



# DPRR

## COMMUNITYLINK

SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH  
SPECIAL EDITION

THE DIRECTORATE OF PREVENTION, RESILIENCE AND READINESS NEWSLETTER | AUGUST 2025



The theme “We Are Stronger Together. Connect to Protect,” highlights the significance of maintaining connections with others to support mental well-being and resilience within the Army community. (U.S. Army photo)

## Connection Matters: The Lifesaving Skill Anyone Can Learn

By Jasmine Taylor, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

Picture this: You're at the last barbecue of the summer, enjoying a sizzling burger hot off the grill, when your friend starts to choke. Everyone senses the urgency of the situation and watches with concern, but few people can help. They may not know what to do, but you do. By springing into action and administering the Heimlich maneuver, you're able to save your friend.

Now, let's think about suicide prevention awareness in the same way. By being well-informed and appropriately trained, we can notice the signs when someone is struggling and be prepared to offer support.

Just as we wouldn't wait for an emergency to learn a lifesaving technique, we shouldn't wait for heartbreak to learn ways to prevent suicide.

“Building connections is lifesaving. . .One must know what to look for and respond immediately,” said Dr. Myron C. Byles, a retired Army Chaplain who serves as the Suicide Prevention Program Coordinator at Fort Irwin, California.

In November of last year, the Department of Defense released its [Annual Report on Suicide in the Military](#), highlighting the tragic loss of 279 active-duty, Guard and Reserve Soldiers who died by suicide in 2023. While the report indicated an increase in suicide deaths compared to 2022, it also called attention to the significant impact of simple gestures such as a phone call, video chat or an invitation to social gatherings for those who are struggling.

The [2025 Suicide Prevention Month](#) theme, “We Are Stronger Together. Connect to Protect,” reinforces the fact that staying connected with others is important for mental well-being and resilience in the Army community.

Byles said that simple, consistent and engaging interactions can open the lines of communication and make space for deeper conversations.

“Take the time to check on individuals and go beyond the greetings of the day. Learn their strengths and weaknesses. Understand what motivates people to do what they do, or simply what gives them joy and peace,” he said.

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Anthony Campbell, a Workplace Violence Prevention Consultant and certified Mental Health First-Aid Trainer, said that trust and vulnerability also play an integral role in building meaningful connections.

“I believe the key to (connection) is how relatable we are. Do we really listen to our peers, or are we thinking of what we want to say and waiting to say it? Even service members want to be listened to if they trust me enough to open up to me,” he said.

Campbell encourages individuals to be present and listen when someone is speaking about their experiences or feelings, instead of rushing to offer guidance or feedback.

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## DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

Team, Strengthening our community is a force multiplier. Making sure our Soldiers, Families and Army Civilians are ready means addressing quality-of-life conditions and eliminating barriers to mental health support. The Army is accomplishing this through initiatives, programs and services that were created with our unique daily circumstances and challenges in mind.

I'm happy to announce we have a new Army Family Action Plan webpage. AFAP is a grassroots program that allows Soldiers, Families, Survivors, Retirees and Army Civilians to identify and share their well-being concerns with Army Senior Leaders. You can get involved at [www.armyresilience.army.mil/AFAP](http://www.armyresilience.army.mil/AFAP).

But this isn't the only opportunity available to influence change. The Survivor Advisory Working Group is an advisory board of Army Senior Leaders, surviving spouses, adult children or parents of Soldiers who died on active duty. They discuss issues affecting all survivors and look for resolutions. Interested Family members can contact their local Survivor Outreach Services coordinator at <https://go.mil/armyos>.

Since taking care of our people is a priority at the Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness, we need to acknowledge developments that may affect how our communities receive support. Due to changes in organizational capabilities, DPRR's Adolescent Support and Counseling Services will end after the 2025-2026 school year.

For many years, ASACS has provided confidential counseling and prevention-based services to Army children and teens. The Defense Department has established additional resources, such as Child and Youth Behavioral Military Family Life Counselors and school-based behavioral health counselors. The remaining ASACS staff will work with current clients to minimize transition impacts and ensure a warm handoff to these other helping organizations.

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## Army Partners With Alexandria, Virginia, Forms Prevention Leadership Academy

By Chet Curtis, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

The Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness, Ready and Resilient, Training and Integration Division, and the city of Alexandria, Virginia, signed an Intergovernmental Support Agreement to establish an Army Community Prevention Leadership Academy in support of community-based prevention coalitions.

The CPLA will provide professional development to Prevention Integrators assisting with the Commander's Ready and Resilient Council governance process.

Amanda Braasch, DPRR Prevention Specialist, said that the academy will provide Army prevention leaders with unique training opportunities.

"The CPLA could not have been established without the support from the city of Alexandria and the connections the city has built by providing public health and prevention education opportunities to many other cities, states and federal entities," said Braasch.

Alexandria city officials worked with retired Army Maj. Gen. Barrye Price and his organization, Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America, to develop an Army-tailored prevention governance training program for the academy.

"R2I&T's decision to establish the CPLA aligns to the recommendations of the Suicide Prevention and Response Independent Review Committee report," Braasch said.

In its report, the committee outlined steps that R2I&T can take to enhance its community-based prevention efforts to reduce harmful behaviors. The strategy recommends developing a professional prevention workforce that empowers Army leaders.

"The CPLA intends to develop the skills and capacity of the Army's prevention workforce and provide supporting information to strengthen the prevention governance process," said Braasch.

"This training will focus on strengthening the knowledge, skill and abilities of integrators but will also produce over 400 tangible products to support Senior Commander oversight of prevention governance processes across the Army."

In three weeks of nonconsecutive training from the CPLA, students will receive more than 70 hours of virtual group



Retired Army Maj. Gen. Barrye Price and his organization, Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America, were instrumental in the development of the Army Community Prevention Leadership Academy. (Photo courtesy of Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America)

instruction, individual coaching on product development and hands-on learning experience in implementing a comprehensive community-change model based on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration's Strategic Prevention Framework.

In addition to individual support during the training, participants will have opportunities for skills development through on-demand, virtual continuing education offerings and access to a national prevention community of interest, through which state and local community members share best practices. To ensure the CPLA training's long-term impact and knowledge continuity in organizational or community based governance processes, installation or organization Senior Commanders will issue appointment orders to those individuals undertaking the role of the Prevention Integrator.

This year the academy will hold two training sessions for 80 personnel from units across the globe. The first session will launch by the end of August.

Braasch said that due to strong interest from Commanders, the CPLA has already filled the 80 slots. R2I&T may offer additional CPLA opportunities. For more information, contact [usarmy.pentagon.hqda-dcs-g-1.list.dpr-r2i-and-training-div@army.mil](mailto:usarmy.pentagon.hqda-dcs-g-1.list.dpr-r2i-and-training-div@army.mil).

For more DPRR information, visit [www.armyresilience.army.mil](http://www.armyresilience.army.mil).

## Adolescent Support and Counseling Services Transition

The Adolescent Support and Counseling Services program will end after the 2025-2026 school year. Discover additional treatment and prevention services for Army children and teens.

[LEARN MORE](#)

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Why is financial literacy important to me?

