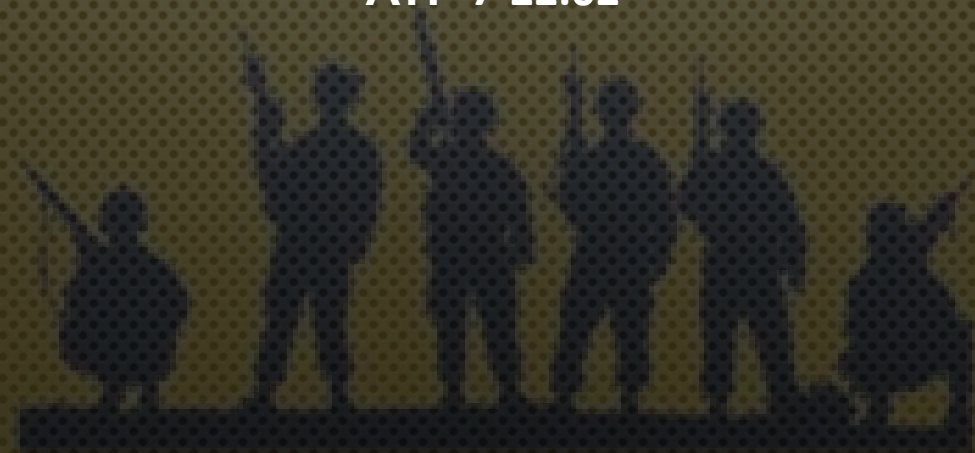


HOLISTIC HEALTH AND FITNESS

Mental Readiness Coaching

ATP 7-22.02



SOLDIER
READINESS SYSTEM





HEALTH AND HOLISTIC FITNESS: MENTAL HEALTH COACHING

MINDFULNESS IN THE MILITARY



HOLISTIC HEALTH AND FITNESS COACHING

H2F COACHING IS THE ACT OF TEACHING SOLDIERS THE TECHNIQUES, TIPS, AND PROCEDURES FOR IMPROVING AND MAINTAINING HIGH LEVELS OF READINESS. THE INFORMATION IN THIS PRESENTATION DELIVERS PRACTICAL HEALTH ADVICE FOR THE DOMAINS: PHYSICAL READINESS, NUTRITIONAL READINESS, MENTAL READINESS, SPIRITUAL READINESS, AND SLEEP READINESS. THIS PRESENTATION OFFERS WAYS FOR SOLDIERS TO REFLECT ON THEIR HOLISTIC HEALTH AND ADDRESS WHAT THEY NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE THEIR READINESS. THIS PRESENTATION PROVIDES THE TACTICAL INFORMATION FOR WHOLE SOLDIER HEALTH AND FITNESS, FROM THE SKIN IN AND FROM THE NECK UP.



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Attention, perception, and expectation

What Soldiers pay attention to and perceive—and what they expect to happen—has a profound impact on their overall health.

The things that Soldiers focus on tend to drive the trajectories of their lives. The more Soldiers learn to pay attention to their health and fitness, the more dramatic and positive their improvements in readiness will be. Soldiers are capable of creating new pathways in their brains that will change their ways of reacting, deciding, and behaving.

In organizations where positive lifestyle choices are valued and encouraged, those members more often make the right choices. When Soldiers learn to focus on positive events, they are more likely overcome the negative, which all of us tend to find first. In successful teams, supervisors give three times as much positive feedback as negative feedback.

Soldiers have their own unique perspective formed by personal experiences, histories, and education. Changing perspectives requires deliberate hard work on the part of Soldiers, their leaders, and the performance readiness experts in the H2F System. Focusing on specific health behaviors can impact a Soldier's perspective. This section of the doctrine directs holistic health coaching, teaching, and mentoring.



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HOLISTIC HEALTH

While certain behaviors make a huge impact on holistic health, Soldiers will have challenges in different areas. The specific health behaviors associated with optimal health are—

- Eat vegetables and fruit.
- Exercise.
- Avoid tobacco use.
- Avoid excessive alcohol consumption.
- Sleep.
- Take medication only prescribed by your provider.

The domains of readiness in this doctrine cover these behaviors and much more. Soldiers have many choices and large potential to achieve optimal health and fitness. Figure shown here lists these areas.





