



84th Training Command Ready and Resilient Newsletter

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MESSAGE FROM THE COMMANDING GENERAL

Soldiers, Civilians & Family Members of the 84th Training Command,

As we enter the fall season and approach the holidays, it's a time to reflect on the year we've had—both our challenges and our progress. This season reminds us of the importance of balance, as we continue to build our readiness and resiliency while ensuring we take time for personal rejuvenation.

As we face an ever-changing operational environment, our focus on readiness and resilience must evolve. It is no longer enough to simply maintain readiness; we must strive to be progressive in our readiness, constantly improving and adapting to new challenges while building a workforce that can thrive both professionally and personally.

Being progressive means anticipating the future, staying agile, and seeking new ways to strengthen our capabilities. It's about fostering a culture that encourages innovation, continuous learning, and adaptability. Our ability to stay ahead of potential challenges and seize opportunities will determine our future success. Every member of this command is critical to that effort.

At the core of readiness is resilience—the strength to overcome adversity, recover quickly from setbacks, and sustain high performance under pressure. Building resilience requires not just physical preparedness but also mental, emotional, and social well-being. We must support one another, creating a culture where we lift each other up, share resources, and foster open communication.

In addition, maintaining a healthy balance between work and personal life is key to sustaining long-term readiness and resilience. When we prioritize our well-being, we enhance our ability to perform at our best, both individually and as a team.

As we near the close of this year, I also want to take a moment to reflect on my time as your Commanding General. I want to extend my heartfelt thanks for your dedication and support. I leave confident that this team is stronger and more capable than ever. I wish each of you and your families a restful and joyful holiday season, filled with balance and moments to recharge.

Sincere best wishes,

Edward Merrigan,
Major General, U.S. Army
84th Training Command,
Commanding



MG Edward H. Merrigan, Jr.
Commanding General

Inside this issue:

<i>MESSAGE FROM THE CG</i>	1
<i>CSM SHOUT OUT</i>	2
<i>MESSAGE FROM THE CXO</i>	3
<i>CREATING A STRIKE CULTURE OF READINESS & RESILIENCY: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT</i>	4-5
<i>CRUCIAL SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAINING IN DENVER</i>	6-7
<i>STAY SAFE DURING WINTER TRAVEL</i>	8
<i>PROGRESSIVE APPROACHES TO PREVENTING HOLIDAY STRESS: ADDRESSING ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE MISUSE</i>	9-10
<i>CHEERFUL CELEBRATIONS: A NON-ALCOHOLIC TOAST TO THE HOLIDAYS</i>	11
<i>GIVE YOURSELF A GIFT OF GOOD SLEEP THIS HOLIDAY SEASON</i>	12
<i>STAY ACTIVE AND SET BIG GOALS: PREPARING FOR OUTDOOR ADVENTURES DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON</i>	13-14
<i>84TH TRAINING COMMAND R2 CONTACT INFORMATION</i>	15

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COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR SHOUT OUT



84th Training Command
Command Sergeant Major
CSM Scott Hinton

To our Soldiers, Civilians, and Families,

Along with MG Merrigan, I want to wish each of you a very happy holiday season. Your hard work and dedication have been instrumental in achieving our mission, and I truly appreciate the effort you put in every day.

As you celebrate with your loved ones, safety remains our top priority. Wherever you are this season, I ask that you make smart, informed decisions and watch out for one another. Leaders, especially our NCOs and supervisors, have a responsibility to engage with Soldiers and review their travel plans. Use risk management tools to assess situations, make smart choices, and steer clear of unnecessary risks. If you plan to drink, make sure you're not behind the wheel. Stay mindful of how alcohol affects your judgment, and don't underestimate the potential dangers.

For those traveling, stay alert and aware of road conditions and other hazards. Keep your situational awareness sharp, and remember, your fellow Soldiers depend on you to return safely and ready to continue the mission.

And if you know a Soldier without plans or a place to go this holiday season, consider inviting them to share the day with you and your family. A simple offer of kindness can make all the difference for someone who might otherwise be spending the holiday alone. Let's take care of one another and ensure no one feels isolated during this time.

Enjoy your holidays, take the time to rest, recharge, and come back refreshed. We're counting on each of you to return ready to continue the mission and accomplish great things in 2025.

Wishing you all a safe, joyful, and fulfilling holiday season.

Scott Hinton
Command Sergeant Major
84th Training Command



MESSAGE FROM THE COMMAND EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Progressing Readiness and Resilience: A Unified Effort for Soldiers, Civilians, and Families



84th Training Command
Command Executive Officer
Dr. Jack R. East

As we look to the future, the 84th Training Command is committed to advancing our readiness and resilience efforts for all members of our community—Soldiers, Civilians, and Family Members. Our focus is on progressing key initiatives like Holistic Health and Fitness (H2F) at the battalion and below (including HHC/Ds) while continuing to support the comprehensive work of Readiness and Resilience (R2) (at the BDE HQs and below) through the Commanders' Ready and Resilient Council (CR2C) (at the GO HQs level).

