days are short, and the nights are long.

Lack of sunlight is considered to be the leading cause of seasonal depression. It triggers a decrease in serotonin, a feel good hormone, and an increase in melatonin, a sleep-inducing hormone. Wisconsinites are especially susceptible to seasonal depression given that 59% of the days during the winter months are cloudy and overcast. Because of its seasonality, the presence of depression-related symptoms or the increase of ongoing symptoms may catch us off guard. Sadness, lethargy, poor concentration, cravings for carbohydrates, overeating & weight gain, and sleeping too much are signs of seasonal depression to be aware of. Symptoms may be exacerbated by shift work, season-related stress, the disruption of the sleep/wake cycle due to daylight-savings-time, and the isolation of hibernating indoors when it's cold.

Experts suggest the following to prevent or manage seasonal depression:

- Vitamin D to supplement decreased levels during winter and to improve mood by regulating serotonin activity. *(Consult your healthcare provider before using,)*
- Light therapy, which consists of regular exposure to an artificial full-spectrum light. *(Consult your healthcare provider before using,)*
- Lifestyle changes such as stress-management, physical activity, and spending more time outdoors.

If symptoms are especially severe, resistant to other measures, or do not subside as daylight increases in the Spring; medication or therapy may help. Consult your healthcare provider for assessment.

Brrr! It's COLD outside!

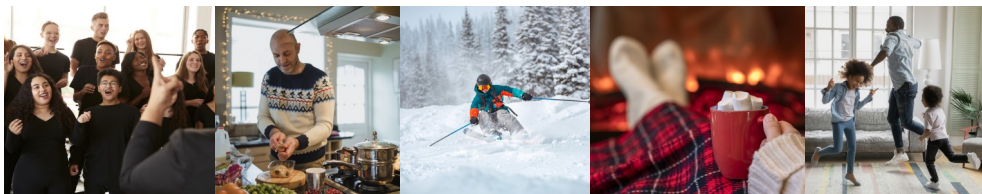
Want to stay warm while you workout this weekend? Check out the HAWC Class on Sunday featuring **Radio Taiso Exercise**. Work out with others & learn something fun, easy, and new to stay fit and practice practical mindfulness. Open to all, jump on in!

For a preview, check out this video! [The Japan Society - Radio Taiso Exercise Video](#)

HAWC Class: Sunday, December 4, Meet at STAC in SFS, dress comfy
1300-1330 – workout w/peers and group leaders
1330-1400 – 5 minute mental fitness challenge w/the MFLC and DPH

"Start viewing EXERCISE as a privilege instead of a punishment. Be GRATEFUL each day for the ability and opportunity to move your body. As there are people out there who'd do anything to be able to be active. "I GET TO" instead of "I HAVE TO"

By Dr. John Rusin, Courtesy of MSgt Ashley Kuske, FWS UTM



Revisiting Mental Fitness for the New Year

The New Year is often used as a benchmark to develop new habits. We thought it was a good time to revisit the concept of mental fitness. Mental fitness is the effort or training you put into cultivating a lifestyle and habits that keep you mentally well and builds your resilience to stress. When you are mentally fit, you are better able to resist being overwhelmed by life stressors and difficult emotions; you will spend more of your time present, engaged, energized, and focused; and you will become more positive, patient, accepting, and flexible.

6 Paths to Mental Fitness

MOVE *Activate, breathe, challenge*

- Physical activity moves toxins out of the body, provides extra oxygen to sharpen the brain, and releases calming endorphins.
- Feeling healthy increases self-esteem and confidence.

EXPAND *Read, reflect, repurpose*

- Increases self-awareness.
- Helps to remove barriers and blind spots, gets you unstuck.
- Sparks imagination, enables you to visualize the life or person you aspire to be.

LEARN *Discover, do, create*

After age 25, brain development slows down. New experiences...

- help your brain continue to develop.
- activate dormant parts of your brain.
- keep your brain agile and flexible.

ENGAGE *Join in, experience, absorb*

- Become fully present in your own life.
- Embrace all experiences; both joy & sorrow, pain & comfort, excitement & dread.
- Be courageous, venture beyond your comfort zones.

BELONG *Relate, reach out, bond*

- Belonging means connection; to feel seen, heard, and know that you matter.
- Connection is the greatest deterrent to anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts.

CULTIVATE *Encourage, promote, support*

- Actively cultivate a healthy and inspiring work environment.
- Support zero tolerance for bullying, intimidation, and gossip.
- Have the courage to advocate for self and others who are being mistreated.
- Treat others humanely, with respect and regard for their individual personhood.

Blasts from the Past

If you missed our pre-Thanksgiving, Special Holiday Newsletter, scroll through your email or ask us to resend to you. Here is a recap:

"You'll Always be my Baby!": Coping when old family dynamics disrupt Holiday visits: *"When everyone packs into Grandma's house for the holidays, no matter their age, family members often fall (or get dragged) into their old childhood roles..."*

What is Your Drinking IQ? *"If you feel like alcohol is negatively impacting your life, or you're just uncomfortable with your habits, it may be time to ask yourself a few tough but important questions..."*

Solo for the Holidays? Make the most of it. *"Despite the cultural expectation that we should be surrounded by loved ones during the holidays, spending that time alone doesn't mean you're unloved or failing at life; nor is it about your ability or your worth..."*

And we're bringing back our own, epic version of 'T'was the night before Christmas' called **'A Happy-ish Holiday Tale'**. Check it out here: https://youtu.be/1oR7_bY94PY

An excerpt:
...*"See how it is and then how it can be/When even one family member chooses to see/A vision of peace, both outer and inner;/Oh, let's be real, how about just getting through dinner?"/After all, happy families are certainly the wish/But sometimes it's fine to achieve 'happy-ish'."*