NEW LINK TO FINANCIAL FRONTLINE CAN HELP YOU MANAGE YOUR MONEY



## Fort Carson Soldier and Cancer Survivor Competes in 2025 Warrior Games

By Jasmine Taylor, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

Sgt. 1st Class David Hong personifies the Warrior Games spirit of recovery and determination. His journey to the games started at the Soldier Recovery Unit, or SRU, at Fort Carson, Colorado. It ultimately led him to the 2025 Army Trials at Fort Bliss, Texas, where he competed in the men's road cycling competition. Hong said the road to the games was paved with support from his community, including a team of doctors, coaches, advocates and loved ones, as well as a firm grounding in his spiritual resilience.

"Our Family quote is, 'Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might' Ephesians 6:10. It was faith in the Lord that helped me mentally, physically and spiritually," he said.

During the Army Trials, over 60 wounded, ill and injured Soldiers and Veterans competed in various sports and activities. The event assessed and qualified athletes for this summer's Warrior Games competition.

Hong served 16 years of active duty as a Senior Religious Affairs Noncommissioned Officer, with deployments to Afghanistan (2019) and tours in Korea (2011, 2020). He arrived at Fort Carson's Soldier Recovery Unit in September 2023 to receive support after a cancer diagnosis and orthopedic injuries to both knees. In recent years, he has undergone nine major surgeries and 23 chemotherapy treatments. He said his time at the unit has been a battle to fight cancer, to



Sgt. 1st Class David Hong uses his adaptive sports training to build resilience and to cope with post-traumatic stress, anxiety and depression. (U.S. Army photo by Gino Mattorano)

take care of his special-needs daughter and to prepare for his transition out of the Army.

"The team of the SRU, Evans Hospital, my Family, nurse case manager and coaches have provided all the care to help my Family and I get through this," he said.

The Army Recovery Care Program uses SRUs to manage recovery and advanced-care needs for wounded, ill and injured Soldiers. SRUs offer adaptive reconditioning programs that help strengthen Soldiers' bodies and minds. The programs provide a wide variety of activities that can supplement a Soldier's recovery and improve their well-being. Adaptive sports—sports modified for people with physical disabilities—can further enhance the rehabilitation process.

"The adaptive sports have truly helped me become positive, motivated, physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually strong," Hong said. By participating in them, he has built resilience to cope with post-traumatic stress, anxiety, depression, sleep apnea and severe neuropathy.

"It helped me become part of something greater than myself. It truly helped me become motivated to keep fighting all my illnesses through my (behavioral health) issues and also cancer," he said.

The 2025 DOD Warrior Games, hosted by U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, were held July 18–26 at Colorado College in Colorado Springs. Hong competed in track and field, cycling and rowing. He will now undergo further surgery to treat his cancer.

Through modified equipment and special classification systems, any athlete can compete at the Warrior Games, regardless of their injury or illness. The games are more than just a competition; they aim to inspire recovery while encouraging athletes to grow and build strength in their bodies and minds.

"I am honored to serve my country not only as a Soldier but as an athlete. It has created a drive for me to be part of this great community that will care for me and my Family after my military career," Hong said.

## Can Exercise Help With Post-Traumatic Stress Symptoms?

By Human Performance Resources by CHAMP at the Uniformed Services University

Post-traumatic stress is a condition that affects how a person thinks, feels and functions mentally and physically after experiencing a traumatic event. It can leave people stuck in a seemingly hopeless cycle of anxiety, depression, fear and emotional exhaustion from coping with its effects. It manifests differently for every person, and the symptoms can have a major impact on day-to-day life.

Recent [research](#) shows that exercise can be a valuable addition to traditional PTS treatments for reducing symptoms. Moving your body—whether it's going for a walk, lifting weights or meditative movement—can reduce anxiety and depression, improve cognitive performance, increase self-esteem and help you manage stress. While not a cure, exercise can provide relief to those who are suffering from depression, anxiety and other emotional regulation symptoms. Regular exercise can also improve sleep, which is a major challenge that many PTS patients face.

There's no exact type and amount of exercise that's been proven to reduce PTS symptoms, but a good baseline for overall physical and [mental health](#)

[benefits](#) is to meet the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services guidelines and aim for 150 minutes of physical activity each week. Write down your SMART goals (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) with this baseline in mind, and remember to pace yourself. For information on how to build a workout program, see HPRC's [Military Workout Planning for Beginners](#).

Exercise is a stressor that causes your body to adapt over time, which leads to short- and long-term benefits to your physical and mental health. Even though exercise stress is good for your body and mind, it can also mimic your body's responses associated with a traumatic event. When exercise triggers your body's stress response, your body may respond with an elevated heart rate, heavy breathing or an adrenaline rush. The fear of experiencing these physical sensations, or the potential to experience hyperarousal symptoms (hypervigilance, rage, difficulty sleeping, irritability, trouble concentrating), can discourage some people with PTS from doing physical activity. So a mindful approach to working out should be taken when it's included in the treatment



Studies indicate that adding exercise to standard treatments for post-traumatic stress can help lessen symptoms. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Alvin Conley)

plan for those who have PTS. This includes avoiding high-stimulation or crowded environments at first, exercising with a support partner and using [mind-body skills](#) that can activate your relaxation response.

While the research on exercise's ability to reduce PTS symptoms is encouraging, remember that seeking professional help to create an individualized treatment plan is the best route. Exercise is one tool to aid in recovery and to reclaim your health and well-being. Learn more at [hprc-online.org](#).

### Do you want to contribute to the next issue of the newsletter?

Submit articles and photographs by Sept. 19. For any questions, contact the editor at [jtaylor@strategyconsultingteam.com](mailto:jtaylor@strategyconsultingteam.com).



# WE ARE STRONGER TOGETHER

CONNECT TO PROTECT

Connecting with others not only fosters a sense of belonging but also empowers us to cope with life's challenges. Meaningful connection creates a strong support system filled with people and resources we can lean on in tough times.



U.S. Army Field Band musicians perform inspirational songs as a part of the Prevention Music Initiative. (U.S. Army photo)

## Soldiers Create Original Songs to Spread Hope, Prevent Suicide

By Cynthia Bell, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

A new Prevention Music Initiative offers a modern, creative way to reach Soldiers and Families with messages of suicide prevention. The initiative's collaborators include Sgt. 1st Class Todd Freeman from the United States Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command; Sgt. Maj. Ruben Murillo, Senior Enlisted Advisor to DPRR; and the United States Army Field Band and Army band musicians.

After he lost a friend to suicide at a young age, Freeman, who has made it his mission to support Suicide Prevention Program initiatives as a songwriter, has vowed to help people struggling through hardship.

Freeman's shift from supporting the Army band to the Suicide Prevention Program is helping him to fulfill that goal. His role includes supporting units and Army Families with suicide prevention training, resources and postvention assistance.

"I got into songwriting and loved the ability to convey messages with music and realized that this was something that would work for the Suicide Prevention Program," he said.

Freeman was inspired to write a seven-part music series that shares a complex and deeply human story about Soldiers' mental health struggles. The

songs chart an emotional journey from despair to hope, isolation to connection and help-seeking, and vulnerability to renewal.

He said the lyrics are based on interviews with battle buddies who have post-traumatic stress and sought therapy, his personal discussions with other Soldiers and feedback during interventions. Freeman, the musicians and other collaborators went on to compose music with messages that aim to heal members of the Army community.

PMI is an Army comprehensive public health approach to preventing suicide and other harmful behaviors highlighted in Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael R. Weimer's January 2024 testimony before the [House Armed Services Committee Quality of Life Panel](#). The initiative complements [numerous resources already available to Army leaders](#) as they actively engage units in suicide prevention. The new songs and videos can be incorporated into annual and ad-hoc prevention training and organizational activities in order to pave the way for open discussion, sharing and support among teammates and battle buddies.

