



LIFELINK

NEWSLETTER

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Stress Awareness Month: Know Your Zone

Operational stress is the process of responding to the challenges of Navy life, as well as the direct and indirect challenges associated with Navy operations. While some stress is good, exposure to prolonged or extreme stress can negatively impact health, performance and morale.

April is National Stress Awareness Month and there's no better time for you and your shipmates to check in with each other—and yourselves. The Operational Stress Control (OSC) program's **Stress Continuum Model** can help Sailors and commands identify stress reactions and guide appropriate action based on four color-coded zones: Green (Ready), Yellow (Reacting), Orange (Injured) and Red (Ill).

The Green Zone represents readiness and personal well-being. While you may not be stress free, if you're feeling on top of things, are functioning optimally and have an overall positive attitude, you're likely in the Green. While you're here:

- Maintain a **physical fitness** regimen and **balanced diet**;
- Get seven to nine hours of **sleep** daily (preferably uninterrupted); and
- Practice active communication and engagement to strengthen **relationships**.

The Yellow Zone represents normal, expected and predictable reactions to temporary and mild distress. While it may sound ideal to want to "stay in the Green," at any given time in your life you will oscillate between Green and Yellow—and that's how you build resilience. While you may experience some changes to daily function, including trouble sleeping and reduced concentration, serious and persistent dysfunction do not characterize Yellow Zone stress. To return to the Green:

- Practice self-care, such as active **relaxation**, exercise and "saying no" to overloading yourself with activities that may contribute to stress;

- Talk with your shipmates, friends or loved ones. A **Stress Navigation Plan** can help you readily identify who you can turn to when facing challenges; and
- Explore resources available through your local Fleet & Family Support Center and/or **Military OneSource**.

The Orange Zone indicates injury resulting from severe or prolonged exposure to stress. Social withdrawal; inability to perform daily activities; and intense or uncontrollable guilt, shame or emotion may characterize an Orange Zone stress injury. While stress injuries usually heal over time, if left untreated, they may progress into more serious physical and/or psychological health concerns. To promote recovery:

- Seek guidance from a medical professional or confidential support from a **Navy chaplain**. The **Military Crisis Line** offers confidential support at 1-800-273-TALK (Press 1).
- Communicate with a trusted shipmate or leader to harness support and promote safety; and
- Practice self-care, setting goals to get back to the Green.

Severe distress that persists or worsens and leads to a loss of function characterizes the Red Zone. While only a medical or psychological health professional can diagnose a Red Zone illness, it is important to remember that seeking help is a sign of strength. Seek medical treatment and ask a trusted shipmate or family member to accompany you. If danger is imminent, contact 911.

READY	REACTING	INJURED	ILL
TO STAY MISSION READY	TO RECOVER AND BUILD RESILIENCE	TO BEGIN HEALING	TO GET HELP
Keep fit, eat right, relax	Get adequate sleep, talk to someone you trust	Talk to a chaplain, counselor, or medical provider	Seek medical treatment
Unit Leader Responsibility	Individual, Shipmate, Family Responsibility		Caregiver Responsibility

For more on the OSC Stress Continuum, click the image above.



Lifelink Spotlight

A Hero Inspiring Little Heroes: HM2 Alex Perez, USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74)

Staying connected with loved ones while on deployment can be tough logistically, but can also be tough emotionally. For Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Alex Perez, any free time available to him on deployment is dedicated toward writing children's books starring his daughters and nephew.

As a kid, Perez enjoyed drawing cartoon characters from his favorite shows, but it was having kids of his own that inspired him to put those talents to use as a means to stay connected with them while deployed. He's now working on two books aimed at helping children learn how to use and grow their innate powers of kindness and respect. His book "A Hero with No Powers" explains what it means to be a hero, featuring short life lessons on cultivating compassion for others and strength during adversity. He tells his daughters they "don't need any powers to change the world."