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To help Soldiers take stock of where they stand on the circle of health, the personal health inventory (PHI) has been developed. A completed PHI gives the Soldier and H2F performance team a full picture of what really matters in the Soldiers' lives, what they intend to use health for, what brings them joy and happiness, and what their vision is of their best possible health and fitness. Table shown here gives the overview of the PHI. The PHI can be taken at a time to be determined.

Personal health inventory components

Component	Examples
What really matters?	Identified values, mission, aspirations, and purpose
What is going right already?	Assets
Goals	SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-specific)
Mindful awareness	Focus on what is important
Self-care	Food and drink; recharge; personal development; family, friends and colleagues; power of mind, spirit and soul; and working the body
Professional care	Prevention, illnesses, referrals, screening, complementary approaches
Community	Resources, team members
Next steps	Follow-up, support



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Mindfulness is paying attention, on purpose and without judgment, to the present moment. Mindful awareness or mindfulness is a key component of cultivating presence—paying attention or being aware of the moment—and it is essential for H2F. Unless Soldiers pay attention or take notice, they cannot change or grow. Learning to focus on one thing for a period often contradicts normal behavior. When the mind is too full of thoughts, it cannot focus in the present moment. The objective is to be mindful.

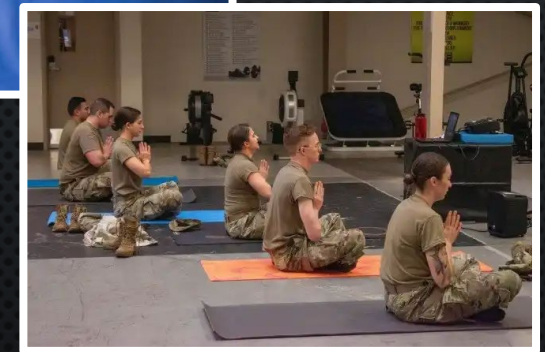
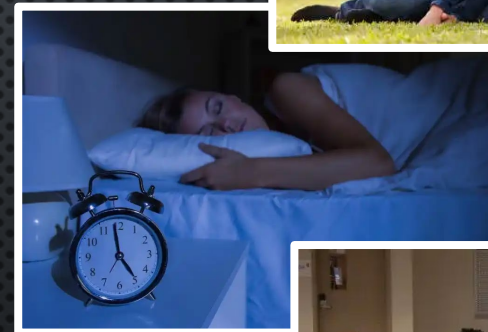
Everyone has the capacity to be mindful. It is a natural capacity to pay attention with curiosity and openness. Simple examples include enjoying a cup of tea or coffee, watching the sunset, savoring a favorite food, or noticing the details of driving home from work. Soldiers use some techniques, like meditation, to foster mindful awareness, but mindful awareness is really about an overall approach that goes wherever the Soldier goes. Mindfulness involves tuning in with personal thoughts and practicing awareness of relationships with these thoughts.



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Practicing mindfulness and other forms of meditation has many health benefits. Changes in brain activity appear after a few weeks of mindfulness practice. Other physiological changes are associated with increased relaxation, improved focus, reduced inflammation, lower stress hormones, and enhanced immune system function. For healthy Soldiers, changes can include reduced stress, anxiety, depression, anger and distress; improved quality of life, higher emotional intelligence, creativity and concentration; and increased empathy, spirituality, and self-compassion.

For those Soldiers with health issues, mindfulness can ease chronic pain, decrease high blood pressure, and calm stress hormones and inflammatory processes. It can help with smoking cessation, substance abuse, and reducing sleep difficulties.





Mindfulness Training Exercise

Sit comfortably with the feet planted firmly on the floor. Lengthen your body through your back, neck, and the top of your head. For the next two minutes, turn all of your awareness to your breathing. Without changing the rate or quality of your breathing, simply note the sensation of inhalation, the sensation of exhalation, and the pauses between these two.

Now reflect:

How easy was it to focus your attention on your breathing for two straight minutes? What distracting thoughts arose?

What judgments or evaluations pulled your awareness away from your breathing?