Holistic Health and Fitness (H2F) for a Stronger Force

H2F is an important means to maintain Soldier readiness, addressing the physical, mental, and spiritual fitness necessary to thrive in challenging environments. While H2F operates as distinct activities, they are nested within and support the goals of our R2 (BDE) and CR2C (GO HQs) efforts, ensuring an integrated approach to readiness across the command.

For Soldiers: H2F provides tools to enhance your physical performance, prevent injuries, and build resilience against mental and emotional stress. These resources are vital to maintaining operational effectiveness and ensuring long-term well-being.

For Civilians and Families: While H2F is primarily focused on Soldiers, its principles of holistic wellness resonate throughout the command, fostering a culture of health and resilience that benefits all members of the community. Soldiers can transform and improve the health of their families when they bring what they learn home. Our Civilian team members are all invited and welcome to share in H2F resources as they are critical members of our teams.

An underappreciated enabler: The Army has provided us many tools to help achieve our well-being and resiliency goals. One that is largely unrecognized and under-appreciated is the Building Strong and Ready Teams (BSRT) education program. This is a NON-RELIGIOUS, secular, and industry proven set of curriculum designed to educate and transform participants. This is a Commander's training event that happens to be taught by chaplains. The instructor choice is a consequence of funding source more than anything else. Commanders can select from the specific blocks and sections from across many different secular and evidence based educational curriculum that addresses specific needs of Soldiers, teams, Families, and units. Families can and should attend when possible!

The Role of Readiness and Resilience (R2) in Supporting Soldiers, Civilians, and Families

R2 supports the entire command by addressing the environmental and social factors that impact resilience. R2 ensures that Soldiers, Civilians, and Family Members have the resources they need to maintain readiness, both at the individual and community levels.

For Soldiers: R2 strengthens your ability to perform under pressure by providing access to mental health resources, leadership development, and support systems that enhance your overall resilience. R2 Team Leaders are currently authorized in every brigade headquarters to support this effort.

For Civilians: R2 helps create a workplace environment that promotes balance, resilience, and professional development, ensuring you can remain effective in your role while maintaining personal well-being. Civilians have access to R2 resources like Resiliency Centers, Army Wellness Centers, and the Employee Assistance Program.

(CONT.)



PROGRESSING READINESS AND RESILIENCE: A UNIFIED EFFORT FOR SOLDIERS, CIVILIANS, AND FAMILIES (Cont)

For Families: R2 recognizes the critical role families play in maintaining overall readiness. By providing family support resources, educational programs, and community engagement, to support families as strong, resilient, and able to support their Soldier or civilian member. Every program has a charge to support families, and with our Readiness Division Partners our Soldiers and Civilians can take home critical resources such as free online tutoring, access to medical care (via TRICARE), and other support through the RD Family Programs and USARC Public Private Partnership (for employment support), and many other opportunities.

Streamlined Efforts for a Unified Vision

While H2F and R2/CR2C remain separate initiatives, their efforts are aligned to ensure a comprehensive approach to readiness and resilience. H2F focuses on the individual health of Soldiers and is executed at the battalion and below (including HHD/Cs) as the means for achieving R2/CR2C goals and end state conditions. R2 at the Brigade HQs level understands the needs and gaps in the Brigade "Community" and aligns resources and plans H2F and other activities so as to improve multiple risk and protective factors in their communities. CR2C at the GO headquarters create achievable and feasible goals, objectives, and end state conditions while allocating resources and overseeing the implementation of the R2 effort at Brigade and assessing the effectiveness of H2F and other efforts in battalions. All of this together ensures that Soldiers, civilians, and family members have the support and resources needed to thrive. We need our team members and their families to survive first contact and dominate the stressors and risks at home, work, school, and on duty.

This integration eliminate silos, creates a streamlined and integrated approach that addresses both the individual and community aspects of readiness. This ensures our efforts cover the full spectrum of well-being—whether it's physical fitness, mental health, spiritual fitness, or social resilience.

Moving Forward Together

As we continue to advance our readiness and resilience efforts, I encourage all Soldiers, Civilians, and Family Members to take advantage of the resources available through H2F and R2. Together, these opportunities and resources provide a comprehensive foundation for maintaining strength, adaptability, and mission readiness. You and your family EARNED these resources through your service and sacrifice; use them! Seeking help is a sign of strength, courage, and love.