"Senior leaders are uniquely positioned to shape the climate in which Soldiers trust leadership," said Renee Johnson, Suicide Prevention Program Manager.

Simply put, they can help Soldiers feel seen, heard and supported. In sharing these songs, leaders can emphasize Soldier and Family readiness, individual grit and the power of positive change.

The songs' meanings highlight the incredible resilience of Army community members to thrive and grow through challenges.

DPRR's evidence-based policies and programs to prevent and respond to suicide are being integrated during Suicide Prevention Month and year-round.

Novel initiatives like PMI can reduce stigma and encourage help-seeking, foster communities of care and promote essential resources such as the [988 \(+1\) Crisis Line](#), [Military OneSource](#) and [Telemynd](#). Ready and resilient Army communities can elevate the voices of Soldiers and Families to overcome hardship, encourage effective leadership and build caring connections.

The next phase of the initiative will involve music industry contacts including the 81st Readiness Division's Chief Warrant Officer 3 Billy Green and Chief Warrant Officer 1 Craig Greer (also known as country music artist Craig Morgan).

Together they will refine the songs and disseminate the powerful messages. They aim to upload the series directly to consumer platforms such as Amazon Music, Apple Music and Spotify and hope to film a documentary to share prevention messages to broader audiences.

Find the seven-song series and more information on PMI on DPRR's [website](#) or [YouTube](#).



Members of the U.S. Army Field Band's Six-String Soldiers record songs written by Sgt. 1st Class Todd Freeman. (U.S. Army photo)

## Reducing Suicide Risk for Soldiers Undergoing Administrative or Legal Action

By Antonieta Rico, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

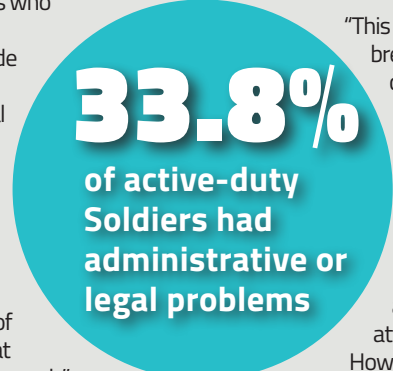
When a Soldier commits a UCMJ offense, it may be tempting for command teams to distance themselves from the situation, especially if the Soldier is being separated from the Army, but it is precisely in these circumstances that leaders must step up. The DOD [Annual Report on Suicide in the Military CY 2023](#) found that about a third (33.8%) of active-duty Soldiers who died by suicide in 2023 had administrative or Uniform Code of Military Justice legal problems, "such as nonjudicial punishment, under investigation or administrative separation," in the year prior to their death.

"It is still a commander's responsibility to ... make sure that the Soldier is taken care of day-to-day regardless of what legal process they are going through," said Col. Kevin Goke, the Deputy for Resilience at the Army Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness. "The command team is there to support the Soldier; the legal side is there to take care of the legal."

"Our job as Trial Defense Service attorneys is to guide clients through the court-martial process," said Maj. Sarah Bailey, Training Officer, Trial Defense Service. "It is

really up to the command team to stay involved and be responsible for Soldiers' welfare; we don't want defense (lawyers) to step into that command role."

Bailey said that although legal professionals have an obligation to the welfare of their client, they are also limited by the rules of confidentiality in attorney-client privilege.



"This is critical to understand: We cannot break confidentiality unless someone clearly expresses an intent (of) suicide or harm," she said. Bailey said attorneys representing clients can only break confidentiality in two circumstances: if the client indicates that they are an immediate threat to themselves or that they are an immediate threat to another person, at which point attorneys can take immediate action. However, getting Soldiers help with other personal challenges as they go through legal proceedings, such as financial, family, behavioral health and other day-to-day needs, is the role of command teams.

"We have no mental health or legal assistance resources of our own, and we are not able to observe and monitor clients the same way a command team can," Bailey said. "Put simply, we aren't equipped to

take the role of a command team in caring for a Soldier facing immense legal stressors."

When the Suicide Prevention and Response Independent Review Committee, established by the DOD in 2022 to ["address and prevent suicide in the military,"](#) released its final report, the findings noted that service members under investigation could be considered a "high-risk subgroup warranting targeted prevention" efforts. The SPRIRC made several recommendations regarding these service members with pending legal issues, which are being actioned at the DOD level. Meanwhile, the Army has also taken steps to address risk in this subgroup. Suicide Prevention Program managers take a comprehensive approach at the installation level to connect command teams and Soldiers to helping resources, such as Behavioral Health and nonclinical services like chaplains and Military and Family Life Counselors, highlighting that these resources are also available if there is a need when Soldiers are involved in legal proceedings, Goke said.

The Army's annual suicide prevention [training](#) identifies legal involvement as one of the risk factors for suicide. Additional factors that increase suicide risk include relationship problems, work setbacks and medical problems, according to the Brigade and Battalion Commander's Handbook for Suicide Prevention, published by the Center for Army Lessons Learned and written by experts at DPRR.

Read the full article on the DPRR [website](#).



## SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH AWARENESS MATERIALS

This year's Suicide Prevention Month awareness materials are now available. Visit our microsite for posters, fact sheets and social media posts you can use in local installation outreach efforts. [www.armyresilience.army.mil/SPM-2025/index.html](http://www.armyresilience.army.mil/SPM-2025/index.html).



# Finding Hope in the Desert

By Jasmine Taylor, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

Some people might say that an oasis can be found in the middle of the Mojave Desert, just 6 miles from the main gate of Fort Irwin in San Bernardino County, California. But there are no shady palm trees or babbling brooks found at this retreat. Instead of lush greenery, there's an assortment of colorful boulders known as Painted Rocks.

Painted Rocks commemorates the many Soldiers who have passed through Fort Irwin's National Training Center. The units who have trained there celebrate their time at the facility by painting their insignias on massive desert rocks, a rite of passage dating back to 1981.

A more recent addition has given the site a greater purpose. Positioned at a high-traffic location, a special monument known as The Rock can be seen by every individual entering or leaving Fort Irwin.

It reads, "Even the strongest rock can be worn down by the storm," and it provides instructions on how to access the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. The quote is a testament to anyone who sees it that even the strongest Soldiers can be affected by life's hardships.

Dr. Myron C. Byles, Suicide Prevention Program Coordinator for the Army Substance Abuse Program, said the intent was to acknowledge the struggles many Soldiers face and to offer a visible symbol of hope at one of the most-visited areas at Fort Irwin.

"The vibrant and meaningful artwork displayed there serves as a beacon of hope and peace for Soldiers, (Army) Civilians, Families and contractors living and working on the installation. The Rock is distinctive from the other boulders and catches the eyes of visitors. It's a reminder that support is always within reach," he said.

Byles said that a Soldier from a rotational training unit temporarily stationed at Fort Irwin chose to call 988 after seeing The Rock at the Painted Rocks site.

"We want every person who sees it to understand that it's OK to ask for help—even those who are perceived as strong sometimes struggle. Help is available, and you are not alone," he said.

The ASAP and Suicide Prevention Program are unified at Fort Irwin. The collaboration is known for its creativity and visibility; the teams utilize costumes, interactive events and a strong presence at installation-wide activities to connect with the community. Byles said the programs' primary purpose is to foster a culture of awareness, resilience and help-seeking behavior.