Though the stories are a way for Perez to create memories and timeless bonds with his own family, he recognizes that his books might have a ripple effect on others. Perez is publishing his works to help raise money for children with autism—a cause that hits close to home as his nephew is impacted by the disorder.

Finding the time to create isn't easy, but Perez says that even a 15-minute break to draw or write can be a big help. When Navy life gets challenging, he finds motivation in his family and purpose in his work. Perez hopes to inspire his shipmates to put their limited free time to good use and follow their passions, too. "We really need that, especially here when we are stuck on this ship," he said in a [related Stennis 74 blog post](#). "You have to use your brain and create something else."

Leveraging your creativity and passion can help you live a meaningful life and reclaim balance. HM2 Perez's story is a shining example of how a little bit of self-care goes a long way. A 15-minute time out can help you stay connected with your family, decompress from your day, help others and promote a sense of purpose. For more tips on self-care and navigating deployment stress, check out our [NavyNavStress](#) blog—or seek inspiration from your fellow shipmates like HM2 Alex Perez!



Resilience Corner

Eliminate Sexual Assault: Know Your Part, Do Your Part

Regardless of the accused's or survivor's gender, research indicates that sexual assault is associated with an increased risk of stress injury and/or suicide related



behavior. Sexual assault has been linked to both physical and psychological effects including depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Reducing the threat of sexual violence from within our ranks is everyone's duty. While ensuring the safety of Sailors and the Navy community is a year-round priority, Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month (SAAPM) is a call-to-action to help us reenergize our focus on the scope and impact of sexual assault, while dedicating ourselves to becoming a part of the solution. It's not just about awareness—it's about knowing how to step up and step in, not only to intervene during dangerous situations, but to prevent them from occurring.

In her recent 2016 SAAPM interview on [NavyLive](#), Rear Adm. Ann Burkhardt, 21st Century Sailor Office Director, emphasizes that while part of prevention involves promoting core values and respect, it also includes encouraging healthy behaviors and not tolerating misuse of alcohol. "I really want Sailors to know that offenders victimize individuals under the influence of alcohol, so it's important to understand this approach and then be part of the intervention to prevent this from happening," she said.

Sexual assault can have lasting impacts on the survivor, perpetrator and command readiness. Learn how you can get involved in the fight to prevent it this month and all year long by visiting [sapr.navy.mil](#).

It's Never too Early to Plan for Suicide Prevention Month!

Suicide Prevention Month is observed each September across the Dept. of Defense. Navy uses each observance to help commands re-energize local engagement and kick off new efforts for the upcoming fiscal year, which starts in October. Suicide prevention coordinators should start brainstorming engagement ideas early to ensure adequate planning and resources. You could plan to hand out Navy Suicide Prevention materials or related stress navigation resources at your installation's security gates for those entering the base, organize a 21st Century Sailor Resource Fair focusing on comprehensive wellness, develop and install inspiration boards where shipmates can post positive messages to encourage and support others—there are endless possibilities! Stay tuned for additional details and guidance to be provided in the coming months. For more ideas, visit the [Every Sailor, Every Day](#) webpage.

News and Resources

Commanding Officer's Suicide Prevention Program Handbook
[Issuu](#)

Empathy vs. Sympathy—
What's the Difference?
[HPRC](#)

How Breaking Up can be Good
for You
[HPRC](#)

What's Next? Navigating
Transitions
[NavyNavStress](#)

Navy SEAL: 'Talk to
Someone—Because We're Out
There'
[DCoE](#)

Sleep is Serious—Catch Your
Zzzs
[Health.mil](#)

Guard Your Health's 'Warrior
Ready' Workout Challenge
[Guard Your Health](#)

A Guide to Responsible
Drinking (Infographic)
[Guard Your Health](#)

Wounded Warriors Take Part
in Invictus Games Celebrations
[Navy.mil](#)