By fostering a culture of continuous improvement and collaboration, we can ensure that every member of our community is fully supported and ready for whatever challenges lie ahead. Together, we are resilient. Together, we are ready.

A Personal Message

As you move through the holidays please remember these things:

- **You WILL** put your heart and soul into making the Holidays the most wonderful time for the people you love. You will likely give beyond your ability to sustain. You will consume and give away all your resiliency. As servants to the ones we love we can do nothing less.
- **You WILL** disappoint someone. No matter hard we try, neither you nor I can be everything to everyone and meet every desire over the holidays.
- **BUT**, the people who love us are NEVER as disappointed as we think, they NEVER want us to give more than we can, and they ALWAYS strive to fill us back up. They just want US, and the things we do and give beyond that is in THEIR eyes second best to just having YOU.

I wish you a Happy, Safe, and Love Filled season!

Jack



CREATING A STRIKE CULTURE OF READINESS & RESILIENCY: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM



By
COL Brent Allen
84th TC
Chief of Staff



By
SGM Melissa Solomon
84th TC
3/5/7 SGM

At the 84th Training Command, our success isn't measured solely by our operational outcomes, but by how we work together as a team. As we continue to build a culture that fosters collaboration, trust, and resilience, it's essential that we focus on the values that strengthen us as an organization.

While the holiday season can be a time of celebration, it often brings additional stress and potential challenges for teams. To help create a supportive and leader led culture we're introducing **STRIKE**, a set of guiding principles that can enhance team cohesion, reduce conflict, and ensure that we remain resilient through any situation. These principles, paired with our new leadership development program, are designed to build an enduring culture of resilience and success at the 84th Training Command.

Safeguard Trust: Trust is our currency, earned daily through our actions and necessary to build effective teams. Treating each other with dignity and respect is the foundation of our Army. People are most important asset; our Soldiers and Civilians must honestly know that we care deeply for them and their families. Building and maintaining trust is essential for the strength of the 84th Training Command headquarters.

The Foundation of Team Resilience

Trust is the cornerstone of any successful team. At the 84th, we build trust through actions that show care and respect for our Soldiers, Civilians, and their families. During the holidays it is important to continue to foster a non-stigmatizing environment where everyone feels heard and valued, we create the psychological safety necessary to tackle challenges head-on and reduce the risk of conflict. Trust makes it possible to address problems early, find solutions together, and maintain morale, even in high-stress situations.

Take Initiative: Proactively engage in research, analysis, and decision-making. Anticipate needs and act within your scope of responsibility; make research based recommendations and request guidance when required. Demonstrate leadership by identifying opportunities for improvement and taking timely, informed action to advance our mission and objectives.

Proactive Engagement and Conflict Prevention

The ability to take initiative empowers team members to anticipate and resolve issues before they escalate into conflicts. Encouraging proactive communication and decision-making fosters an environment where everyone can contribute to problem-solving. By promoting leadership at all levels, we create a culture where team members feel confident in addressing stressors directly, leading to faster conflict resolution and more resilient teams.

Relationships Matter: Collaboration through positive interactions across the staff, our DRUs, the installation, and community. The 84th Training Command is a customer-based organization that exists to enable our Training Divisions to accomplish the mission and meet the Commander's intent. Strong, trust based, collaborative relationships are essential to success!

Strengthening Collaboration

Building positive, trust-based relationships across teams, directorates, and communities ensures that collaboration remains at the heart of our mission. The holiday season can often amplify stress, but when we focus on nurturing strong, supportive relationships, we minimize friction and promote a sense of unity. By staying connected, especially through informal team-building activities or virtual check-ins, we strengthen the bonds that allow us to face challenges together.



STRIKE CULTURE OF READINESS & RESILIENCY (CONT)

Intentional Communication: Use the appropriate mode of communication to ensure clarity, awareness, understanding, and results. Effectively communicate your needs and expectations, personally and professionally, to identify and resolve issues efficiently. Never suffer in silence. Effective communication is essential to solving almost every problem.

Solving Problems Before They Grow

Clear, intentional communication is one of the most effective ways to reduce workplace conflict. During busy times like the holidays, it's easy for misunderstandings to arise. By using the appropriate mode of communication to express needs, clarify expectations, and offer feedback, we prevent issues from escalating. Never suffer in silence—address concerns early so that they don't become larger problems. This proactive approach fosters an atmosphere where issues are dealt with constructively, ensuring team cohesion.

Knowledge and Lifelong Learning: Embrace continuous learning, professional development, and a growth mindset to expand skills and remain relevant as an Army leader. Fight entropy, avoid complacency, and ensures standardization operations across the command. Through Soldier commitment to lifelong learning, professional and personal growth, the 84th Training Command will progress with excellence.