"We wanted to convey a simple message encouraging individuals facing challenges to seek help without hesitation," he said.



The Rock, located at Fort Irwin, California, symbolizes the challenges Soldiers face and reminds them that support is within reach. (U.S. Army photo)

"Leading this initiative reflects (the Army's) commitment to reducing stigma and connecting individuals to the support and resources they need before reaching a point of crisis."

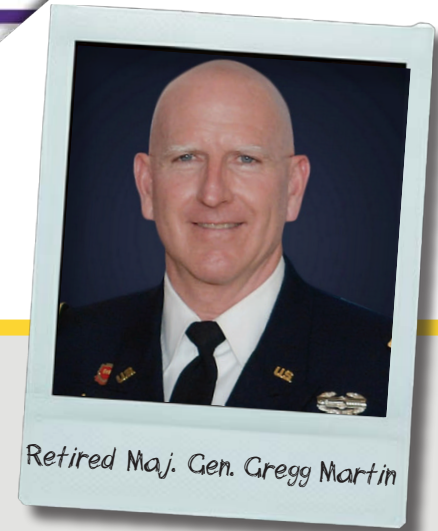
In alignment with this commitment, the Fort Irwin ASAP will host a special event called Ruck for Resilience in September to observe Suicide Prevention Month. Participants will wear a weighted rucksack along a designated route, representing the burdens that individuals may carry in life. Along the way, resource stations operated by Army Community Service, Family Advocacy Program and the Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention program will allow runners to "lighten their load" by removing weights from their rucksacks.

"The event is designed to demonstrate that while we may face heavy challenges, support systems exist to help us move forward with strength and hope," Byles said.

## EVERYDAY COURAGE Sharing Stories of Resilience

Resilience keeps us flexible when life throws challenges our way. "Everyday Courage" is a series highlighting stories from the Army community about when their resilience was put to the test and how they were able to overcome hardships.

Gregg Martin is a retired Army Major General who served on active duty for 36 years. He is a 69-year-old husband, father, grandfather, combat veteran and a proud, thankful bipolar survivor, thriver and warrior. This is his story.



Retired Maj. Gen. Gregg Martin

## THE BIPOLAR GENERAL

Unbeknownst to everyone, my genetic predisposition for bipolar disorder was triggered at age 47 by the intense stress, and adrenaline of the Iraq War in 2003, where I commanded thousands of Soldiers. My brain responded to the stress by producing and distributing excessive amounts of dopamine and endorphins, sending me into a euphoric, high-performing mania that made me feel fearless, like I was Superman.

Moreover, my bipolar disorder worsened with policy changes affecting my mission, the trauma of presiding over numerous gut-wrenching Soldier funerals, institutional support deficits and the stress I felt knowing my two sons were serving in combat.

My bipolar disorder remained undiagnosed for over 10 years. My manic highs climbed higher, and my depressive lows sank lower, until I rocketed into full-blown mania in the spring of 2014. Due to my disruptive, erratic and over-the-top behavior, my four-star boss removed me from command in July 2014. It was the right decision. He also directed that I get a mental health evaluation. Unfortunately, I was misdiagnosed three times and determined as "fit for duty."

Over the next four months, I spiraled, then crashed, into crippling, hopeless depression, accompanied by terrifying psychotic delusions. Over the next two years, I fought for my life as morbid, vivid imagery of my own violent, bloody death occupied my mind. These passive suicidal ideations were real for me.

Fortunately, an Army comrade helped me get into an excellent Veterans Administration hospital. My wife's love and perseverance were crucial, and the support of Family and friends helped keep me from falling into the abyss.

But it was lithium, a natural salt, that stabilized me in September 2016. Since then, I have rebuilt my previously bipolar-shattered life upon my new biochemical balance and psychological coping skills, along with healthful living (diet, sleep, exercise, low stress and the like). These elements are necessary but not sufficient. For a recovery that's built to last, these elements must be anchored in the social platform of the five P's: people (surround yourself with fun, happy, interesting people), place (live in a safe, energizing place), purpose (commit with passion to a cause greater than self), perseverance (be infused, energized and strengthened with the will to win) and presence (get outside your own head; think about your thinking; metacognition).

Since I started on lithium seven years ago, my wife and I enjoy a wonderful life—happy, healthy, successful—in sunny Florida, with a network of fun,

vibrant friends. I manage my bipolar disorder and pursue my life purpose of mental health advocacy.

I never wanted bipolar disorder, but it wanted me. It nearly destroyed everything I value: marriage, family, health, friends, career and life itself. In response, I've taken my "bipolar gift" and transformed it into my calling and mission: sharing my bipolar story to help stop the stigma and save lives. I speak and write about my experiences, providing hope and knowledge to others.



Maj. Gen. Gregg Martin attributes his ability to manage his bipolar disorder to the encouragement from his wife and friends. (Photo courtesy of Maj. Gen. Gregg Martin)

## Suicide Prevention Month Podcasts



DPRR's SPM podcast series supports further learning about suicide prevention to cultivate connection through critical conversations. The series covers topics such as lethal means, financial readiness and holistic awareness.

LEARN MORE

## 988 LIFELINE

Dial 988, then press 1, or text 838255.

- For calls inside the continental U.S., dial 988 and press 1 for the Military Crisis Line
- Text: 838255 or visit <https://988lifeline.org/chat>
- For calls outside the continental U.S. (OCONUS):  
NORTHCOM: 988; press 1  
PACOM: +1 844-702-5493 or DSN 988  
EUCOM: +1 844-702-5495 or DSN 988  
CENTCOM: +1 855-422-7719 or DSN 988  
AFRICOM: +1 888-482-6054 or DSN 988  
SOUTHCOM: +1 866-989-9599 or DSN 988

Visit [www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help-now/military-crisis-line](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help-now/military-crisis-line)

# GUARDIANS OF THE SOUL: The Essential Role of Army Chaplains in Spiritual Readiness

By Lytaria B. Walker, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

In the Army profession, where physical fitness, tactical proficiency and mental resilience are highly respected, it might be easy to overlook a quieter but equally vital component of personal readiness: the spiritual domain. At the heart of spiritual readiness stand the U.S. Army chaplains. They are servant leaders who ensure that every Soldier, regardless of faith or background, has access to spiritual care, moral guidance and emotional support.

Chaplain (Capt.) Harry C. Ross, a Chaplain Clinician at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, describes the chaplaincy as a sacred calling within the profession of arms. While today's chaplains may not carry weapons, they are very much in the fight, supporting Soldiers with confidential, faith-based support in times of crisis, uncertainty and personal challenge.

"We're more than just religious leaders," he said. "We're counselors, ethical advisers and spiritual first responders who are ready to meet Soldiers wherever they are, in the garrison or on the battlefield."

Army chaplains are not typically licensed counselors, but they are prepared to help people navigate life's real challenges, like stress, career concerns, substance misuse or deployment. On any given day, a chaplain may lead a worship service, conduct a marriage counseling session or provide grief support. "It's not about preaching doctrine; it's about helping Soldiers find meaning, purpose and resilience, especially when life gets difficult or combat becomes a reality," Ross said.

But what truly sets Army chaplains apart is their commitment to compassionate service amid uncertain times. Whether it's a young private struggling with homesickness, a seasoned sergeant grappling with financial troubles or a unit left reeling after a loss, chaplains often provide a calm presence. They can offer a safe place for Soldiers to open up, reflect and begin to heal. Spiritual wounds can linger long after a deployment ends. Chaplains can help Soldiers confront issues head-on, offering moral

clarity and a space for reflection grounded in faith or personal values.

