Comprehensive Resilience Module

Spiritual Dimension

"Spiritual Support"

Spiritual Dimension Introduction

Being in the Army has special meaning for all of us. We understand our role and why we're here… taking an oath to serve and protect… being part of something greater than ourselves.

The word spiritual or spirituality can mean many things to many people.

It's all about the human spirit.

The human spirit is the essential core of a person, the deepest part of who we are.

Struggles of the human spirit can be a sign of strength and courage because you are facing difficult questions that do not always have easy answers.

Struggles can present an opportunity to examine your beliefs and re-define your life

This can lead to a deeper commitment to your values, stronger connection to your spirit and other people in your life, patience forgiveness, spiritual growth, depth, and richness.

All of these things build your spiritual fitness, and make you a more resilient Soldier.

Spiritual Support

- ❑ **When you feel stressed or question your core values, how do you seek spiritual support?**
- ❑ **What do you draw on for resilience ,strength, meaning, and comfort?**
- ❑ **Are these means of support available to you wherever you are - wherever you may serve?**

In this module:

- **We will focus on the tools available for seeking spiritual support**
- **The tools may be available during any point in your life, and service in the Army.**
- **The tools broaden your understanding of how spiritual support helps you develop and build resilience.**
- **You will be able to identify new ways to seek spiritual support on your own and with others.**

Spiritual struggles don't just take a toll on your mind, they can impact your health and well-being.

It is important to turn to spiritual resources available to you and facilitate spiritual resilience when encountering struggles.

Discovering new types of spiritual support is important for you to persevere and grow as you face stressful and uncertain experiences that can lead to spiritual struggles.

Spiritual struggles vary in intensity as some are really BIG, and you need spiritual support. Other times, problems are smaller and spiritual support is just modestly needed.

Types of Spiritual Support

Explore ways you can support, develop, and strengthen your human spirit which do not require the participation of others.

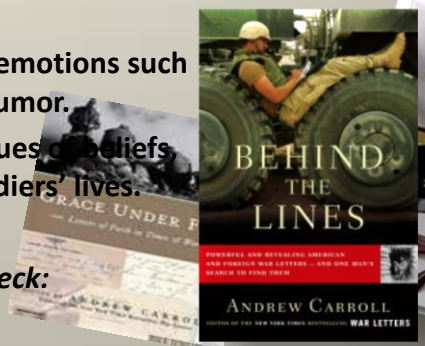
- Reading
- Writing
- Music
- Prayer
- Nature
- Personal Meaningful objects

At times you may just want solitude and privacy

Spiritual Support From Reading

- **Reading is a way humans have learned and expanded their knowledge for thousands of years.**
- **There are many books available which could help you support your human spirit.**
- **Soldiers throughout history have written letters to communicate and express their experiences during war.**

- **Journalist Andrew Carroll traveled the globe in an effort to collect letters written by Soldiers from all of the major American wars.**
  - **In these letters, he found inspirational and profound messages brought on by war and the tribulations of being a Soldier.**
  - **In two of his books, he incorporates letters, emails, and photos documenting Soldiers' experiences from the American Revolutionary War to the current War on Terrorism.**
  - **Behind the Lines contain a variety of letters displaying a full range of human emotions such as excitement, fear, courage, despair, homesickness, patriotism, anger, and humor.**
  - **Grace Under Fire includes letters and emails which were more focused on issues of beliefs, values, philosophy of life, and spirituality and how they play a role in the Soldiers' lives.**



- ***Another example is the well-known poem, called "Soldier" by George L. Skypeck:***
  - **I was that which others did not want to be.**
    I went where others feared to go, and did what others failed to do.
    I asked nothing from those who gave nothing, and reluctantly accepted the thought of eternal loneliness ... should I fail.
    I have seen the face of terror; felt the stinging cold of fear; and enjoyed the sweet taste of a moment's love.
    I have cried, pained, and hoped ... but most of all, I have lived times others would say were best forgotten.
    At least someday I will be able to say that I was proud of what I was... a soldier.

- **How to Incorporate:** ***There are a variety of materials that can support the human spirit.***
  - **Find books that explicitly discusses morals, values, beliefs, and philosophical worldviews.**
  - **Read self-help books focused on spiritual development.**
  - **Reading a biography of an influential leader from history**
  - **Read texts from specific spiritual traditions, as they have many important things to say about values and philosophies of living.**

Spiritual Support From Music

- One author noted, in his book on the role of music in Iraq, there are a lot of messages of survival, chaos, and power found in heavy metal and hip hop music which Soldiers might relate to.
- There are volunteer efforts to send musical instruments to Soldiers serving overseas.
- Playing and listening to music can have great strengthening and healing power.