A Growth Mindset for Problem-Solving

A commitment to lifelong learning encourages everyone to expand their skills and develop a growth mindset. This not only strengthens individual capabilities but also enhances the team's collective ability to overcome obstacles. By constantly seeking ways to improve professionally and personally, we build a resilient teams that can adapt to change, manage stress effectively, and work through conflicts in a constructive way.

Engaged Leadership: Get into the weeds to know your team and their families. Champion their goals, celebrate their wins, and guide them through their challenges. Leaders must know their team and what motivates them to Fight and Win!

Knowing Your Team, Reducing Stress

Leaders who are engaged and connected with their team members can identify sources of stress early and provide the support needed to resolve conflicts before they impact the team. By championing the well-being of each team member, leaders play a critical role in building a resilient, cohesive, and high-performing team.

Operationalizing STRIKE Through Leadership Development

As part of operationalizing the STRIKE initiative in the Headquarters at Fort Knox, we are implementing a leadership development program that reinforces these core values and strengthens our team at all levels. This program will provide long-term development opportunities and is designed to help everyone, from junior leaders to senior staff, apply the STRIKE values in their daily work. This may be a model for your units.

1. Leadership Champions: 3 designated leaders (DA civilian, officer, and NCO) to champion the STRIKE culture and the leadership development program.
2. Monthly Development Sessions: Monthly sessions will focus on leadership, proactive communication, and conflict resolution, giving every member of the Command the opportunity to grow in alignment with STRIKE principles.
3. Quarterly Team building: These team-building exercises will complement the monthly development sessions, providing practical opportunities to apply what we've learned and strengthen our collaboration.
4. Battle Assembly Integration: We will integrate quarterly development sessions into Battle Assemblies, ensuring both full-time staff and reserve Soldiers benefit from this initiative. This ensures a unified approach to leadership development and STRIKE implementation across the Command.

This combined effort begins during the holiday season, offering our teams the tools they need to stay resilient, connected, and strong through any challenge.

CALL TO ACTION:

Embrace the **STRIKE** culture and the leadership development program to build a workplace rooted in trust, collaboration, and proactive problem-solving, enhancing cohesion and resilience across the 84th Training Command.



Crucial Suicide Prevention Training in Denver



By:
Mr. Zach Ziolkowski,
IBDE, 91TD
CR2C Coordinator

Denver, CO — In a significant effort to enhance mental health awareness and fortify suicide prevention within the military, the 84th Training Command, under the expert leadership of Ms. Stacey Hill and assisted by MSG Miller and Dr. East, recently conducted essential Suicide Prevention Liaison training and ACE-SI Tier 2 (Ask, Care, Escort - Suicide Intervention) training. This critical training event took place in Denver, Colorado, drawing participants from various Army units eager to improve their skills in mental health intervention and support.

Leadership and Expertise

Ms. Stacey Hill, a distinguished leader within the 84th Training Command, has been at the forefront of mental health advocacy in the Army. Her guidance in these training sessions underscores her dedication to ensuring the well-being of every soldier. Ms. Hill's leadership was complemented by the expertise of MSG Miller and Dr. East, both of whom brought invaluable insights and experience to the training.

Suicide Prevention Liaison Training

The Suicide Prevention Liaison training is designed to create a network of trained personnel who serve as the first point of contact for soldiers in distress. Participants in this training program learn to:

- Recognize signs of suicidal ideation/behaviors.
- Approach individuals in a non-judgmental and supportive manner.
- Connect at-risk individuals with appropriate mental health resources and support.
- Utilize the Soldier Leader Risk Reduction Tool (SLRRT)
- Support commanders in managing suicide prevention, intervention and post-vention programming

This training fosters a supportive environment within the military, where soldiers feel empowered to seek help and support their peers.

ACE-SI Tier 2 Training Program

The ACE-SI Tier 2 train the trainer qualifies individuals to train the ACE-SI curriculum. Trainers obtain advanced comprehensive protocols to intervene when a fellow Soldier is in crisis: **Ask:** Directly inquire about suicidal thoughts in a calm and compassionate way.

Care: Show empathy and listen attentively, demonstrating genuine concern for their well-being.

Escort: Ensure the individual gets to a professional for help, accompanying them if necessary to ensure their safety.

By following these steps, soldiers can provide immediate and potentially life-saving support to their peers.

Breaking the Stigma

A positive unit climate that actively supports mental health services helps break down the stigma associated with seeking help. In many military cultures, there is often an unspoken expectation of resilience and self-reliance, which can discourage individuals from seeking the mental health support they need. By promoting an environment where seeking help is seen as a strength rather than a weakness, units can encourage more soldiers to take proactive steps toward maintaining their mental health.

