AWARD NUMBER:    W81XWH-14-1-0362

TITLE:    HomeFront Strong (HFS): Building Resiliency in Military Families

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:    Michelle Kees, PhD; University of Michigan

CONTRACTING ORGANIZATION:    Regents of the University of Michigan
                              Ann Arbor, MI 48109

REPORT DATE:    September 2015

TYPE OF REPORT:    Annual

PREPARED FOR:    U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command
                 Fort Detrick, Maryland  21702-5012

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                        Distribution Unlimited

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14. ABSTRACT

Military families have long been the pillars of strength, yet the tempo of deployment over the past 14 years has taken a toll. Nearly 40% of military spouses experience psychological symptoms related to deployment, yet few evidence-based programs are available to support spouses. The current project aims to improve the psychological health of military families residing in civilian communities by implementing and evaluating HomeFront Strong (HFS), a promising evidence-based psychological health intervention for military spouses/partners. This project is guided by three goals: 1. Develop and field test an HFS mobile website; 2. Train community providers to disseminate HomeFront Strong at their community sites (8 sites); and 3. Evaluate the mental health outcomes of Group vs. Web-based HFS in a sample of 360 military spouses/partners. In the current funding period, the HFS mobile website and administrative console have been developed, designed, and field tested (Goal 1, complete). Foundational activities for Goal 2 and 3 have occurred, with a confirmed partnership with Easter Seals Michigan to disseminate HFS at four sites, final product development of community training materials, a comprehensive plan for participant recruitment, and IRB proposals are in process. The subsequent year will see concerted effort in each of these areas.

15. SUBJECT TERMS
Military spouses; Resilience; Psychology health intervention; Mental health

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:

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19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code): Unclassified
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1. **INTRODUCTION:**
This project aims to improve the psychological health and well-being of military families residing in civilian communities by disseminating and evaluating HomeFront Strong (HFS), an evidence-based resiliency intervention for military spouses/partners. The project is guided by three objectives: 1) Develop and field test an HFS mobile website; 2) Train community providers to disseminate HomeFront Strong at their community sites; 3) Evaluate the mental health outcomes of Group vs. Web-based HFS in a sample of 360 military spouses/partners. The current proposal will build capacity in local communities to offer HFS, provide program evaluation data to further establish the effectiveness of HFS, and generate feasibility data to develop a strategic plan for large scale implementation of HFS.

2. **KEYWORDS:**
Military families; Military spouses; Military partners; Resiliency; Mental health; Psychological health intervention; Community capacity building; Dissemination; Implementation science

3. **ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

What were the major goals of the project?
1) Develop and field test an HFS mobile website
2) Train community providers to disseminate HFS at their community sites (8 sites projected) and evaluate levels of training (Basic versus Enhanced)
3) Evaluate outcomes of Group vs. Web-based HFS in a sample of 360 military spouses/partners

What was accomplished under these goals?

**Goal 1: Develop and field test a HomeFront Strong mobile website:**

i) Major activities
In collaboration with the Center for Health Communications Research at University of Michigan, Goal 1 has been a primary focus of this funding period and has been successfully completed, resulting in two products: 1) the HFS Administrative Console and 2) the HFS mobile website.

Access to the secured website will be managed through the HFS Administrative Console. The HFS Administrative Console is available only to HFS program staff and is a tool to support program management and implementation. The Administrative Console has been designed so that HFS program staff can manage participant enrollment in HFS either as individuals (Web-Based Condition) or as part of a cohort (HFS Group Condition). Depending on the enrollment status of a participant, the Console is programmed so that participants receive timed access to each of the eight on-line sessions, with session and homework reminders pushed by email or text, at the participant’s preference. See Appendix A for images from the Administrative Console.

The HFS mobile website is designed to be accessible to participants from mobile devices or computers, and is hosted on a secure server with password protection. The site includes content for each of the eight HFS sessions, with interactive exercises, audio files, and homework practice
embedded throughout. The site will be the sole source of program information for participants in the Web-based Condition and will provide supplemental learning opportunities for participants in the HFS Group Condition. Of note, for participants in the Web-based Condition, the website does not include some of the more interactive elements that are used as discussion points in the group setting (e.g., guided journaling, tracking self-care, daily gratitude with test reminders). The Web-based condition also is information only, meaning there is no opportunity for social connection with other military spouses/partners. See Appendix B for images from the HFS website.