Incorporating music includes playing instruments for fun, singing, or performing in an Army band.

The easiest way to incorporate music into your life is simply by listening to it on your down time or going to a concert.

To support your spirit with music, find music which not only fits your style, but has messages which can relate to your experience, values, and beliefs.

Listen to music that encourages or inspires you, or has a special meaning to you because of loved ones or significant events in your life.

Listen to music for relaxation or to remind you of your mission as an Army Soldier.

Spiritual Support From Writing

Writing can be a great way to reflect upon and record your experiences, and express your thoughts and feelings.

SGT Charles King wrote in a journal for his infant son Jordan.

"Listen to your first thought. You will figure this out on your own. Never second-guess yourself. When your heart is in the right place, always go with your first thought. Work hard at things and follow your instinct. Since you were born, you have always been alert. That means you will be very perceptive about things. Believe God and trust yourself. Keep the faith, Jordan. You will be fine."

- Writing can be done in a variety of ways:
- Keep a journal or write letters to loved ones, whether or not you send them.
- Writing can serve to honor your losses, explore how your values may have changed and identify goals for future growth.
- Writing often helps you adjust to the major changes in life.

Use writing as a way to record your thoughts and experiences, reflect about your values and beliefs, and what you are learning about yourself by interacting with others.

Writing can help you explore how your views of yourself, others, or the world through new experiences overseas.

Write poetry or stories that focus on your core self and beliefs, or write letters or prayers to a greater power if you believe in one.

Getting your feelings, beliefs or experiences down in writing can help you work through the tough times and help you identify goals for future growth of your human spirit.

How to Incorporate Writing

Spiritual Support From Prayer

Prayer found in the pocket of a deceased confederate Soldier during the American Civil War.

I asked God for strength, that I might achieve;
I was made weak, that I might learn to humbly obey.
I asked for health, that I might do greater things;
I was given infirmity, that I might do better things.
I asked for riches, that I might be happy;
I was given poverty, that I might be wise.
I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men;
I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.
I asked for all things that I might enjoy life;
I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.
I got nothing I asked for but everything I had hoped for.
Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.
I am, among men, most richly blessed.

Prayer is for all individuals, does not have to be said to a specific spiritual being or religious figure, and does not have to be tied to religion, and does not have to be formal.

Prayer can support your human spirit by allowing you time to sit and be with your thoughts, experiences, beliefs, values, and emotions.

Prayer can be a certain amount of time you set aside to be quiet with your thoughts, reaching out to or a connecting with something greater than yourself or it can be something you do spontaneously

How to Incorporate Prayer, You Can:

- ❑ Use prayer to express emotion such as thanks and gratitude, or ask for protection and strength.
- ❑ Pray for the safety and health of others and loved ones, or use prayer as a way to find meaning and cope with a difficult struggle.
- ❑ Use prayer to sit with your thoughts regarding your inner core beliefs and values.
- ❑ Use prayer to cope with stress, by just sitting quietly and finding rest.

Spiritual Support From Nature

- **The human spirit can also be supported through spending time in your natural surroundings.**
- **Many people are reminded of something bigger than themselves when they are in nature.**
- **Nature can bring a sense of awe and wonder, and may be a good environment for you to sort out your thoughts and feelings.**

There are a variety of ways for you to connect with your natural surroundings. You could:

- **Simply enjoy a sun rise or sun set, or look up at the stars at night.**
- **Go on a walk or hike while you observe the setting around you.**
- **Take advantage of exploring and appreciating your surroundings no matter where in the world you may serve.**

Spiritual Support From Personally Meaningful Objects

- In times of stress, it's easy to lose sight of who we are and what we believe in. By carrying and keeping small mementos and tokens with you, you can easily remind yourself who you are, where you come from, what you believe in, and what you stand for.

  - There are some things that remind you of someone or something special in your life or of a great memory that can give you the pick-me-up in tough times.

  - Personally meaningful objects can be incorporated Into your spiritual life. There is no limit as to what you can take with you that reminds you of who you are and what you believe in.

Take something with you given to you by a family member or a friend, or bring an object that reminds you of a special place or a significant experience.

Bring a photo album to keep pictures of family, friends, religious or spiritual figures, people you admire, or places that have meaning to you.

Keep a symbol of your specific spiritual tradition. Pictures are a great way to remind you of where you come from.

Spiritual Support From Other People

- Spiritual support in the form of talking with others is an excellent way to develop your core values, receive help and comfort, and reach out to others.
- As you look around your unit, you might see others who share your beliefs and philosophy on life.
- You might also see those who may come from very different worldviews and spiritual backgrounds.

Spiritual support in the form of talking with others is an excellent way to develop and strengthen your core values, receive help and comfort, and reach out to others.

