



# HOLISTIC WELLNESS CHALLENGE

## STRESS LESS THIS HOLIDAY SEASON



**CHALLENGE** your Service members to adopt at least one of the recommended resources to reduce stress this holiday season.

### TIPS FOR A HEALTHIER HOLIDAY

The holidays are a time of giving thanks, spending time with friends and family, and looking forward to new beginnings.

For some, the season can be challenging. It can be marked by financial pressure, unrealistic expectations, and physical distance from loved ones.

Follow these tips<sup>2</sup> to go from:



- **Connect with others.** Physical distance does not mean disconnected. Call a battle buddy or wingman, text a high school friend, or join a family dinner over video chat.
- **Plan ahead.** Schedule time for activities such as shopping, cooking, baking, gift wrapping, and socializing.
- **Make a budget.** Develop a spend plan and stick to it. Share costs, give homemade gifts, or plan a potluck.
- **Set boundaries.** You don't have to accept every invitation. It is okay to say 'no' to things that don't bring you joy.
- **Respect differences.** Not all friends and family members share the same point of view. When differences arise, choose your words wisely and focus on commonalities.
- **Emphasize self-care.** Keep the same sleep schedule, monitor eating habits, get regular exercise, drink alcohol in moderation, and stay hydrated.
- **Unwind.** Take time to decompress by going for a walk, listening to music, or watching a favorite movie.

### FACTS & FIGURES: DID YOU KNOW?

- **45%** of Americans, ages 18-44, say their stress levels increase during the holidays<sup>1</sup>

Common stressors reported:



Affording gifts - **54%**



Missing family - **48%**



Lack of sleep - **40%**



Eating too much - **34%**



Discussing politics - **33%**



Being alone - **31%**



Drinking too much - **23%**

### SEASONAL STRESS CAN HAVE LASTING EFFECTS

The pressure to find the perfect gift or bake the best cookies can not only dampen holiday spirits, but it can also:

- Put a strain on relationships
- Reduce peak performance
- Decrease mental and physical health

### CONTACT US

For more information on holiday stress or other topics, email us at: [ng.ncr.ngb.mbx.integrated-prevention-branch@army.mil](mailto:ng.ncr.ngb.mbx.integrated-prevention-branch@army.mil)



## DE-STRESS DURING THE HOLIDAYS

### What does it mean?

- Holiday stress is an acute reaction to seasonal challenges, whether it's a never-ending shopping list or being physically separated from loved ones.

### Why does it matter?

- The effects of holiday stress can linger long after the decorations are put away, which can increase overall health risks and reduce military readiness.

### What can you do?

- Recognize that the holidays, while joyous for some, may be difficult for others.
- Reach out to Service members and let them know they are not alone.
- Create opportunities for connection during the holidays and beyond.
- Encourage help-seeking, before manageable problems become unmanageable.
- Talk openly about the importance of maintaining healthy habits.
- Seek a balance between enjoying the festivities and overindulging.

## DEOCS EXTENDED

### Don't Miss Out!

The deadline to complete the Defense Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS) has been extended to **30 DEC**.

As 2023 draws to a close, all National Guard members are strongly encouraged to make their voices heard by participating in the survey.

Findings from the DEOCS will inform future prevention plans.



## RESOURCES TO RECOMMEND



Advice for military families on how to stay connected during the holidays <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/parenting/family-life/together-while-apart-military-families-connect-for-the-holidays>



Tips for curbing holiday spending <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/financial-legal/personal-finance/9-tips-for-savvy-holiday-spending/?inheritRedirect=true>



Recommendations for dealing with loved ones over the holidays <https://www.hprc-online.org/social-fitness/family-optimization/you-can-go-home-again-tips-deal-loved-ones-during-holidays>



Suggestions for making "hot-button" conversations more productive [https://www.hprc-online.org/sites/default/files/document/HPRC\\_Tips\\_for\\_Hot\\_Button\\_Conversations\\_031623\\_508.pdf](https://www.hprc-online.org/sites/default/files/document/HPRC_Tips_for_Hot_Button_Conversations_031623_508.pdf)



Guidance on how to maintain healthy eating habits during the holidays <https://www.hprc-online.org/social-fitness/relationship-building/keep-your-diet-track-during-holiday-season>



Support for Service members wanting to learn more about responsible drinking <https://www.ownyourlimits.org>



Tools for military families to help manage stress and worry through a free, online course <https://www.cohenveteransnetwork.org/tools-for-stress-and-worry>



## SPOTLIGHT: MASTER RESILIENCE TRAINING (MRT)

- The National Guard facilitates Service-specific MRT courses to help Soldiers and Airmen cope with adversity, accomplish missions, and thrive in their everyday lives.
- Practicing mindfulness, developing connections, and showing gratitude are just some of the skills that can help Service members reduce seasonal stress and enhance overall readiness.
- For more information, reach out to your unit's Master Resilience Trainer who can provide the support needed to make this a healthier, happier holiday.

## REFERENCES:

1. American Psychiatric Association. [https://www.psychiatry.org/File%20Library/Unassigned/APA\\_Holiday-Stress\\_PPT-REPORT\\_November-2021\\_update.pdf](https://www.psychiatry.org/File%20Library/Unassigned/APA_Holiday-Stress_PPT-REPORT_November-2021_update.pdf)
2. Psychological Health Center of Excellence. <https://health.mil/Military-Health-Topics/Centers-of-Excellence/Psychological-Health-Center-of-Excellence/Clinicians-Corner-Blog/When-the-Tinsel-Gets-Tangled-How-to-Cope-with-Holiday-Stress>