Programming language has been written to collect participant usage of the website via paradata approaches, including “clicks” on each page within each session, length of time on each page, homework completion, and access of audio files. These variables will allow us to define use of the site and dose of exposure to the content material. See Appendix C for a sample image of paradata to be collected.

ii) Specific objectives
Consistent with the proposed Statement of Work for this Goal, the following objectives have been met in Year 1:

- Design, programming, and pilot testing of the HFS Administrative Console to manage secure access to the website and delivery of program information via the site
- Modification of HFS program materials and content for delivery via mobile website, including eight sessions of psychoeducational content and interactive exercises, homework tracking logs, and audio files
- Graphic design and software programming of the HFS mobile website
- Beta testing of the HFS mobile website with key stakeholders
- Programming to collect paradata (participant usage of the site, time spent per page, completion of session activities, etc.)

iii) Significant results or key outcomes
The HFS Administrative Console and HFS mobile website are complete and ready for program use. Beta testing of the Administration Console by HFS staff and non-participating stakeholders has been completed. Programming language to collect paradata regarding site usage has also been completed.

iv) Other achievements
Nothing to report.

v) Stated goals not met
All goals related to the HFS mobile website have been met. As participants enroll in HFS and real-time usage of the site and Administrative Console occurs, we will make necessary programming changes or updates.

Goal 2: Train community providers to disseminate HomeFront Strong at their community sites (8 sites projected):
i) Major activities
For Goal 2, the primary activities have centered on final preparation of HFS community provider training materials, including a training protocol for community providers, HFS curriculum manual for the providers, and training slides for the 2-day community training. The training has been piloted through Star Behavioral Health Providers under a different grant mechanism, and with some modifications is ready for launch with this project.

This project uniquely focuses on training of community providers and seeks to evaluate the dissemination and implementation process of HFS. As such, another major activity has been finalizing the evaluation protocol that will be used to assess fidelity to the treatment model and the community providers’ overall experience in implementing HFS. Lengthy discussions with the University of Michigan Institutional Review Board have been held, and a Not Regulated proposal for this portion of the project is under review.

In this funding period, we have also focused on engaging community partners to launch HFS groups at their community sites. We expect to engage a minimum of 8 community sites through the course of the project. Easter Seals Michigan has 13 community locations state-wide, and has committed to participating with at least 4 sites. A Memorandum of Understanding is under review. Individual and small group meetings have also taken place with other community agencies interested in disseminating HFS. Additionally, meetings have been held with the Michigan National Guard to identify specific geographical areas of need, and with Star Behavioral Health Providers Michigan to plan locations for community trainings.

ii) Specific objectives
Consistent with the proposed Statement of Work for this Goal, the following objectives have been initiated in Year 1, with ongoing effort projected for Year 2:

- Engage community partners (8 sites proposed)
  - Easter Seals Michigan has committed to 4 community sites, and is completing the MOU process
  - Informational meetings have occurred with other potential community sites and state partners
- HFS community provider training
  - HFS training protocol is finalized
  - HFS curriculum manual is finalized and is in graphic design
  - HFS training slides have been piloted and are under modification
- Evaluation of the HFS implementation process with community providers
  - IRB is under review at University of Michigan as Exempt category
  - Final measures for evaluating the HFS implementation have been selected
  - Qualtrics programming of the evaluation measures is in process

iii) Significant results or key outcomes
A key result for this outcome is the commitment from Easter Seals Michigan to participate as a lead community agency, offering 4 sites spread geographically across the state. Other key outcomes include the near finalization of the portfolio of training products. Year 2 will see significant advancement in this Goal with key outcomes in the training domain.
iv) **Other achievements**
Nothing to report

v) **Stated goals not met**
Given the revision of the timeline to prioritize Goal 1 (HFS mobile website development; See Question #5), the activities toward Goal 2 are reasonable and within expected parameters.

### Goal 3: Evaluate Group vs. Web-based HFS in a sample of 360 military spouses/partners:

i) **Major activities**
For Goal 3, activities in this funding period have centered on further strengthening partner relationships and exploring strategies for future participant recruitment. Our team has met with the Michigan National Guard, Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency, Star Behavioral Health Providers – Michigan, Easter Seals Michigan, Ann Arbor VA, and Blue Star Families to discuss strategies for recruitment. We have also initiated community mapping exercises for cities identified as locations for future groups. Additionally, we have explored targeted social media advertising.

In this funding period, we have finalized the evaluation protocol to use for participants at the four assessment time points (pre, post, 3-month, and 6-month follow-up), and are in the midst of the IRB process at the University of Michigan. Additionally, Qualtrics programming of the participant surveys is in process.

ii) **Specific objectives**
Consistent with the proposed Statement of Work for this Goal, foundational work for the following objectives has been initiated in Year 1, with substantial effort projected for Year 2:

- Participant recruitment plan
  - A recruiting plan has been detailed based on community site locations, with plans for social media advertising and leveraged advertising from key partners
- Multi-wave program evaluation with HFS participants
  - IRB proposal at the University of Michigan for human subjects is in process.
  - The qualitative interview and evaluation measures for each of the four assessment waves have been finalized
  - Qualtrics programming of the survey measure is in progress

iii) **Significant results or key outcomes**
Nothing to report

iv) **Other achievements**
Nothing to report

v) **Stated goals not met**
Given the revision of the timeline to prioritized Goal 1 (HFS mobile website development; See Question #5), the activities toward Goal 3 are reasonable and within expected parameters.
What opportunities for training and professional development has the project provided?
Training for community providers (Goal 2) will be a primary focus in Year 2 of the project.