The time you serve is a chance to build resilience, strengthen or even modify your beliefs. You may find this is a key time in your life when you learn from others and expand your understanding, purpose and meaning in life.

Spiritual Support From Home

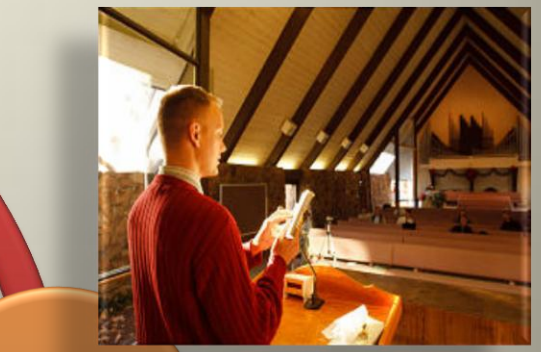
- Individuals from your spiritual community back home may encourage spiritual fitness and help you prevail while you are away on duty by staying in touch.

- Seek Support from significant others and any role models at home.

Spiritual Support From Home

- Before leaving home, write down a reflection, prayer, mantra, or inspirational quote or message that will help you remember loved ones
- Exchange letters and emails with your spiritual group, family and friends.
- Create a Special group service or ritual to mark the times you leave and return home, and to remember home while on location.
- Join a social networking website (e.g. Facebook, MySpace, Twitter
- Create your own online blog or video chat, Keep in touch with your spiritual role models. Ask others to think about, reflect or pray for your safety and well being.

Myth Buster



If a chaplain cannot give you the support you want, you are free to seek out other resources

My conversation with the chaplain won't be private?

I'm weak if I seek help. Real Soldiers don't need help in building resilience. I should just suck it up.

The chaplain will make me change my beliefs or try to convert me?

I can only see a chaplain if I need serious help or am really sick?

I have to identify with the same religion as the chaplain.

It may not be possible to find a chaplain who matches your core beliefs, chaplains act as an advocate for every kind of background.

You are free to attend a range of worship services, including Jewish, Catholic, Lutheran, Protestant, Muslim, pagan, and Greek Orthodox services.

Supporting a Resilient and Ready Force

Chaplains

Chaplain

- A chaplain is an officer who is trained by the U.S. Army, involved in all stages of war, from mobilization and deployment to reunion.
- chaplains are advocates for everyone, regardless of where you stand on your core values and beliefs.
- Chaplains wear insignia specific to their branch.

Chaplain Duties

- Chaplains conduct moral leadership training and assist Army personnel as well as families and other civilians on moral, ethical, social, and personal issues by nurturing the living, care for the sick or wounded, and honoring the dead.
- Chaplains are everywhere – some travel with a unit overseas on missions OR are located on Army bases or hospitals.

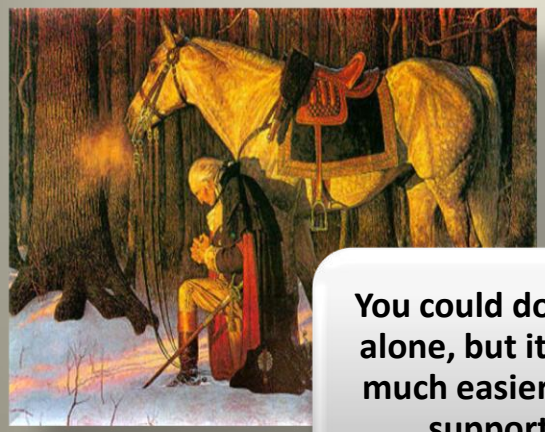
UMT

- A Unit Ministry Team, also known as UMT, includes at least one chaplain and chaplain's assistant.
- A chaplain's assistant is an enlisted Soldier and acts as a link between the chaplain and fellow Soldiers. UMTs help Soldiers, families, and civilians alike.

Supporting a Resilient and Ready Force

Seeking Spiritual Support

- Why is it important to seek spiritual support while deployed?



If you have to go alone, you should have / seek spiritual guidance

You could do deployment alone, but it would be so much easier with a good support system.

It would be so much better to go with a higher power.

Regardless of the situation or mission your involved in, having a higher power can be comforting.

if you are doing it alone go with a battle buddy it also helps.

Take Away

Find what gives you comfort and helps you develop and persevere, even in the face of spiritual struggles

It's important to tap into whatever helps you develop and strengthen your human spirit.

Regardless of the situation or mission your involved in, having a higher power can be comforting.

Express your artistic ability thru:

- **Exercising**
- **Playing Sports**
- **Listening to music**
- **Reading a book**
- **Writing in a Journal**
- **Helping others**