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Take two additional minutes to repeat the exercise above. This time, when your thoughts wander away from the breath, gently return your attention to your breathing. Judgments may arise—“I can’t concentrate,” or “This is boring.” When this happens, simply notice that this is a thought and bring your attention back to your breathing. When your mind wanders, be gentle with yourself. Notice if you scold yourself for deviating from the breath, accept the passing distraction, and focus your attention back on the breath.

Now reflect again:

How did it feel taking an additional two minutes to focus on the breath?

How easy or difficult was it to maintain your attention on the breath?

What distracting thoughts and judgments arose?

How easy or difficult was it to gently bring your awareness back to your breathing? How do you feel at the end of this exercise?



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If you found it challenging to maintain present-moment awareness of the breath during the last exercise, take heart; the body is a constant ally in remaining grounded in the here and now. Your body feeds you constant updates about your experience of the present moment. Observe your breathing. Note the feeling of your feet on the floor. What signals are arising from your body—hunger, thirst, fatigue, discomfort, the need to go to the bathroom? What are you seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching? In bringing the awareness to these ongoing status indicators, we are able to maintain presence in the current moment.

Now reflect again:

How is this way of paying attention different from how you normally pay attention?
How might this way of paying attention have an effect on your health?



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PROACTIVE HEALTH

Proactive health refers to taking charge of physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing to control and minimize potential health hazards. As opposed to reactive health that focuses on a response to a hazard, proactive health requires a disciplined approach to managing all aspects of health—from exercise, to diet and nutrition, spirituality, and behaviors—in a preventative mode. The H2F System is designed to account for the multitude of factors that influence health from a preemptive standpoint.

PHYSICAL EXERCISE

Regular participation in exercise helps to decrease disease risk and in most cases is beneficial behavior that helps when treating diseases and symptoms. Beside daily physical training, Soldiers who tend to have less physically demanding MOS- or work-related duties should incorporate physical activity throughout the day. Taking movement breaks every hour or performing Stability and Movement Drills during computer breaks, walking outside parking farther away, and taking the stairs all provide feasible ways to get more movement throughout the day and thus decrease sedentary time.

The health benefits of activity are significant and numerous. They include lower all-cause mortality rates; increased life span; prevention of cardiovascular disease, cancer (colon and breast), type II diabetes, high blood pressure, and obesity. Exercise reduces the negative effects of aging, reduces dementia, and enhances brain function. Cognitive benefits of exercise include improved concentration, memory, and mental agility. Increasing physical activity decreases symptoms of depression and anxiety and improves psychological well-being.



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SURROUNDINGS

A Soldier's surroundings include the home, workplace, neighborhood, emotional network, climate, ecology, and healthcare environment where a Soldier goes to heal or prevent illness. Surroundings can significantly impact the way Soldiers feel as well as their health outcomes. For example, a messy desk cluttered with paper and used cups can stress some people. And a walking into a tidy clean space can invigorate some people to focus quickly on a task.

In the study of epigenetics—how genes are expressed—the expression of genetic traits is linked to the environment. The possibilities for how biological, psychological, and social phenomena interact and how differences in environment might affect health are practically endless. However, if surroundings can cause changes in health, modifying the surroundings can also influence H2F goals.

Changes to the environment and lifestyle do not have to be complicated or expensive. For example, using darker curtains, a sleep mask, or earplugs can aid sleep; while re-painting a room a brighter color or spending more time in nature can improve mood. Bringing a plant inside a home can improve indoor air quality and even the aesthetic appeal of a room. Other methods to change environment can include—

- Asking smokers to move outside (or cut back).
- Cleaning the house using safe household products.
- Using a water filter.
- Placing weapons in locked boxes.
- Keeping cords and obstacles out of the way.
- Increasing consumption of fresh vegetables and fruit instead of processed convenience foods.



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PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Soldiers often think of work-related development as the way to forge a successful professional life. Developing a life outside professional spheres—personal development—balances work and play to provide more energy for professional success. Personal development includes hobbies, interests in art and music, volunteering, personal reading, and other sources of inspiration that help Soldiers to find their potential. Personal development might encompass or include improving financial health, spending time with friends and family, practicing forgiveness and gratitude, or committing random acts of kindness. These activities improve self-awareness and identity, build social capital, nurture positive emotions, and cultivate hope and optimism.

