

PREVENTION IN ACTION

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

STRENGTHENING PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Strengthening relationships requires listening skills. Here are some strategies to be a better listener:

- Be fully present when speaking and listening to your partner. Many people listen with the intent to reply instead of understanding. Ask questions related to what your partner says to show you are actively listening.
- Tune out distractions. Find a quiet place to communicate. Turn your ringer to silent and turn off the TV. If there are children present, try to settle them in another room.
- Wait until your partner is done speaking and summarize what you heard your partner say. Then it is your turn to share what you want to say.
- Pay attention to nonverbal cues. Sitting across from your



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partner and making eye contact communicates attention. Unfolding your arms shows you are open to listening. Nodding agreement or understanding can also indicate you are actively listening.

There are several Marine Corps services that can help you strengthen your relationship.

The Family Advocacy Program (FAP) offers “Married and Loving It,” which covers the fundamentals of relationships—improving communication, how to handle conflict, anger management, and how to make decisions about finances.

“Within Our Reach for Couples,” is a workshop that reviews thoughts and behaviors

associated with successful relationships.

Activities emphasize commitment, expectations, and relationship needs such as friendship, fun, and connection.

The [Community Counseling Program](#) offers individual, couples, and family counseling.

The chaplains offer Chaplains Religious Enrichment Development Operation (CREDO) workshops, which provide couples time to get away from it all and work on building healthy communication skills.

[Marine Corps Family Team Building](#) offers workshops and classes for Marines and families at the unit and installation level.

Please visit your local MCCS webpage to find contact information for local resources.

Embrace Self-Awareness and Self-compassion

When experiencing stress, the first thing to consider is what personal strengths might be most useful. Self-awareness and self-compassion are two important strengths for coping during stressful times.

Self-awareness is the ability to recognize your emotions. For example, being aware that you are getting frustrated before someone else mentions it.

Self-awareness allows you to better manage your emotions and understand where they are coming from.

It is about being honest with oneself in terms of personal strengths and being realistic about personal growth. It may also require consideration to what areas in your life can use improvement to turn possible liabilities into strengths.

Self-compassion requires awareness of one’s own self-judgments and some kindness with personal thinking.

Do you have unrealistic standards for yourself? Do you beat yourself down when making a bad call?

Give yourself the grace you would give others who were going through something similar. Be aware of personal thoughts and give yourself some room when going through a difficult moment instead of ignoring the pain or judging or criticizing yourself.

To increase self-awareness and self-compassion try these two activities:

- Reflect and write about past experiences. Many learn a lot about themselves by identifying how their past influences who they are and their behaviors. Think about

your thoughts, emotions, and what you needed in that moment.

- Think of a difficult moment you have gone through or are going through or perhaps a mistake made. Develop a positive phrase to combat excessive self-criticism. Make sure it is something that feels believable to you. For example, rather than “I can’t believe I did that,” try “well, I guess I’ll know better for next time.” Say this phrase as often as needed, and notice how it changes your feeling about a situation.

“We must view asking for help as a normal, smart decision, not a sign of weakness.”

– **General David Berger, Commandant of the Marine Corps**

For more information, contact your local Community Counseling Program, usmc-mccs.org/marine-family-support/prevention-and-counseling/community-counseling.

LEARNING SPORTSMANSHIP AND TEAM SPIRIT THROUGH SPORTS

Since its establishment the Marine Corps has done a great job teaching esprit de corps early on in Marines. Creating a culture of brother/sisterhood through competition is what makes Marines strive to be great. That competitive attitude in all that Marines do is truly the hallmark of a United States Marine.

The All-Marine Sports Program allows sport lovers a way to showcase their talents and love for their respective sports.

Soccer is a way of life for me. I am truly blessed to have been a player and now a coach at the All-Marine sports level.

There is nothing like wearing the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor on your chest while listening to the Marines' Hymn play right before taking the pitch against the other branches of Service.

Being a player is unique and rewarding; you meet Marines from every walk of life, military occupational specialty, and rank. It can really open your eyes to how big the Marine Corps is.

Having the honor to be the Head Coach of the All-Marine Men's Soccer Team has allowed me to see just how much these individuals grow into a team. At the start of



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MSgt Rocky Fredin (left) plays in an All-Marine Men's Soccer game in 2010 when he was a sergeant. He is now the team's head coach.

training camp, I generally see timid or reserved players who segregate into groups.

However, through the trials, tribulations, and team-building events, they begin to relax their shoulders and let their guards down. They realized they all have something in common other than being a Marine.

At times, it can be difficult to remember that the other Service branches are not our enemies, but our allies. When the competitive juices are flowing, the respect level can diminish at times.

I can remember a game where the Marines lost a hard-fought battle against the Air Force in penalty kicks after double overtime. Talk about heartbreaking.

I saw several of my players in the heat of the moment drop their heads and go internal. This is the most important time for me, as their coach, to walk around with my head held high and remind them of the bigger picture - we are all brothers in arms.

Telling them to pick their heads up and shake hands with the other team is a simple gesture but an important one. Winning should never be placed above sportsmanship.

Having been with the soccer program almost 12 years, as both a player and a coach, I have earned a sense of pride and learned the importance of teamwork within the Marine Corps.

—MSgt Darrell "Rocky" Fredin,
Head Coach,
All-Marine Men's Soccer

Five Reasons to Sign Up Your Children to Play Sports

The National Alliance for Youth Sports believes that participation in sports and activities develops important character traits and lifelong values in children, which can create a positive impact in their lives.

Youth Sports programs at Marine Corps installations seek to make the sports experience for all children safe, fun, and healthy. These programs promote the value and importance of sports and physical activity in children's emotional, physical, social, and mental development.