Enhancing Readiness and Performance

Mental health is directly linked to a soldier's readiness and performance. Units that prioritize mental health create soldiers who are more resilient, focused, and capable of handling the stresses of military life. When soldiers feel supported and know that their mental well-being is a priority, they are more likely to perform at their best. This readiness translates to a more effective and cohesive fighting force.

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Crucial Suicide Prevention Training in Denver (Cont.)

Building Trust and Cohesion

A supportive climate fosters trust and cohesion within the unit. When soldiers see their leaders and peers advocating for mental health, it builds a sense of trust and solidarity. This cohesion is vital for unit effectiveness, as it ensures that soldiers can rely on one another and feel confident in their collective strength. Open discussions about mental health and regular encouragement to use available services can strengthen these bonds.

Preventing Serious Issues

Early intervention is key to preventing serious mental health issues. Units that promote the use of mental health services encourage soldiers to seek help before problems escalate. This proactive approach can prevent issues such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) from becoming debilitating. By addressing concerns early, the overall mental health of the unit improves, reducing the risk of crises and emergencies.

Providing Comprehensive Support

A positive climate that endorses mental health services ensures that soldiers have access to comprehensive support. This includes not only psychological counseling but also resources for stress management, coping strategies, and peer support networks. Units that integrate these services into their daily routines and training programs create an environment where mental health is seen as an integral part of overall wellness.

Leadership's Role

Leadership plays a crucial role in fostering a positive climate for mental health. Leaders must set the example by openly discussing mental health, utilizing services themselves, and actively supporting their soldiers in seeking help. Training programs for leaders on recognizing the signs of

mental health issues and how to support their troops can further enhance this climate.

Impact and Feedback

The training sessions in Denver were met with overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants, who appreciated the practical skills and confidence gained from the experience. Soldiers highlighted the importance of such training in creating a culture of care and vigilance within the Army.

One participant shared, "This training has equipped me with the skills to approach and support my fellow soldiers in times of need. It's empowering to know that I can make a difference."

Looking Ahead

The 84th Training Command's commitment to suicide prevention is a testament to the Army's dedication to its soldiers' mental health. Under Ms. Stacey Hill's leadership, with the support of MSG Miller and Dr. East, the Command plans to expand these training programs, reaching more soldiers and reinforcing the support network within the military.

As the Army continues to address the complex issue of suicide, initiatives like these play a crucial role in fostering a culture of resilience, support, and proactive intervention. The 84th Training Command's efforts in Denver mark a significant step forward in the ongoing battle against suicide, ensuring that every soldier knows they are not alone, and that help is always available.

In conclusion, the 84th Training Command, under the guidance of Ms. Stacey Hill, is making a profound impact through its Suicide Prevention Liaison and ACE-SI Tier 2 training programs. By empowering soldiers with the knowledge and skills to intervene, the Army is taking decisive action to protect the mental health and lives of its members.



SEMPER PRIMO!



Stay Safe During Winter Travel

Know before you go:

- From blizzards, to avalanches, to ice storms, be aware of the winter risks in places you visit.
- Check the local weather forecasts and warnings before heading out.
- Visit National Weather Service for up to date forecasts and download the FEMA App for alerts in up to five locations.
- Check your local weather and traffic reports before heading out.
- If your roads are not in good shape, consider postponing non-essential travel until the roads are cleared. If you do have to go out, make sure you are prepared in case you become delayed while traveling.

HERE'S WHAT TO HAVE IN A CAR EMERGENCY KIT:

- ◇ A properly inflated spare tire, wheel wrench and tripod jack
- ◇ Jumper cables
- ◇ Tool kit and/or a multipurpose utility tool
- ◇ Flashlight and extra batteries
- ◇ Reflective triangles and brightly colored cloth to make your vehicle more visible
- ◇ Compass
- ◇ First aid kit with gauze, tape, bandages, antibiotic ointment, aspirin, a blanket, nonlatex gloves, scissors, hydrocortisone, thermometer, tweezers and instant cold compress
- ◇ Nonperishable, high-energy foods, such as unsalted nuts, dried fruits and hard candy
- ◇ Drinking water
- ◇ Reflective vest in case you need to walk to get help
- ◇ Car charger for your cell phone
- ◇ Fire extinguisher
- ◇ Duct tape
- ◇ Rain poncho
- ◇ Snow brush
- ◇ Shovel
- ◇ Windshield washer fluid
- ◇ Warm clothing
- ◇ Cat litter for traction
- ◇ Blankets

Every vehicle should have an emergency supply kit in the trunk. Kits should be checked every six months, and expired items should be replaced regularly.

AS WE BRACE FOR THE WINTER SEASON, THE 84TH TRAINING COMMAND REMINDS ALL PERSONNEL TO PRIORITIZE SAFETY AND PREPAREDNESS.