"In my role, I've seen the incredible weight our Soldiers carry," Ross said. "Sometimes it's visible, like a wound or a scar. But more often, it's invisible. That's where we come in. We help carry the burdens that no one else can see."

Ross also said that chaplains serve as trusted advisers to commanders. "We provide insights into unit morale, ethical concerns and the overall spiritual health of the force," he said. "In a way, we are the moral compass of the unit. We see what others might miss, and we speak truth even when it's hard."

The belief that the spirit of the Soldier needs to be nurtured and supported is at the core of the chaplain's mission. Their presence is a reminder that despite the demands of military service, there is space for grace, healing and hope. They often serve as the quiet professionals walking beside the Soldier through the valleys of doubt, the peaks of triumph and everything in between. "We may not carry a rifle, but we go to the front lines just the same. We go armed with compassion, guided by faith and committed to the soul of the Soldier," he said.

To find an Army chaplain on your installation, check your installation's website, contact the Religious Support Office or check the Military OneSource [website](#).



Army chaplains often provide spiritual support and guidance to Soldiers celebrating religious holidays. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. John Mateja)



Chaplain (Capt.) Felix Chukwuma speaks about love and relationships during a Building Strong and Ready Teams session at Fort Pickett, Virginia, on June 7, 2025. (U.S. Army Reserve photo by Staff Sgt. Kanangwe)

# BEYOND THE UNIFORM: How JBLM's IRC Supports Soldiers and Families From Day One

By Heather Aguilar, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

Starting fresh at a new duty station can bring stress, uncertainty and a long checklist of to-dos. At Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, the Installation Reception Center exists to remove that burden from Soldiers and their Families. Whether someone is arriving solo or with dependents, the IRC's structured onboarding process ensures they're not facing it alone.

The five-day in-processing schedule begins immediately after a Soldier signs in. During this window, Soldiers complete everything from medical and dental checks to financial readiness, housing and unit integration briefings. Time is also built in for other personal tasks like enrolling kids in school or securing long-term lodging.

"There's not a whole lot of downtime once they sign in to the installation," said 1st Sgt. Lee Smith, the center's Sponsorship Program lead. "We keep them occupied here."

JBLM's Sponsorship Program is a central pillar of the onboarding process. Every Soldier is paired with a sponsor from their gaining unit—someone who can answer questions, share tips and provide that early connection to the new community.

"We want to reduce isolation and make sure Soldiers don't have to navigate this alone," Smith explained. It's especially helpful for younger or first-time movers, who might not know where to begin.

To complement those one-on-one connections, JBLM has expanded access to digital tools. A public-facing onboarding website shares up-to-date contacts, frequently asked questions and 24-hour reception support. "It makes a difference,"

said Smith. "Even if I don't have data, I know Soldiers are reaching out more and getting the answers they need faster."

Financial stress—a known contributor to mental health strain—is tackled head-on. With the Smart Voucher program, Soldiers get help filing for reimbursements tied to their PCS move.

"You're owed this money, and we make sure you get it back fast," said Capt. Craig Samuel, IRC Commander. Soldiers complete their vouchers during a scheduled session with finance professionals, ensuring a high approval rate and faster reimbursements.

Events on the last day of in-processing tie readiness to resilience. The day starts with the Courage Workout of the Day, where new Soldiers and senior leaders train together.

"It gives Soldiers face time with leadership and a space to talk about goals," Samuel said.

That's followed by Keys to Connection, a chaplain-led session focused on purpose, community and wellness. These conversations can surface challenges early and reinforce protective factors against suicide.

"It's about thinking beyond the uniform—what really matters to you while you're here," said Samuel. The effort is part of a broader Army-wide strategy to address suicide risk through early engagement and connectedness.

Families are also encouraged to attend newcomer briefings and resource fairs.



New Soldiers participate in an icebreaker activity during Keys to Connection at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington. (U.S. Army photo)

"Getting spouses involved early reduces stress," said Smith. "They see the resources firsthand, instead of relying on secondhand info."

Post-arrival surveys help JBLM measure what's working.

"Ninety-five percent of Soldiers report satisfaction with their onboarding experience," Samuel said. "That tells us we're on the right track."

By combining logistical support with real connection, JBLM's onboarding process strengthens Soldiers and Families from day one.

## ONLINE RESOURCES



MilitaryOneSource Suicide Prevention MilLife Guide  
[www.militaryonesource.mil/resources/millife-guides/suicide-prevention](http://www.militaryonesource.mil/resources/millife-guides/suicide-prevention)



Tricare Mental Health Care  
<https://tricare.mil/CoveredServices/Mental>



Online Mental Health Services  
<https://www.telemetry.com/military>



Lethal Means Safety  
Together we can take actions to ensure secure storage of lethal means and prevent suicide.  
[www.armyresilience.army.mil/Lethal-Means/LMS-Home.html](http://www.armyresilience.army.mil/Lethal-Means/LMS-Home.html)



## Building Connection Saves Lives *CONNECTION* Continued from page 1

"It can ruin that (connection) with the individual by being too 'advice-driven,' rather than helping someone work through their own challenges by walking the walk with them...often we just need to talk it through," he said.

Leaders can build stronger relationships with the Soldiers they lead by making them feel like they belong. Campbell explained that many Soldiers want to be recognized for their contributions and want to be empowered to fulfill their role as a part of a team.

"Not a parade and award (is needed) for every achievement, but a, 'Thanks, we could not have done that without you.' A simple 'Thanks' goes a long way from the right person," he said.

So how do you start a conversation with someone if you're concerned about them? In the "Ask" suicide prevention rap [video](#), Staff Sgt. Nicholas Feemster, Ask, Care, Escort-Suicide Intervention Trainer shares three tips for approaching someone you care about.

- Know their "baseline" or typical behaviors. Share that you've noticed a shift or difference in them.

**"I believe that social connections truly help individuals cope with their challenges, and if received positively, they are more apt to (bounce) forward from their difficult situation."**

—Col. Kevin Goke, Deputy for Resilience, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

- Mention one of their interests or protective factors and offer to engage in that activity.
- Ask them directly if they've ever thought about suicide.

Also, Feemster said that while asking about suicide might be tough, we shouldn't be deterred.

"We often think that if we ask about suicide, it suggests the idea to someone. Research says this is not true and that asking can actually reduce that chance that suicide happens," he explains in the video.

Validating someone's experiences can make a big difference. There are [studies](#) supporting the psychological health benefits of accepting negative emotions and thoughts.

"I normalize having bad days," Byles said.

To further support the Army community, DPRR has created print and digital Suicide Prevention Month [materials](#), which are now available on the DPRR Products on Demand website. The "Connection Matters" fact sheet explains that connecting with someone involves recognizing signs of distress early, asking intentional questions, being present with your time and opening up about shared experiences.

Beyond taking the time to learn about and communicate with your teammates and Family members, you can also have information on hand in case they want to seek help. They can contact the Military Crisis Line by dialing 988 and pressing 1 or by texting 838255. You can also save the numbers for your installation chaplain and local Behavioral Health office in your cell phone. If they are nervous or don't want to do it alone, you can offer to help them make the phone call or go with them.

