



U.S. ARMY

Stay Laser-Focused: Channel Your Energy to Where It Matters Most



DIRECTORATE OF PREVENTION,
RESILIENCE AND READINESS

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Stress is entirely normal and finds its way into everyday life. Indeed, each of the five pillars of wellness— physical, emotional, social, spiritual and family— are deeply interconnected, each influencing and reinforcing the others. When one pillar weakens, the others feel the impact and can become stressed. If you fail to compartmentalize [stress](#) to the area from which it comes, this emotional response can find its way into all the pillars. Take control by identifying what's important now for the task at hand so that you can stay task-focused, rather than being consumed by stress and wasting critical energy.

What's important now

The brain likes specific targets, which is why it's important to establish what is relevant to focus on in the moment. The strategy behind what's important now is to direct your attention toward the relevant part of a task. So, for example, if you are involved in a work project and you split your attention between what you are doing and a stressful situation from, say, your home life, you could end up [performing poorly](#). Research shows that when people divide their attention, they tend to make more errors. To limit the potential for mistakes and enhance your performance, try using the what's important now technique to concentrate on what you are doing at the present moment.

Refocusing routine

Soldiers have multiple stressors every day yet must stay focused on critical tasks at the same time. One way they can manage to do this is by using a refocusing routine to direct their attention, thoughts and [energy](#) toward their current task. Routines are personal, so make sure to follow a series of steps or incorporate skills that help you refocus and get back to the task. Hold off on thinking about the stressor that's from another part of your life until you can tackle it at an appropriate time.

Like other mental skills, routines take practice, so make sure to repeat them, and over time you will see that the act of [refocusing](#) happens more automatically. A well-practiced routine can bring comfort and control to situations in which you otherwise have very little sway and security. Soldiers can follow a refocusing routine anytime their attention is divided, especially during a critical situation such as facing the officers on an Army promotion board. This event is already stressful, which is why it is critical to stay laser-focused on the matter of work performance. So if as a Soldier, you experience distracting thoughts in this scenario, try the following refocusing routine:

1. Take three [deliberate centering breaths](#).
2. Tell yourself, *I'm ready for this*.
3. Refocus on what's important now, which is how you will introduce yourself to the board members and make a great impression.





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References and resources

[What's Important Now \(Video\)](#)

Daydream With a Purpose

<https://www.hprc-online.org/mental-fitness/performance-psychology/daydream-purpose>

A Guide to Staying Resilient in Times of Crisis

<https://www.hprc-online.org/mental-fitness/mental-health/guide-staying-resilient-times-crisis>

Make Stress Work for You

<https://www.armyresilience.army.mil/ard/R2/Stress-Mindset.html>

Stress Diary Worksheet

<https://www.armyresilience.army.mil/ard/R2/pdf/Modules/Module9/Stress%20Diary%20Worksheet.pdf>

Make Stress Good for You

<https://www.hprc-online.org/mental-fitness/sleep-stress/make-stress-good-you>

Stress Management Skills Worksheet

<https://www.hprc-online.org/mental-fitness/stress/stress-management-skills-worksheet>

Make Stress Your Ally

<https://www.hprc-online.org/mental-fitness/stress/make-stress-your-ally>

5 Mental-Rehearsal Tips to Optimize Performance and Stress Management

<https://www.hprc-online.org/mental-fitness/performance-psychology/5-mental-rehearsal-tips-optimize-performance-and-stress>

Develop Routines to Optimize Attention

<https://www.hprc-online.org/mental-fitness/performance-psychology/develop-routines-optimize-attention>

3 Strategies to Better Manage Your Energy

<https://www.armyresilience.army.mil/ard/R2/Better-Manage-Your-Energy.html>

Take a Long, Deep, Deliberate Breath

<https://www.armyresilience.army.mil/ard/r2/Deliberate-Breathing.html>