Meaningful activities for personal development are nearly infinite, but the impact of volunteering on holistic health is worth particular attention. Of those who volunteered over a 12-month period, a study by United Health Group published in 2013 found that 76 percent reported feeling healthier, 94 percent reported improved mood, 78 percent reported lower stress levels, 96 percent reported enriched sense of purpose in life, and 80 percent reported feeling control over health.



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NUTRITION

The sheer number of resources and suggestions available for advice on nutrition make it imperative for Soldiers to work in conjunction with the H2F performance team's registered dietitian. In the absence of a dietitian, the following guidelines, fleshed out with the information in the "Nutritional Readiness," domain, provide a rational approach for leaders:

- Eat breakfast. Front-load calories during the day—eat most calories earlier rather than later.
- Don't skip meals or snacks.
- Cut back on caffeine.
- Drink more water and limit consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages.
- Limit eating out and bring a healthful lunch to work.
- Eat more fruits and vegetables. The more color on your plate, the better.
- Eat slowly and mindfully focusing on food rather than on screens; limit screen time during meals.
- Be realistic and make small changes over time.
- Be sensible and enjoy all foods in moderation.





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RECHARGE

As discussed in the presentation, Soldiers need to maintain a well-balanced sleep-wake schedule for overall health. Disruption of this schedule promotes chronic fatigue and the onset and progression of illness. For those with less than 5 hours of sleep per night versus those with greater than 7 hours of sleep, there is an increased risk of obesity, hypertension, diabetes, heart attack, and stroke.

Recharging does not just include sleep. Energy levels can be positively impacted by vacations, rest periods, and breaks at work. Taking time for leisure, creativity, and hobbies or other non-work interests can restore energy levels. The break from work does not have to be a long one for restored energy to happen.



CHAMP

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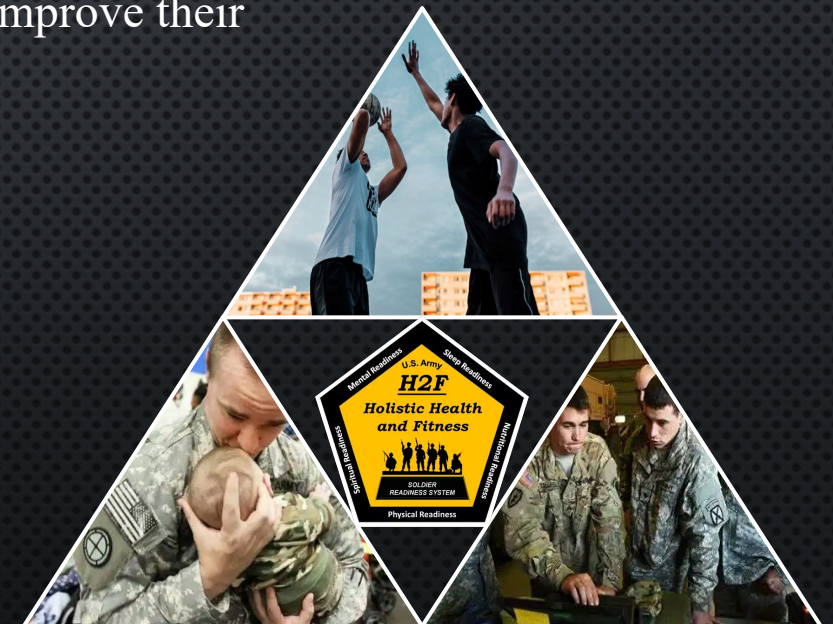
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FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND COLLEAGUES

A Soldier's support network is perhaps the single most important variable in determining his or her physical and emotional health. The stress hormone, cortisol, does not increase as much in stressful situations when people have supportive companions nearby. A simple hug from a friend or family member can be a stress-buffer, alleviating fears and increasing positive feelings. When contact activates the skin's sensory receptors, the hormone oxytocin—the one that makes people feel good—is stimulated and cortisol is reduced.

Soldiers have many ways to enhance social connections and relationships. The following list is by no means exhaustive but includes many simple ways for Soldiers to improve their support network:

- Consider joining a health group, sports team or workout group.
- Become more active in the community through volunteering.
- Make sure to have a confidant to turn to.
- Connect with a significant other.
- Connect with animals. Heal or avoid negative relationships.
- Cultivate communication skills.
- Work with H2F performance team experts to build coping skills.
- Practice being compassionate to and thankful for others.