DPRR also released five suicide prevention awareness [podcast episodes](#) aimed at fostering conversations and enhancing resilience among Soldiers, Army Civilians and their Families. Topics include holistic wellness, exploring the interplay of

mind, body and spirit; lethal-means safety, offering practical safety steps; invisible wounds, addressing unseen mental-health struggles; and financial readiness, highlighting the impact of money stress.

By addressing these important topics, the podcast intends to empower listeners to not only connect with one another but to take proactive steps toward protecting their emotional health.

During the SPM podcast series's introductory recording, Renee Johnson, HQDA Suicide Prevention and Response Program Manager, said, "Mental health is health."

"We go to the doctor when we get sick, and we want our Soldiers to know that they can and should utilize their helping medical resources when challenged by less-visible struggles."

"Whether you're a leader or a Program Manager, an Army spouse or simply someone who cares, these conversations and resources are for you," she said.

Connection is a lifesaving skill, and like many other skills, it can be learned and strengthened through practice. Whether it's at work, hanging out with your Family or engaging with friends, taking the time to connect socially can protect your resilience and mental well-being while building stronger bonds with those you care about.

"I believe that social connections truly help individuals cope with their challenges, and if received positively, they are more apt to (bounce) forward from their difficult situation," said Col. Kevin Goke, the Deputy for Resilience, HQDA G-1, DPRR.

Although Suicide Prevention Month serves as an important time for Soldiers, Army Civilians and their Families to engage in open conversations about mental health and strengthening support systems, it's important to remember that you don't need to have the perfect words; simply being present for someone in need can make a difference.

## Empowering Our Community, Enhancing Readiness *DIRECTOR'S COLUMN* Continued from page 2

This month we're encouraging everyone to make self-care a priority and to build healthy routines as part of our National Wellness Month campaign. Whether you're focusing on hydration, movement or mindfulness, this month is your reminder to put yourself first. You can find materials at [www.armyresilience.army.mil/ard/materials.html](http://www.armyresilience.army.mil/ard/materials.html).

We have also developed fall observances awareness materials to help further support our Soldiers and Families. These campaigns spotlight the services and programs that are available year-round to help individuals who are seeking to learn coping skills and strategies.

September is Suicide Prevention Month, and the Army's 2025 theme is "We Are Stronger Together.

Connect to Protect." In addition to the SPM campaign materials, you can now find a special five-part podcast that addresses common risk factors for suicide. Listen to the podcast series at [www.armyresilience.army.mil/ard/SPM-podcast.html](http://www.armyresilience.army.mil/ard/SPM-podcast.html).

The next campaign addresses a topic that has no place in our Army Family: domestic violence. Domestic Violence Awareness Month, observed in October, has two awareness campaigns this year: "What's Inside Matters," which encourages victims of abuse or those noticing signs of harmful behaviors in their relationship to seek help; and "Pause," which speaks to those who notice their own potentially harmful behaviors toward their partner and want to improve before their behavior escalates. Materials are available for download at [www.armyresilience.army.mil/DVAM-2025](http://www.armyresilience.army.mil/DVAM-2025).

October is also time for two of our biggest annual events, the Army Ten Miler, which promotes esprit de corps and Army fitness, and the Association of the United States Army's yearly convention. For more information, check out the Upcoming Events section on page 14.

May these great plans inspire you to keep the momentum. We value all you are doing to ensure our people feel ready, resilient and equipped for whatever lies ahead. Thank you! Please enjoy the last days of summer.

Have a wonderful start to the fall season!

—Dee Geise, DPRR Director



## SECURING THE FINANCIAL FRONTLINE

### Why is financial literacy important to me?

LEARN MORE



## New Link to Financial Frontline Can Help You Manage Your Money

By Cynthia Bell, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

Financial Frontline, the Army's online hub of financial readiness resources for Soldiers, Families, leaders and service providers, has a [new web address](#) that will continue to house videos, checklists, handouts and other essential budgeting and money-focused materials.

Personal financial readiness training is congressionally mandated under [Section 992 of Title 10, United States Code](#). The [Army's Financial Readiness Program](#) provides free comprehensive education, training and unbiased counseling services to help Soldiers and Families secure their financial well-being, which also enhances military readiness.

The Financial Frontline website complements FRP services available through [Army Community Service](#). Free counseling and training are available via the website or in person, through ACS.

The website's many resources can keep Soldiers on track during major professional and personal events, such as Advanced Individual Training graduation, their first duty station, promotions, marriage, divorce, birth of a child or health issues.

"The Army's Financial Frontline site is your go-to resource for managing money throughout your Army service," said Dr. Cindy Morita, acting Financial Readiness Program Manager and Family Advocacy Program Specialist for the Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness.

Along with linking to FRP services, Financial Frontline connects to [Military OneSource](#) and [Army Emergency Relief](#). Soldiers with AER loans can participate in financial literacy training to receive credit on their existing loans, according to Morita. A loan will be credited if a Soldier:

- Watches all videos on debt, major purchases and spending plans.
- Takes a 25-question quiz.
- Scores 80 percent or above on the quiz.
  - E4 and below can receive a credit of up to \$500 on an existing loan.
  - E5 and above can receive a credit of up to \$250 on an existing loan.

The Financial Frontline website supports mandatory Financial Readiness Common Military Training requirements with downloadable certificates. There are also interactive tools, such as a self assessment, budgeting and PCS cost calculators, tax resources, GI Bill guidance and credit-protection information.

Visit the [Financial Frontline website](#) for resources to help you attain a high quality of life for you and your Family, both during your career and in retirement.

## Protect Your Pocketbook: Stay Safe From Financial Scams

By Mavia Hanson, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

When was the last time you passively scrolled through an online community board? While it's possible you didn't feel in danger while scoping out secondhand furniture or a rental unit in preparation for your next move, it's important to be aware that scammers could be trying to take advantage of unsuspecting individuals.

Financial readiness often involves understanding how to effectively engage with the marketplace, recognizing and avoiding fraud and scams, and making informed financial choices to establish a stable financial future. Fraudsters may target Soldiers and their Families during high-stress periods, such as deployment transitions or permanent change of station season. [Research](#) from the Better Business Bureau Institute shows that military consumers reported a higher median dollar loss to scams than nonmilitary consumers. Between 2019 and 2024, the BBB received 273,937 complaints from military customers.

"Knowing how to spot and avoid scams is a first line of defense," said Dr. Cindy Morita, Acting Financial Readiness Program/Family Advocacy Program Manager. Watch out for some of the top rip-offs, including fake rental listings, phishing attempts and investment frauds.

- **Fake PCS rental listings targeting service members.** Scammers post homes for rent online,

requiring advance payments for properties they don't own.

- **Phishing scams.** Emails or text messages from individuals pretending to be officials from the Defense Finance and Accounting Service or Tricare requesting personal or banking information and demanding payments. Do not click on any links or respond by providing personal information. Stay safe by contacting the organization directly.
- **Investment fraud.** Promises of high returns that turn out to be [pyramid](#) or cryptocurrency schemes. Morita said to always conduct research before you invest.

Choosing a safe payment method could be an effective, simple step against scams. Some payment methods offer little or no protection against fraud. Cryptocurrency, payment apps, wire-transfer companies and gift cards offer less fraud protection. These options can make it difficult to recover your money. Credit cards usually offer stronger fraud [protection](#).

