

Supportive Behavior Overview

Readiness Supportive Behaviors

READINESS SUPPORTIVE BEHAVIORS ARE THINGS YOU DO AS LEADERS, TO HELP SUPPORT AND MAINTAIN THE HEALTH, WELL-BEING, AND RESILIENCY OF YOUR SOLDIERS.



Emotional Support: What you do to help your Soldiers feel heard, and to show that you understand their family and personal demands.

Examples:

- Increasing face-to-face contact with each Soldier.
- Communicating genuine concern about your Soldiers' lives and well-being.
- Expressing empathy, understanding, or offering assistance when a Soldier shares a personal challenge.
- Expressing appreciation for your Soldiers' service and their contributions to the unit.
- Making sure that you have the time with your Soldier to engage in an emotionally supportive conversation.
- Asking open-ended questions about a Soldier's emotional health, physical health, and general well-being.

Why is this important?

Despite the challenging atmosphere and self-reliance valued in the military, the personal connection and support between service members and their supervisors is critical to their readiness and resilience.

Talking to your Soldiers and checking in by asking how they are doing is a critical step.



Instrumental Support: Making practical arrangements so Soldiers can meet both ongoing service demands and, at times, unexpected family or person demands.

Why is this important?

As the leader, you are the one who Soldiers go to for helpful information, and knowing about available resources can be helpful to your Soldiers.

Family and personal stress and demands are common and being able to respond when Soldiers express a need for assistance is part of assisting your Soldiers around readiness and resilience.

Examples:

- Providing clear guidance on available resources.
- Matching your Soldier with a fellow soldier who has overcome similar challenges (e.g., debt, divorce).
- "Going to bat" or supporting Soldiers when communicating with the chain of command.
- Publicly supporting your Soldiers seeking behavioral health care.
- Adjusting Soldiers' duties to avoid conflicting with family responsibilities or outside challenges.
- Identifying areas of inexperience to educate your unit on healthy coping skills.

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Role Modeling: Demonstrating by example that you are taking care of your own personal well-being.

Examples:

- Approaching required mental health related training with support and optimism.
- Allowing Soldiers time off to seek treatment or get behavioral health support.
- Using the correct language that is clear and cannot be misinterpreted.
- Sharing your own or your subordinates' success stories of

Why is this important?

Soldiers see their leaders as demonstrating appropriate and inappropriate ways to behave.

You are looked up to and need to remember that what you do sets an example for what your Soldiers will do.



Reducing Stigma Associated with Seeking Help: Communicating that it is safe and healthy to seek help and support.

Examples:

- Ensure that when Soldiers seek help and are provided with treatment plans, there is little impact to the mission and little notice by members of the unit.
- Seek help yourself when needed.
- Know about the mental health resources available to your Soldiers and make appropriate referrals when necessary.
- Educate all Soldiers, Army civilian employees, and family members about anxiety, stress, depression, PTSD, and treatment options.
- Acknowledge the misconception regarding Soldiers abusing the system and understand that this is only a small percentage of Soldiers.
- It is the leaders' responsibility to set the tone that it is ok to seek help when in need; when in formation emphasize that it is ok if you need to seek mental health support
- Invite a BHO to unit to meet with Soldiers.

Why is this important?

It is your job to teach your Soldiers that mental toughness, like physical toughness, includes seeking help for mental or emotional wounds, even though, unlike physical wounds, mental wounds are hidden rather than physically visible.

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Readiness Responsive Behaviors

READINESS RESPONSIVE BEHAVIORS ARE THINGS YOU DO TO RESPOND TO THE POTENTIAL WARNING SIGNS THAT A SOLDIER IS EXPERIENCING A DECLINE IN RESILIENCY AND/OR MENTAL HEALTH.



Warning Recognition: Warning signs that a leader might notice when a Soldier is struggling.

Performance:

- Not performing to usual standards or missing deadlines, falling out of runs, etc.

Distress:

- Decreased physical fitness, being uncivil or rude, talking about how stressed they are.

Social Withdrawal:

- Pulling back from fellow Soldiers, not doing the “normal” social things they used to do.

Attendance:

- Disengaging from the workplace, lateness, getting sick frequently.

Extreme Behavior:

- Expressing thoughts about suicide, expressing desire to hurt self or others.

Why is this important?

Warning signs can be indicative of stress or more serious mental health issues. Which is why it is so important to recognize warning signs early.

Stress and resilience are like a rubber band, the rubber band can be flexed and stretched only so many times before it breaks.

If you, as a leader, can recognize when someone is being flexed too much or stretched too thin, you can intervene to prevent a breaking point.



Early Intervention: Supporting your Soldiers to seek out and use the resources available to them.

Why is this important?

Early recognition of warning signs is critical to maintaining readiness and resilience.

The sooner you recognize a pattern of warning signs, the sooner you are able to provide even better, more tailored support to your soldiers.

Attend:

- Recognizing the warning signs, paying attention to your Soldiers by asking them how they’re doing, paying attention to their body language when they respond, getting to know your Soldiers versions of “normal”.

Communicate:

- Openly discuss available resources, focus on behavior patterns, and use open-ended questions that directly address specific concerns.

Touch Base:

- Contact Behavioral Health or encourage the Soldier to contact Behavioral Health, suggest specific resources, and always follow-up to make sure the Soldier is getting the resources/support they need.