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SPIRIT

Let's discuss spiritual readiness. It outlines ways that Soldiers and their leaders can encourage individual spiritual readiness and development. When Soldiers seek a sense of meaning or purpose in their lives, they can take practical actions toward that goal. For example, Soldiers can write in a journal to answer questions about what spirit means to them. They can pray, meditate, join a spiritual community, or connect with a chaplain or chaplain service. Some of the demonstrated benefits include—

- **Coping:** religiosity and spirituality can help people cope with many problems including anxiety, chronic pain, addiction, mental disorders, and the stress caused by natural disasters and war.
Pain control: Many people pray as a method to cope with pain. Prayer is a positive resource for reducing pain and improving well-being and mood. Accessing religious and spiritual resources decreases arthritis pain, chronic pain, migraines, and acute pain. Often, it seems that it is not that the pain level is decreased so much as that a person's ability to tolerate the pain is improved.
- **Mental health benefits:** incorporating religious and spiritual perspectives into Soldiers' lives can decrease their risk of posttraumatic stress, major depressive disorder, alcohol-related problems, and suicidal ideation.
- **Health benefits:** religious people smoke less, exercise more, and have a healthier diet.



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POWER OF THE MIND

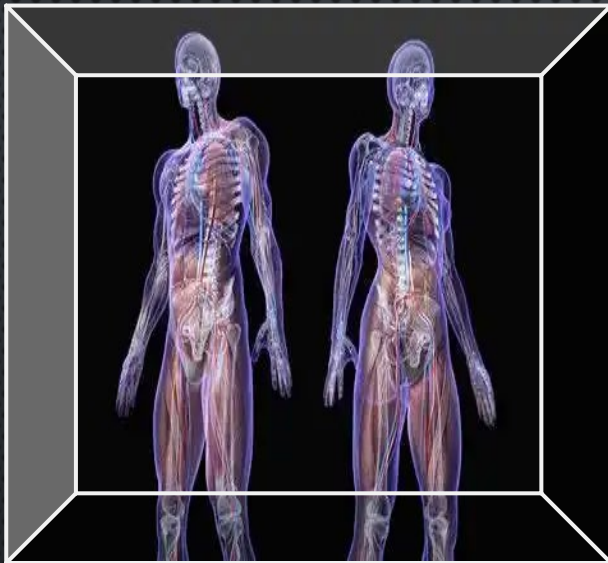
What Soldiers think and believe about themselves strongly affects what they can achieve physically. The H2F approach treats the Soldier's physical and mental readiness as requiring equal amounts of attention. In fact, it regards them as inseparable.

Examples of the power of the mind are well known. In the 1940s, Henry Beecher found that saline injections with no medicinal potential reduced pain for wounded Soldiers. He coined the term “placebo effect” to describe the phenomenon. In the 1970s, Herbert Benson began to study what he described as the “relaxation response”—the body's natural state of relaxation—and how this response can be activated through the mind. Study participants who use mind-body practices experience genetic and molecular changes not experienced by people in study control groups.





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The field of psychoneuroimmunology studies the relationship among the nervous system, the immune system, and the endocrine system. Thoughts and emotions have a measurable biochemical effect and can change the body chemistry. Neuroplasticity research demonstrates that the nervous system can change in response to the environment, personal behaviors, and the natural world. Even brains undergo constant changes. For example, parts of the brain can shrink in response to chronic pain, and those same parts can regrow with the use of mind-body techniques such as meditation and cognitive behavioral therapy—therapy focused on changing behaviors by modifying thoughts in a positive way.

Some mind-body practices do not require referral for clinical or professional intervention. These practices can include art therapies such as music, visual arts and dance. They also include autogenic training and other forms of self-hypnosis, biofeedback devices that measure physiological activity such as heart rate monitors. Lastly, mind-body practices include breathing exercises, imagery, journaling, meditation, and progressive muscle relaxation.



Health and Holistic Fitness: Mental Health Coaching

H2F Coaching

Delivering improved readiness system in H2F requires a new paradigm of coaching, teaching, and mentoring and contemporary performance readiness content. This content integrates and condenses the domains of H2F into tactics, techniques, and procedures that represent a culture shift for the Soldier.





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