Access to trustworthy resources that educate Soldiers and Army Families about financial scams can also help safeguard their economic well-being. Military Consumer is a program designed for the military community. The [website](#) offers free resources to help teach individuals about fraud and

assist them in making informed financial decisions. The Military OneSource podcast series also provides an [episode](#) on prevalent scams affecting service members. In the episode about online scams, Carol Kando-Pineda, Counsel with the Federal Trade Commission's Division of Consumer and Business Education, educates listeners on scams that use artificial intelligence, text messages and tempting financial investment opportunities.

Having open, honest conversations about money and spending habits can also protect you and your Family against financial scams by fostering trust, teamwork and unity. "When Families communicate about finances, they work together to set goals and solve problems, which builds resilience on every level," said Morita.

The Financial Readiness Program aims to empower Soldiers and Families with the knowledge, tools and resources needed to achieve financial resilience and independence by helping individuals to not only manage their finances but also prepare for unexpected circumstances. Sharpen your financial knowledge and stay ahead of scams by visiting the Financial Frontline [website](#) or by connecting with a financial readiness counselor at your nearest Army Community Service.

To learn more about scams or to report a scam, visit the FTC website at <https://consumer.ftc.gov/scams>.



# SHARP PROGRAM UPDATE



The new SHARP structure includes an Army Civilian response workforce supported by special assignment SHARP professionals in remote locations and deployed theaters. (U.S. Army photo)

## Special Assignment Army SARCs and VAs Have Key Role in SHARP Restructure

By Cynthia Bell, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

Due to the [Restructure of the Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention program](#), SHARP professionals, Sexual Assault Response Coordinators and Victim Advocates now serve outside the command reporting structure. SARCs and VAs report to the Lead SARC, who is supervised by the SHARP Program Manager at the Army Command/Army Service Component Command level.

The Lead SARC also supervises military personnel who are selected to serve as Special Assignment SARCs and VAs on the installation and in the deployed setting while supporting operational forces during contingency operations. As the Army moves toward its mandate of building an installation-based SHARP model using primarily Civilian personnel, Soldiers will build the operational SHARP capability.

This shift in reporting is based on recommendations from the Secretary of Defense's 90-day Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military. This new independent reporting and professional oversight structure ensures that SHARP personnel provide professional, high-quality, victim-focused support and advocacy.

"The future SHARP structure will be a primarily civilian response workforce with support from Special Assignment Military SHARP professionals in remote and isolated locations,

as well as in deployed theaters of operation," said Stacey Hale, SHARP Plans and Operations Branch Chief.

Factors considered for the designation of remote and isolated locations for the SHARP Program are:

- Proximity to resources.
- Availability of victim services, such as legal, investigative, behavioral health and forensic medical services, through civilian or sister service programs.
- Hard-to-hire locations where the Army has historically struggled to find or retain qualified candidates.
- Locations with heightened security concerns or potential for conflict.

Soldiers selected to serve as Special Assignment SARCs will be in forward-operating bases or secured military locations that support tactical operations and strategic goals. Special Assignment VAs will be embedded in the operational brigades and will deploy to ensure response capability is available.

"Because the Special Assignment SARC is pre-positioned in that forward location whenever possible, they are aware of the infrastructure and services available in that area of operation," Hale said.

"As Special Assignment VAs rotate or deploy to that area of responsibility, these Special Assignment SARCs can coach, teach and mentor these VAs who are trained and credentialed but may not be aware of the services available in that area."

Soldiers interested in becoming a Special Assignment VA must complete a three-week Basic Course at the Army SHARP Academy. An additional three-week Intermediate Course is required if a Soldier wants to become a Special Assignment SARC.

"Working with command and community partners, to include our sister services, we are confident that the SHARP implementation plan will ensure a robust sexual assault response capability, even in remote, isolated and austere environments," Hale said.

The restructure of the Army's Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention program, currently in phase 4, was mandated by Congress in 2022 through the National Defense Authorization Act. A staffing analysis is slated for completion by the end of FY 2025 to validate resource requirements. This will determine correct allocations and personnel placements and indicate adjustments that may be required prior to the elimination of collateral duty personnel, required by the Defense Department in FY 2027.



## Maneuver Space: Navigating the Continuum of Trust

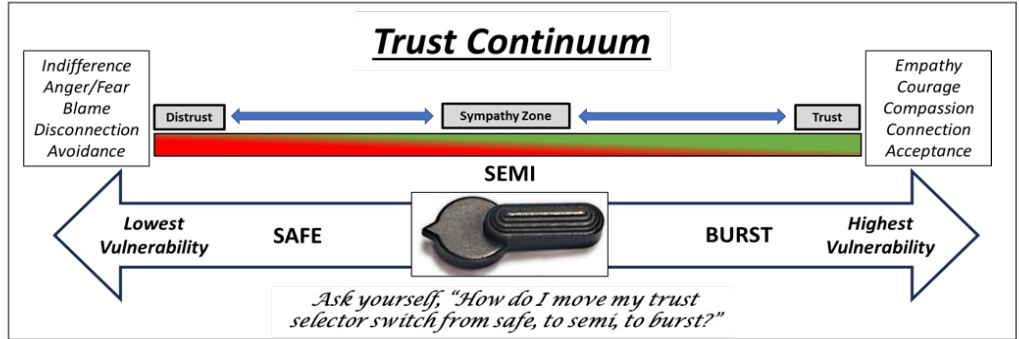
By Marco A. Bongioanni, Licensed Mental Health Counselor

If you've served in the military at some point, you've learned the importance of having space to maneuver. Whether you were maneuvering pairs of boots, a tank, a ship or a fighter jet, having adequate physical space is essential to move smoothly and safely. Likewise, when we encounter challenges in life, our minds need maneuver space to mentally negotiate difficult moments.

The 35th Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. James Amos, once said, "You can't surge trust." Although the original context refers to counterinsurgency operations, the reflection holds true across multiple applications. Mutual trust is a key enabler of mission command, and enhancing it both within military organizations and with our allies and partners is essential to mission accomplishment. What is interesting about trust is that to gain it, we must first be willing to embrace vulnerability. This may seem contradictory and is likely what makes building trust extremely complex. Not only does it develop over time, but it varies from person to person and is often dependent on the situation. An individual might think, "I'm not sure I can trust you. I need to see if you are trustworthy before I share things that are important or meaningful."

However, trust is not an all-or-nothing state. I may trust lending \$100 to somebody and not trust lending \$1 to somebody else. Trust should, therefore, not be visualized linearly but as a continuum if we are to understand it within the context of mental maneuver space.

Trust can be envisioned as a selector switch on an M16 rifle. On "safe," we experience minimal vulnerability, feeling indifference, anger or fear. "Semi" represents the sympathy zone, where we express some vulnerability but remain guarded,



The illustration shows trust levels from "safe" to "burst," indicating vulnerability and depth of connection. (Photo courtesy of Marco Bongioanni)

offering condolences or sympathy. "Burst" is the highest vulnerability level, requiring superior skills and revealing empathy, courage, connection and acceptance. While it involves greater levels of emotional openness, it also opens the door to deeper connection and trust.

Brené Brown, an academic and researcher who has done extensive work on the power of vulnerability, discusses connection and our ability as humans to empathize, love and belonging, which gives meaning to our lives. In her TEDx Talk "The Power of Vulnerability," she said that when we fully and authentically embrace vulnerability, we accept who we are individually. Being vulnerable is ultimately having the courage to be imperfect, the ability to feel worthy and the compassion to be kind to ourselves and others.

