



# HOLISTIC WELLNESS CHALLENGE



**CHALLENGE** your Service members and yourself to use at least one of the recommended resources to build healthy habits for peak mental and physical performance.

## FACTS & FIGURES: DID YOU KNOW?

- Military readiness requires a high degree of both physical and mental fitness.<sup>1</sup>
- Only 2 in 5 young adults are weight-eligible and physically prepared for basic training.<sup>2</sup>
- Moderate-intensity training over time lowers resting heart rate, improves cardiovascular health, balances the stress response, and reduces long-term health risks.<sup>3</sup>
- It takes about 66 days on average for a new behavior to become automatic depending on the person and habit.<sup>4</sup>



## RECOGNIZE THE RISKS TO READINESS

### Mental & Cognitive Ability

- Noticeable lack of focus, attention, or decision-making during drills or mission
- Difficulty retaining information or following instructions
- Increased irritability or emotional volatility

### Physical Readiness

- Decline in physical performance or inability to meet basic fitness standards
- Frequent injury, slow recovery, or chronic soreness
- Low energy during PT, field exercises, or extended duty

### Behavioral & Lifestyle Indicators

- Irregular sleep patterns or chronic sleep deprivation
- Skipping meals, overeating, or relying heavily on fast food
- Increased alcohol use or other unhealthy coping behaviors
- Withdrawal from family, peers, or unit activities

Incorporating healthy habits into your daily routine will ensure you are mission ready.

## CNGB & SEA Corner

*Always Ready, Always There*

As Soldiers and Airmen of the National Guard, mission readiness begins with the habits we build every day to reinforce resiliency essential to mission readiness. Healthy behaviors sharpen the mind, strengthen the body, and steady the spirit to stand stronger in the face of adversity.

Readiness is not built in a single day. It is achieved through small, daily actions that you practice every day. Whether it's improving sleep, strengthening your fitness routine, or reconnecting with your sense of purpose, these habits directly impact your ability to respond when our nation calls.

Read this month's Holistic Wellness Challenge for tips and resources to build routines that support your readiness.

Stronger Together, Stronger Tomorrow.

*Steven S. Nordhaus John T. Raines III*

Steven S. Nordhaus	John T. Raines, III
General, USAF	SEA, USA
Chief, NGB	NGB



## MOTIVATION MATTERS<sup>5</sup>

Change is hard and takes time. Small actions, repeated with intention, create powerful change. **Know your "Why"** - the reason you are building healthier habits. To stay motivated, **make a plan** that includes:

- **Visual cues.** Inspirational quotes, pictures or images, calendar, or app reminders to remind you of your "Why."
- **Social support.** Share your goals with family or friends for accountability. Join a support group or online group chat to connect with others who are facing the same challenges.
- **Progress.** Keep a journal, update your calendar, or track with an app to document your success toward change e.g., sleeping better, weight loss, more stamina, or better focus.
- **Celebrate Success.** Quick wins build the momentum that motivates you to keep going.

If you have a setback toward your goal, **be kind to yourself**. Use this as an opportunity for growth. Remember your "Why" and get back on track.

## CONTACT US

For more information on building healthy habits or other topics email:  
[ng.ncr.ngb.mbx.integrated-prevention-branch@army.mil](mailto:ng.ncr.ngb.mbx.integrated-prevention-branch@army.mil)

## BUILDING HEALTHY HABITS

### What does it mean?

- Consistently practicing small daily behaviors such as physical training, good sleep, nutrition, and stress management improves overall health and well-being.

### Why does it matter?

- Healthy habits support strength, endurance, reaction time, and decision-making critical for readiness.

### What can you do?

- Start the day with at least 30 minutes of core training exercises.** Planks, squats, lunges, and push-ups improve athletic performance and reduce injuries.<sup>6</sup>
- Step away from your screens and get moving.** Aim for 30-60 minutes of steady running, cycling, or swimming, 2-3 times per week to drive endurance, recovery, and resilience.<sup>3</sup>
- Prepare easy, balanced meals and snacks to fuel your performance.** Choose lean proteins, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Stay away from ultra-processed foods that are high in added sugar, salt, and fat and low in essential nutrients.<sup>7,8</sup>
- Workout weekly with a gym buddy** to share goals, check in regularly, and keep each other motivated.
- Protect your sleep by sticking to a regular 'lights out time' and limiting caffeine** late in the day. Aim to get 7-9 hours of sleep a night for optimal physical and mental readiness.
- Limit alcohol, tobacco, and late-night screen time**, recognizing they may undercut fitness gains, sleep quality, and long-term readiness.



## HACK YOUR HABITS: HABIT STACKING

**Habit stacking** involves pairing a new, small habit with an established routine. The old habit acts as a cue to make the new behavior more likely to stick over time. For example:

- **Make your bed + 10-15 push-ups**
- **Check your email + 20 squats**
- **Do the dishes + 10 lunges**



## RESOURCES TO RECOMMEND



Read **Military One Source's** article on better coping skills to stay healthy.

<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/health-wellness/mental-health/healthy-habits-to-better-yourself/>

**Military One Source's** podcast *How to Fuel you Mental and Physical Health* provides actionable recommendations to support your journey toward wellness. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k5mZark648s>

**Military One Source** offers **health and wellness coaches** to provide information, support, encouragement, and accountability that build resilience. Read more on how to access this resource here:

<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/benefits/health-wellness-coaching/>



**Human Performance Resources by CHAMP (HPRC)** *Strategic Habits for Building Cognitive Reserve* helps you assess your habits and identify those healthy habits you would like to build.

<https://www.hprc-online.org/mental-fitness/mental-health/strategic-habits-building-cognitive-reserve>

**Download the Human Performance Resources by CHAMP (HPRC)** *Monthly Habits Tracker* to support your progress toward building healthy habits.

[https://www.hprc-online.org/sites/default/files/document/HPRC%20Habits%20Tracker\\_8.5x11\\_070220\\_508.pdf](https://www.hprc-online.org/sites/default/files/document/HPRC%20Habits%20Tracker_8.5x11_070220_508.pdf)



**Give an Hour** provides helpful resources in addition to in-person and virtual mental health counseling.

<https://giveanhour.org/tools/#thebasics> **Download *Healthy Habits of Emotional Well-being*** for useful tips to boost emotional well-being. [https://giveanhour.org/wp-content/uploads/Definition-Sheets\\_The-Five-Signs-of-Emotional-Suffering-and-Healthy-Habits-2.pdf](https://giveanhour.org/wp-content/uploads/Definition-Sheets_The-Five-Signs-of-Emotional-Suffering-and-Healthy-Habits-2.pdf)



## SPOTLIGHT: AVALON ACTION ALLIANCE

- Avalon Action Alliance uses an integrated care model that coordinates care from clinicians who provide personalized support to help Service members identify stress triggers and build healthy coping strategies without drugs or alcohol.
- Seeking help for substance use challenges is a courageous step toward recovery and restored readiness. If you or someone you know needs support, Avalon Action Alliance provides confidential and effective care. Reaching out is a sign of strength. <https://avalonactionalliance.org/get-care/>.

## REFERENCES:

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- Centers for Disease Control. <https://www.cdc.gov/physical-activity/php/military-readiness/index.html>
- Human Performance Resources by CHAMP. <https://www.hprc-online.org/physical-fitness/training-performance/whats-zone-2-training-and-why-does-it-matter>
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