Progressive Approaches to Preventing Holiday Stress: Addressing Alcohol and Substance Misuse

As the holiday season approaches, many of us look forward to time spent with family and friends. However, this time of year also comes with increased risks of alcohol and substance misuse due to social gatherings, heightened stress, and emotional challenges. To help navigate these potential pitfalls, we are exploring progressive, research-based approaches that emphasize support, resilience, and community-focused solutions to alcohol and substance misuse prevention.

Shifting Focus to Harm Reduction



A day of thanks can be celebrated with a diverse selection of drinks, offering both alcoholic and non-alcoholic options, ensuring an inclusive and mindful holiday gathering for all guests.

Traditional strategies for addressing substance misuse have often relied on deterrence or abstinence-focused approaches. However, recent research has shown that harm reduction methods—such as providing education on safe consumption practices, promoting designated drivers, and offering access to non-alcoholic alternatives—can reduce the negative impacts associated with alcohol use without alienating individuals who are struggling. Harm reduction focuses on minimizing harm, recognizing that abstinence is not always immediately attainable or desired by everyone (Marlatt & Witkiewitz, 2010).

By encouraging mindful consumption, we help individuals make informed decisions about their alcohol intake, especially during social events where alcohol is prevalent. For those dealing with substance misuse, harm reduction programs offer a way to stay engaged with support systems while gradually working toward healthier behaviors.

Mental Health and Substance Misuse: An Integrated Approach

One progressive idea that has gained traction in recent research is the integration of mental health and substance misuse prevention. Research shows that addressing underlying mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression, or trauma, can significantly reduce the likelihood of substance misuse (Weiss & Dixon, 1997). By offering support for mental health alongside substance misuse prevention, we create a holistic approach that addresses the root causes of addiction.

Programs that integrate cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), mindfulness-based interventions, or trauma-informed care with substance misuse prevention have shown promising results (Witkiewitz et al., 2005). These interventions not only target substance use behaviors but also help individuals build coping strategies and emotional resilience, reducing the likelihood of relapse.

Community Support and Peer Engagement

Peer support programs are another progressive strategy that has been shown to be effective in preventing alcohol and substance misuse. Peer engagement models, where individuals with lived experience of substance use recovery offer guidance and support, have been found to increase accountability and offer a non-judgmental space for individuals to talk about their challenges (Tracy & Wallace, 2016). These programs help reduce the stigma surrounding substance misuse, encouraging more individuals to seek help before problems escalate.

In a military setting, encouraging peer-led groups or having designated peer mentors can create an environment where individuals feel safe to discuss their struggles and seek support. Such programs foster community resilience, helping the entire unit stay strong by addressing substance misuse together rather than in isolation.

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Progressive Approaches to Preventing Holiday Stress: Addressing Alcohol and Substance Misuse

Looking Ahead: Technology and Prevention

An emerging area in the field of alcohol and substance misuse prevention is the use of technology. Mobile apps and digital health platforms that provide real-time support, monitor usage patterns, and offer motivational reminders have been effective in helping individuals reduce alcohol consumption or maintain sobriety (Gustafson et al., 2014). These tools offer immediate, on-demand assistance for those who may need support during high-risk moments, such as holiday parties or stressful periods.

For example, apps like Sober Grid and Reframe allow users to connect with sober communities, track their progress, and access educational resources. This approach recognizes the need for personalized, accessible tools that fit into the fast-paced, often high-stress environments in which we operate, including the military (Kazemi et al., 2017).

Conclusion: A New Path Forward

Addressing alcohol and substance misuse requires a multifaceted, progressive approach. By integrating harm reduction, mental health support, peer engagement, and technological innovation, we leverage new opportunities that assist in creating an environment where individuals feel empowered to make healthier choices, seek support, and work towards long-term resilience.

The holiday season may bring celebrations and challenges, but with these research-based, forward-thinking approaches, we can prevent misuse while promoting a supportive, compassionate culture. Together, we can ensure that the 84th Training Command remains strong, resilient, and ready to face any challenge.

Disclaimer: *This information is provided is for educational purposes only and is not intended to replace professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Users should consult a medical professional or healthcare provider for medical advice, diagnoses, or treatment.*

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Cheerful Celebrations: Crockpot Holiday Apple Cider



Image created by AI technology
provided by OpenAI.