The military is an insular world, and warrior cultures are naturally skeptical and mistrustful of outsiders. Add on top of that potential traumatic experiences, and it's easy to see how sometimes it may be even more challenging for Soldiers to build trust. As noted, perhaps being the most authentic, real

and genuine version of ourselves is an important first step to embracing vulnerability. This can help move our selector switch from the safety of protecting ourselves in low vulnerability to the high vulnerability risk of burst fire. It takes a lot of skill to build proficiency at engaging targets effectively on burst first. When we can embrace vulnerability with this level of precision, we create more maneuver space in our minds to build lasting internal and external trust.

Remember, having maneuver space, or space to think, is a gift in life. Once you create it, use it to your advantage.

About the author: Marco A. Bongioanni is a licensed mental health counselor who also works for the Department of Veterans Affairs. He is a Senior Leader in the U.S. Army Reserve. His professional interests include human behavior, applied psychology and military cultural competence. The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Defense or the federal government.

## Understanding How Sleep Duration Affects Health and Wellness

By Human Performance Resources by CHAMP at the Uniformed Services University

Sleep experts regularly review emerging evidence on how sleep supports health, wellness and performance. They assess how different sleep durations correlate with changes in physical, cognitive and emotional functioning. Their conclusions consistently show that people who sleep substantially less or more than the recommended seven to nine hours tend to have worse health and performance outcomes than people who sleep seven to nine hours.

New evidence on the importance of sleep continues to emerge. Yet the core recommendation that adults consistently get seven to nine hours of sleep each night remains unchanged.

Factors such as genetics, age and metabolic needs influence your sweet spot for how much sleep you need within this seven to nine hour range. For example, you might have noticed that as you age you require less sleep. In rare cases, people can do well with a little less than seven hours or slightly more than nine. But most adults—worldwide—fall within this range.



Sgt. Will Hertzman slumbers during a sleep research study testing the impacts of sleep loss on performance. (U.S. Army photo by Mike Walters)

Sleep is not a single, uniform entity. It's made up of four main stages that cycle in an organized and structured pattern known as "sleep architecture." A full night's sleep consists of four to six sleep cycles, each lasting about 90 minutes. All stages are important, and you need to sleep long enough to go through all of them. To get the full benefits of each stage, your brain needs multiple uninterrupted sleep cycles, which is less likely to happen if you sleep less than seven hours.

One of the major problems with sleep loss is that it interferes with your sleep architecture. Imagine a cake with three layers of cake, two layers of filling, and the icing on top. When you eat a whole slice, you generally get a proportional mix of all the layers. If this cake represents your sleep and you eat the full slice (get seven to nine hours of sleep), the layers are distributed proportionally. But cutting your sleep short is like getting a thinner slice and leaving some cake filling (REM sleep) behind.

Some of the effects of sleeping less than six hours include the following:

- **You get used to being tired when you consistently get less than six hours of sleep.** If you regularly get six hours or less of sleep and feel "just fine," you've likely gotten used to being tired—not adapted to functioning with less sleep. Cognitive and physical performance suffer even when sleep loss feels manageable.

Read the full article on the HPRC [website](#).



# DPRR

DIRECTORATE OF PREVENTION, RESILIENCE AND READINESS

AUGUST 2025

## HAIL AND FAREWELL

We invite the Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness community to join us in welcoming new members to DPRR, congratulating current members on taking new positions and bidding a fond farewell to departing staff.

### Hail

- Cheri Roseberry, DPRR Initiatives
- Casey Eidemiller, Chief, R2I&T Division
- Maj. John Schlicht, Assessments Division
- Col. Debra Stone, DPRR Deputy Director, Readiness

### Farewell

- Spencer Myers, R2I&T Division

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### OCTOBER

#### 41st Annual Army Ten-Miler

**Oct. 10–12:** October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Show your support by joining the Headquarters Department of the Army staff at this world-class race. After the run, stop by the Family Advocacy Program table.

**Location:** Washington, D.C. **Learn more:** [www.armytenmiler.com](http://www.armytenmiler.com).

#### AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition

**Oct. 13–15:** As the largest land-power exposition and professional development forum in North America, this annual event from the Association of the United States Army highlights the capabilities of Army organizations and showcases a broad range of defense industry products and services.

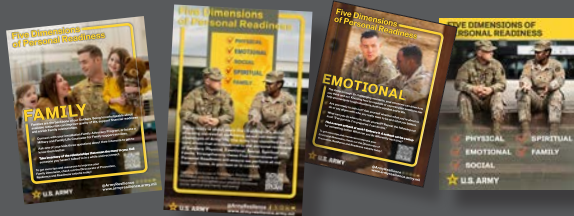
**Location:** Washington, D.C. **Learn more:** [meetings.ausa.org/annual/2025/index.cfm](http://meetings.ausa.org/annual/2025/index.cfm).

#### National Conference on Domestic Violence

**Oct. 27–29:** More than 800 professionals from around the world will gather for three days of discussion, presentations and training on how to destigmatize seeking help for intimate-partner violence and relationship abuse.

**Location:** Kansas City, Missouri. **Learn more:** [web.cvent.com/event/92ec5ea9-5077-44a9-b415-94fb315275fd/summary](http://web.cvent.com/event/92ec5ea9-5077-44a9-b415-94fb315275fd/summary).

## August is National Wellness Month



DPRR is celebrating National Wellness Month by highlighting the five key areas that support Soldiers' well-being. Get materials at the Products on Demand website. [https://marcomcentral.app.pti.com/Ironmark/ARDMaterials/catalog.aspx?uigroup\\_id=591698](https://marcomcentral.app.pti.com/Ironmark/ARDMaterials/catalog.aspx?uigroup_id=591698).

## TOP-PERFORMING POSTS

### FACEBOOK



Impressions: 4,390

### X



Impressions: 198

### INSTAGRAM



Impressions: 490

### LINKEDIN



Impressions: 386

## SOCIAL MEDIA UPDATE

### Follow @ArmyResilience

Please coordinate with your Public Affairs Office to share or retweet @ArmyResilience content on command or installation Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn platforms. Contact Kevin O'Brien for questions regarding DPRR social media at [kobrien@strategyconsultingteam.com](mailto:kobrien@strategyconsultingteam.com).

## Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

### DPRR COMMUNITYLINK

August 20, 2025, Volume 10, Issue 5

The DPRR Community Link newsletter is an authorized bi-monthly publication produced by the Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness for the Army community. The contents of the DPRR Community Link are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense or the Department of the Army. The editorial content of the DPRR Community Link is the responsibility of the Communications & Outreach Division at DPRR. For questions, or to subscribe or submit articles and photographs to DPRR Community Link, please contact the editor at [jtaylor@strategyconsultingteam.com](mailto:jtaylor@strategyconsultingteam.com). This publication is available for download at <https://www.divdshub.net/publication/1102/r2-community-link-newsletter>.

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Do you want to contribute to the next issue of the newsletter?

Submit articles and photographs by Sept. 19. For any questions, contact the editor at [jtaylor@strategyconsultingteam.com](mailto:jtaylor@strategyconsultingteam.com).

## Connect With DPRR!

Contact DPRR Communications & Outreach at [usarmy.pentagon.hqda-dcs-g-1.list.dpr-comm-and-outreach-div@army.mil](mailto:usarmy.pentagon.hqda-dcs-g-1.list.dpr-comm-and-outreach-div@army.mil)

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