Five reasons to sign your child up for youth sports today.

Sports boost self-esteem.

Children learn to be confident on the field. Seeing their hard work pay off has a positive impact on their self-esteem. When kids achieve their goals on the field, it teaches them that they can achieve any other goal they set later in life.

Playing sports helps develop teamwork and leadership skills.

Working as a team to reach a common goal helps children develop communication and problem-solving skills that will benefit them on and off the field.

It's a natural stress reliever.

Exercise is a great way for kids to loosen up and let go. Sports also help kids develop close bonds with their teammates, which will provide them with a support system.

Kids develop lifelong healthy lifestyle habits.

Regular physical activity improves a child's fitness and helps them to stay in shape.

It's fun!

The memories made playing youth sports will last a lifetime.

Want to learn more about what youth sports programs are available on your installation? Contact the [Youth Sports office](#) today.

ATTENTION, SUICIDE PREVENTION STAKEHOLDERS: The Marine Corps' 2023 Suicide Prevention Stakeholders Wellness Symposium will be held at Marine Corps Base Camp Hansen, Okinawa, June 6-8, 2023. For more information, see ETMS2 tasker DON-230309-BQVN, or email Michelle Wozniak at michelle.wozniak@usmc.mil. Please note: All HQMC-funded seats are full.

ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER

The United States Marine Corps' Marine & Family Programs Division publishes Prevention in Action.

The contents of this quarterly newsletter are for informational purposes only and not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment.

Visit usmc-mccs.org/prevention or click on the QR code to sign up for our mailing list or view past issues. Your email address will be used solely to deliver the newsletter.



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To suggest topics or questions, email hqmcprevention@usmc.mil to suggest topics or ask questions.

To access hot links, right-click on link, copy link, and paste it into a browser window.



E - X - P - A - N - D - I - N - G

THE STRESS MANAGEMENT TOOLKIT

The effects of stress can weigh down Marines like rocks in a rucksack. The Mayo Clinic recommends that individuals master the four A's of dealing with stressful situations to help expand their stress management toolkit.

AVOID THE STRESSOR:

- Take control of your environment and the stressors in your daily life. If the evening news makes you anxious, turn off the TV. If traffic makes you tense, take a longer but less-traveled route. If the mall frustrates you, shop online.
- Put some distance between you and the stressor. If someone gets on your nerves, minimize the time you spend around that person.
- Learn to say no when you have the option by trying not to add more to your stress load.

ALTER THE STRESSOR:

- Express your feelings instead of bottling them up. If something is bothering you, communicate your concerns in an open and respectful way.
- Use words like: "I feel ___ when..."; "I love when ..."; "I don't like when..."
- Set limits up front. For example, "My schedule is packed today, so I only have 5 minutes for this conversation."

ADAPT TO THE STRESSOR:

- Look at the big picture: put the stressful situation into perspective. Ask yourself how important will it be in the long run. Worry productively, this applies to accepting things you can't change.

ACCEPT THE STRESSOR:

- Don't try to control the uncontrollable. Many things in life are beyond your control. Focus on the things you can control such as the way you choose to react to problems.

For more information on expanding your stress management toolkit, connect with your local [Community Counseling Program](#), [Military and Family Life Counselors](#), [OSCAR Team Members](#), [Chaplains](#), or chain of command.

The Total Force Fitness concept focuses on a Service Member’s entire health throughout their career, connecting eight dimensions of fitness to optimize health, performance and readiness holistically. The fitness domains are: physical, environmental, medical and dental preventive care, nutritional, spiritual, psychological or mental, social, and financial. The graphic below highlights ways to strengthen two domains.

PHYSICAL + MENTAL A STRONG COMBINATION



WAYS TO STRENGTHEN PHYSICAL HEALTH

Build physical strength.

Start slow. This is a marathon, not a sprint.
Physical fitness is for life.

Make time. Health is wealth.

Aerobic fitness is the foundation
for making the heart healthy.

Do aerobic exercises 2-3 times per week,
30 minutes per session, and keeping heart rate
between 115-130 beats per minute.

Be strong. Build strength to increase
your ability to perform daily tasks.

Movement over muscles. Movements such as
squats, hinges, push/ pull, and planks instead
of biceps, calves, and quads.

Prioritize technique over lifting heavier weights.
Build coordination and technique, increase
weights slowly 1-2% per week.

Strength train 2-3 times per week, 45-60 minutes
per session. Emphasize movements over muscles.

On off days, use active recovery. Pick an exercise and
maintain a heart rate of 100-120 beats per minute
for 20-30 minutes to stimulate the recovery process.

Participate in fun activities. Play sports, spend
time outdoors - anything that provides enjoyment.

Remember: Maintaining good physical + mental health is
a marathon, not a sprint. Keep at it to stay fit.

WAYS TO STRENGTHEN MENTAL HEALTH

Build strong coping and problem-solving skills.

Manage stress before it becomes overwhelming.

Make time for self-care.

Practice mindfulness to improve focus
and to calm yourself.

Forge connections with peers and community (pursue
hobbies, join organizations, volunteer to help others).

Seek help with life’s challenges from
professionals when needed.

Remember the importance of positive self-talk.
Counter every negative thought with at least
two positive thoughts.

Set healthy boundaries. Know it is OK
to say “no” or “not right now.”

Get adequate rest, which helps to maintain mental
sharpness (attention, learning, and memory).

Increase self-awareness by reflecting on past
experiences to better understand personal identity to
help reach self-confidence.

Identify unmet needs to increase awareness regarding
what is needed in that moment to help better control
emotions and behaviors.

Practice mindful self-compassion to enhance emotional
well-being, resilience, and self-acceptance
(accept self in a moment of failure).