CROCKPOT
Homemade Apple Cider
(No Added Sugar)
BY: Rebecca Pytell

Crock Pot Homemade Apple Cider (No Added Sugar)

Ingredients:

- 3-4 lbs Apples (mixed variety, roughly quartered)
- ½ Cup Brown Sugar Sweetener (optional & to taste, use any sweetener of choice)
- 1 Medium Orange (optional)
- 4 Cinnamon Sticks
- 1 TB Whole Cloves
- 1 Whole Vanilla Bean (sliced lengthwise)
- Fresh Filtered Water

Crockpot Instructions:

1. Core and roughly quarter or chop your apples, before adding them, along with the additional spices and flavorings to a large 6-8 quart slow cooker. Pour in enough water to cover the apples, leaving an inch or 2 of space from the top rim.
2. Cover the slow cooker and simmer on high for 2-4 hours (6-7 on low), until the apples are soft (timing will depend on the type of apple and size of chop).
3. Mash the apples with a potato masher or wooden spoon to release as much flavor and natural juice as possible. Cover and simmer for another 1-2 hours on high or 2 hours on low.
4. Now carefully strain the solids particles and chunks of fruit from the cider with a fine mesh strainer, cheesecloth, or fine mesh skimmer. Set the solids aside for applesauce, compost, or discard.
5. Taste test the cider for sweetness and adjust as needed. Serve warm from the crockpot or chill in the fridge overnight for a cold cider.

NOTES:

All spices, flavorings, and mulling ingredients are optional and can be adjusted to taste.

Storage: You can store leftover cider in the fridge for 5-7 days.

Freezing: To batch and freeze leftover apple cider, pour the cider into gallon-sized freezer bags and freeze flat until solid. Thaw the frozen cider in the fridge overnight by placing the frozen bag in a bowl to prevent leaking. Frozen cider is best used within 6-8 months.

Reheating: To reheat cold apple cider, warm on the stove in a pot over low heat or in the microwave in a mug to the desired temperature.



GIVE YOURSELF A GIFT OF GOOD SLEEP THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Have you ever heard the saying, “The best thing you can do for yourself is to sleep”? I have, and I believe it is very true. If you’re like me, on those nights when I don’t get 7 to 8 hours of sleep, I feel restless and find it hard to concentrate the following day. Therefore, this holiday season, endeavor to give yourself the gift of sleep.

Because the holiday season can be a stressful time of year for many people—with events to attend, gifts to purchase, budgets to manage, travel plans to make, food to prepare, etc.—these things can keep us awake at night or prevent us from going to sleep on time. However, it is imperative that we remain intentional and committed to maintaining a healthy sleep schedule—not just for our own health, but for the emotional well-being of those around us.

Now, some of you might be saying, “I’ve conditioned myself to adapt to less sleep. Why is this important to me?” I’m glad you asked! According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), a good night’s sleep aids in the improvement of your brain’s capabilities, such as decision-making and mood. Additionally, sleep gives your body time to reset, helping with your digestive system, hormone balance, and more, whereas a lack of sleep can diminish the capabilities of your immune system, leading to an ineffective defense against various diseases and disorders.

Moreover, be on the lookout not to engage in too much consumption of alcohol, whether beer, wine, etc. Getting drunk and dealing with the hangover will not allow you to sleep well and can lead to accidents or untimely death. If you must drink, do it responsibly so that it does not prevent you from getting the sleep you need to enjoy the holiday season and maintain good health.

To sum it all up, if you want to enjoy the holiday season to the fullest, give yourself (and those around you) the gift of rest and sleep. As Proverbs 3:24 says, “When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.”

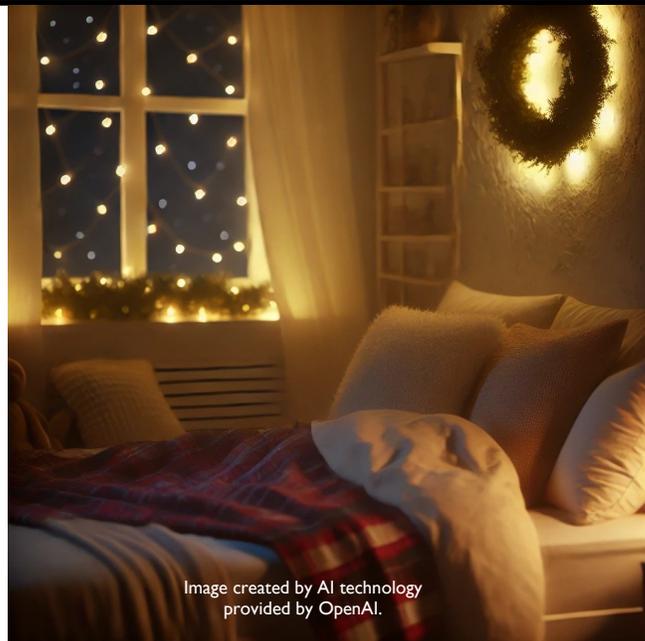


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Happy Holidays!
CH (MAJ) Iheanyichukwu Sunday
Family Life Chaplain
84th Training Command