I am Navy Medicine: Lt. Cmdr.
Christopher T. Ragsdale, LCSW
[Navy Medicine Live](#)

Current and Upcoming Events

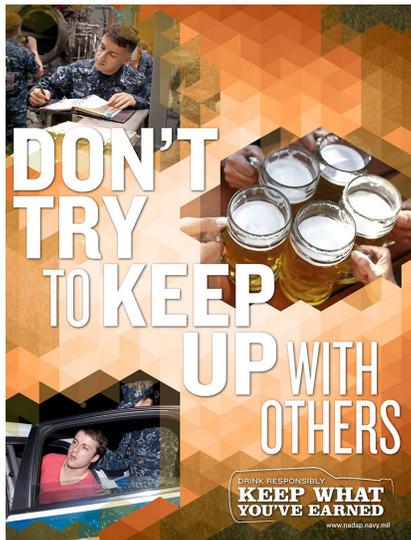
**Sexual Assault Awareness
and Prevention Month
(details), Alcohol Abuse
Awareness Month**
April

Mental Health Month
May

**National Prevention Week
(details)**
May 15-21

SPC Training Webinars
April 12, 1200 CST
April 28, 1400 CST
[Register Here](#)

Reprogram Your Drinking Habits to Promote Health, Well-being and Safety



April brings several areas of Total Sailor Fitness and Resilience to the forefront, including alcohol abuse awareness. Alcohol misuse can affect all aspects of our lives—from health and well-being, to social connections, physical and emotional safety, and mission readiness. Navy's flagship responsible drinking campaign, *Keep What You've Earned*, offers tips to help you and your shipmates adopt or maintain healthy drinking habits and promote healthy decision making.

Build healthy habits to reduce the negative effects of stress. When encountering stress, if we're unable to respond adaptively while our bodies are in "fight or flight" mode, the likelihood that we'll make potentially unhealthy choices to ease that tension increases.

Having a drink or two to unwind after a stressful day may seem harmless, but it can actually work against you and can lead to long-term physical and psychological health effects, including addictive or destructive behavior. Instead of immediately reaching for a drink, try turning to healthy habits. If you're more likely to make a "pit stop" on the way home from work, head to the gym instead. Endorphins released during exercise can boost your mood—a true happy hour! If trying to de-stress with alcohol has become a common practice for you, it's probably time to self-refer for assistance. Talk to your Drug and Alcohol Program Advisor (DAPA), chaplain, doctor, or command leadership about where to get help.

Empower yourself to thrive during adversity. To help you explore and identify your resources for making healthy decisions during stressful times, take a moment to fill out your **Stress Navigation Plan**, available on www.suicide.navy.mil. This simple proactive tool helps you think about your current practices for navigating stress while you're still emotionally and physically healthy. In the process, you may be able to identify more positive coping strategies than what you currently turn to, avoiding potentially destructive behavior like alcohol abuse.

Exercise controllability and plan ahead. As the winter weather is giving way to warmer temperatures, social calendars will start to fill with cookouts and parties. While you're making your party plans, make plans for a safe ride home your priority by ensuring that a shipmate, friend or family member will be your designated driver. Designated drivers need to completely abstain from drinking—buzzed driving is drunk driving too. Programming the number to a local taxi service in your mobile phone is always a good backup plan. Controllability is one of the **Principles of Resilience**, helping you make proactive choices and minimize potential for stress or negative outcomes.

Step up and step in. April is also **Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month**. Approximately half of all sexual assaults involve alcohol consumption by perpetrator, victim or both, according to the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Staying alert, engaged and looking out for your shipmates can not only prevent alcohol abuse, but can prevent sexual assault as well. If you recognize a potentially negative situation, you have the power to speak up and intervene before an incident occurs.

For more information on how you can encourage responsible drinking, visit www.nadap.navy.mil. For additional stress navigation tips to support *Every Sailor, Every Day*, visit navstress.wordpress.com.