

Building Spiritual Readiness in the Time of COVID-19

By Christopher Larsen April 14, 2020



JOINT BASE LEWIS-McCHORD, Wash. – During this time of social distancing, working from home, and being separated from others, some people may experience tough times. They might be looking for answers, question their role in the world, and be faced with unique stressors.

One way to address the challenges may be by building spiritual readiness, according to the Army Resilience Directorate in Washington, D.C.

The directorate divides resiliency, or readiness, into five components: spiritual, physical, psychological, social, and family. Some people may think spirituality means religion – the traditional definition – but over time, more have come to view spirituality and religion as two separate, but interconnected, topics.

The Army Public Health Center defines spirituality as a sense of connection that gives meaning and purpose to a person's life. The Center points out that spirituality is unique to each individual.

Spiritual readiness has several definitions, according to Chaplain (Col.) David Deppmeier, RHC-P command chaplain.

“For people of faith, a relationship with God answers those questions of identity and purpose as people created by God to know him and serve his purpose,” Deppmeier said. “Their walk with God yields insight and guidance, and provides hope and contentment as they navigate the challenges of life.”

But, Deppmeier said, religious faith is just one aspect of spiritual fitness.

“It’s important to remember that many people have a ‘spiritual worldview’ that doesn’t involve a belief in God or a transcendent power,” Deppmeier said. “They may be guided by a philosophy or their own morality or core values, apart from a religion.”

Deppmeier said spirituality is a key part of many peoples’ lives.

“A person’s spirituality isn’t just a once-a-week experience that results from a religious service,” Deppmeier said. “It’s the central part of who they are because it guides their belief system, moral conduct, and outlook on life.

“Chaplains encourage Soldiers and their family members to find hope, strength and resiliency through their own faith tradition,” Deppmeier added.

Deppmeier said that spiritual readiness is an integral part of the Army’s program to ensure the health and strength of its Soldiers.

“Throughout our Army’s history, our leaders have recognized the importance of caring for the religious needs of our Soldiers and their families,” he said. “Our Army leaders have always understood that spiritual readiness is a central part of a Soldier’s overall readiness.”

There are a number of ways to build upon spiritual readiness, during self-quarantine, working from home, or being physically separated from others, Deppmeier said.

“I suggest setting clear goals to develop a spiritual resilience program,” he said. “I once read a study that indicated that people who actually write their goals down on paper accomplish 95 percent more than those who don’t.”

Deppmeier suggested that people may want to set aside some time each day to meditate, pray, or read religious or devotional materials.

“Another goal may involve deciding to attend regular worship services in order to receive encouragement, experience fellowship, and deepen an understanding and faith in God,” he added.

Deppmeier said there are additional ways to build spiritual readiness apart from religious services or practices, especially if people are unable to leave their homes.

“Since many of us are experiencing isolation from others, it’s a great time to set a goal to read a book a week or month on any topic that will inspire or encourage you,” he said. “It’s easy to check out e-books at your local library and start a reading plan. Get your spouse or loved one involved in reading a book together and it can deepen your communication.”

Deppmeier said the RHC-P pastoral staff is always available to Soldiers, civilians and families and that their role goes far beyond what is normally associated with the chaplain.

“Our chaplains lead religious services, provide counseling, and conduct religious support training events,” he said, “such as ward appreciation events for staff members, or classes on topics like suicide prevention, coping with grief, or managing stress or anger.”

Other methods of building spiritual readiness found on APHC’s Spiritual Health include yoga, meditation, and downloadable brochures containing information to outside resources.

One ‘advantage’ to being at home, Deppmeier said, is that people may find themselves with more time in which to work on their own spiritual readiness.

“I often hear the complaint, ‘If I only had more time!’” he said. “I know we’re all busy, but we’ll only have the time if we make the time, and we always make time for the things most important to us.”

HELP IS AVAILABLE

The Army has a variety of resources available to help build and maintain resiliency. These resources are there for Soldiers, civilians, retirees, and their families. Many are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Because so many Regional Health Command-Pacific staff members are working long hours, working from home, or are self-quarantining with their families, we’re sharing their contact information to reach a wider audience.

Regional Health Command-Pacific Behavioral Health: Lawrence Edwards, lawrence.a.edwards3.civ@mail.mil; Warren Aoki, warren.k.aoki.civ@mail.mil; Michael Martella, michael.a.martella2.civ@mail.mil.

Regional Health Command-Pacific Chaplain: Chaplain (Col.) David Deppmeier, 808-594-8031, david.j.deppmeier.mil@mail.mil; Staff Sgt. Michael Kuehne, 808-741-3049, michael.k.kuehne.mil@mail.mil.

Regional Health Command-Pacific Master Resiliency Trainer: Sgt. 1st Class David Baker, 808-800-1450, andrew.d.baker5.mil@mail.mil

Army Resilience Directorate: <https://readyandresilient.army.mil/index.html>

ArmyFit: <https://armyfit.army.mil/>

Army Public Health Center Spiritual Fitness:
<https://phc.amedd.army.mil/topics/healthyliving/bh/Pages/SpiritualHealth.aspx>

Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness: <https://readyandresilient.army.mil/CSF2/index.html>

Military Crisis Line (U.S.): (800) 273-8255 or DSN 111; Press 1. Text: 838255

Military Crisis Line (Korea): 0808-555-118 or DSN 118

Military OneSource 24/7 Support: 800-342-9647

Psychological Health Center of Excellence: 866-966-1020; 24/7 outreach