STAY ACTIVE AND SET BIG GOALS: PREPARING FOR OUTDOOR ADVENTURES DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON

The holiday season is a time for celebration, relaxation, and family, but it doesn't have to mean pausing your fitness goals. In fact, the winter months provide a perfect opportunity to stay active indoors while setting ambitious goals for outdoor adventures when warmer weather arrives. Whether it's building endurance on a stationary bike for a summer cycling tour, improving your strength for hiking or climbing, or perfecting your swimming technique in preparation for open water swims, these indoor activities allow you to stay motivated and healthy. Here's how you can turn holiday workouts into steppingstones for future outdoor achievements.

1. Indoor Cycling (Biking)

- **Goal:** Use a stationary bike or indoor cycling trainer to build endurance, strength, and stamina over the winter months.
- **Plan for a Long Bike Tour in Warmer Weather:** Create a training schedule that gradually increases your cycling time and distance each week. You can map out a local or destination cycling tour for spring or summer as a reward for your training.
- **Metrics to Track:** Time, distance, and resistance levels on your indoor bike can be logged and adjusted over time to keep progressing.
- **Plan:** Adventure Cycling Association: Offers a wealth of resources on bike routes, bike tours, and preparation for long-distance cycling trips www.adventurecycling.org
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy: Focuses on converting old rail lines into scenic trails, ideal for hiking, biking, and trail running www.railstotrails.org



2. Running on a Treadmill

- **Goal:** Set a running goal, such as preparing for a 5K, 10K, half marathon, or marathon.
- **Prepare for Outdoor Races or Fun Runs in the Spring:** Many cities host spring races, so training over the holidays can help you prepare for these events. You can gradually increase your running time and distance on a treadmill, setting specific pace goals.
- **Metrics to Track:** Speed, distance, and heart rate, with adjustments for incline to mimic outdoor terrain.
- **Plan:** Road Runners Club of America (RRCA): Provides resources for running clubs, race events, and training plans, with a focus on grassroots running communities. www.rrca.org

3. Indoor Rowing

- **Goal:** Improve cardiovascular fitness and full-body strength using an indoor rowing machine.
- **Prepare for Outdoor Rowing, Kayaking, or Paddleboarding in Warmer Months:** Building rowing endurance indoors can help you prepare for outdoor water sports. You can set a goal of completing a certain distance or time row, and then translate that into outdoor activities like kayaking or paddleboarding.
- **Metrics to Track:** Distance, speed, and strokes per minute, with challenges to increase rowing time each week.
- **Plan:** American Canoe Association (ACA): Offers courses, guides, and resources for paddling, including kayaking and paddleboarding www.americancanoe.org



STAY ACTIVE AND SET BIG GOALS (CONT.)

4. Swimming

- **Goal:** Build endurance and improve swimming technique through indoor pool training.
- **Prepare for Open Water Swims or Triathlons:** Indoor pool swimming can help you prepare for outdoor swimming events, triathlons, or water sports when the weather warms up. You can set a goal to swim a certain distance or master different strokes.
- **Metrics to Track:** Lap times, distance covered, and stroke efficiency.
- **Plan:** USA Triathlon: Offers resources for triathlon training, race listings, and general information on swimming, cycling, and running: www.teamusa.org/USA-Triathlon

5. Walking or Running Challenges

- **Goal:** Participate in virtual or indoor step challenges to maintain cardiovascular health.
- **Prepare for Hiking or Walking Adventures in the Spring:** Use an indoor walking treadmill or participate in virtual step challenges to build endurance for outdoor hiking or walking trips when the weather is better.
- **Metrics to Track:** Steps taken, distance covered, and total time spent walking or running.
- **Plan:** America Walks is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting walking as a means to improve health, build communities, and protect the environment. They offer resources for walking challenges and community walkability efforts.
- www.americawalks.org

6. Indoor Climbing or Bouldering

- **Goal:** Build climbing strength and technique at an indoor climbing gym.
- **Prepare for Outdoor Climbing or Bouldering Adventures:** Training on an indoor climbing wall or bouldering gym is great preparation for outdoor rock climbing or mountain hiking. You can set specific climbing route goals or try to complete certain bouldering problems.
- **Metrics to Track:** Climbing grades completed, time spent on the wall, and technique improvements.
- **Plan:** Access Fund: Advocates for protecting climbing areas while providing resources for climbers about conservation, routes, and access; www.accessfund.org

By setting achievable indoor goals during the holidays, you can maintain your fitness and look forward to completing outdoor challenges in the warmer months. Tracking your progress and working toward a spring or summer goal keeps you motivated throughout the holiday season!

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