In Year 1, professional development activities for our team have included:
- Star Behavioral Health Providers Tier 1, Military Culture
- Star Behavioral Health Providers Tier 2, Psychological Concerns in Military Populations
- Star Behavioral Health Providers Tier 3, Military Family Resilience
- Ann Arbor VA Community Summit
- Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation Annual Grantee Summit
- 2015 Hidden Heroes Coalition Summit: Progress and Promise Produced Focused Initiatives and Overwhelming Support for Military and Veteran Caregivers
- Elizabeth Dole Foundation, Meeting of the National Coalition for Military and Veteran Caregivers

How were the results disseminated to communities of interest?
As Year 1 has focused on development of the HFS mobile website and logistics, there have not been any data-specific results to disseminate. We have presented the background and goals for this project in several professional venues (see Presentations, Question #6). We have also initiated a series of informational meetings with state partners to announce the upcoming community training and HFS program initiatives. These partners include, Michigan National Guard, Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency, Star Behavioral Health Providers – Michigan, Easter Seals Michigan, Ann Arbor VA, and Blue Star Families.

What do you plan to do during the next reporting period to accomplish the goals?

Goal 1: Develop and field test HomeFront Strong mobile website
The primary activities of Goal 1 were completed in Year 1. Consistent with the Statement of Work, Year 2 will include two objectives and related activities:
1. Launch the HFS mobile website with HFS participants
   - Monitor site for any implementation issues not evident in production or field testing
   - Modify site content or software programming as needed
2. Collect and analyze site usage data
   - Retrieve usage data from the secured site at timed intervals related to the cohort or individual’s completion of the program
   - Write syntax to code paradata (e.g., how many clicks or time on page translates to session completion) and transform to SPSS variables of usage.

Goal 2: Train community providers to disseminate HomeFront Strong at their community sites
Consistent with the Statement of Work, the next funding period will focus on three objectives towards meeting Goal 2, with the following activities:
1. Engage community partners
   - Obtain final IRB approval from the University of Michigan and Human Research Protection Office
   - Finalize MOU with Easter Seals Michigan
   - Recruit and secure MOU’s with 4 additional community sites
2. **HFS community provider training**
   - Train community providers at the 4 identified Easter Seals Michigan sites
   - Train community providers at 4 additional community sites
   - Randomly assign community sites to implementation condition: Basic (training + coaching) or Enhanced (training + coaching + co-led groups)
   - As groups launch, provide ongoing weekly coaching sessions to community providers
   - For community providers in the Enhanced condition, co-lead the HFS groups

3. **Evaluation of the implementation process**
   - Program Qualtrics for on-line administration of the implementation and fidelity survey for community providers
   - Field Qualtrics surveys to community providers during the course of each group
   - Conduct preliminary analyses of survey results
   - Conduct fidelity coding of the video-recordings from HFS sessions

**Goal 3: Evaluate outcomes of Group vs. Web-based HFS in a sample of 360 military spouses/partners**

Consistent with the Statement of Work, the next funding period will focus on four objectives towards meeting Goal 3, with the following activities:

1. **Recruit participants**
   - Obtain final IRB approvals from the University of Michigan and Human Research Protection Office
   - Recruitment efforts to target social media advertising, community mapping, and leveraging of existing partnerships.
   - Screen interested participants and offer HFS group or Web-based condition.

2. **Conduct pre-, post-, 3- and 6-month follow-up assessments with participants**
   - Conduct qualitative interviews with HFS participants at pre and 3-month follow-up assessments
   - Transcribe and code qualitative interviews with participants
   - Program Qualtrics with survey measures for HFS participants
   - Field Qualtrics survey to participants at 4 intervals
   - Conduct preliminary analyses of survey results

3. **Offer HFS groups at community sites**
   - Use the HFS Administrative Console to track and manage HFS program participation
   - Coordinate all logistics of the HFS groups (e.g., scheduling, location, food, supplies, children’s program)

4. **Offer HFS Web-based condition via HFS mobile website**
   - Use the HFS administrative Console to track and manage HFS program participation
4. IMPACT:

What was the impact on the development of the principal discipline(s) of the project?
The HFS mobile website and Administrative Console have the potential to significantly impact
the well-being of military spouses/partners who before could not participate in an in-person
program because of geographic location, transportation issues, or other time commitments. The
website includes all components of the HFS program, delivered on-line, through a secure,
password protected site that is easily accessible via mobile/smart phone platforms. Military
spouses/partners who previously would have struggled to attend an in-person program will now
have the opportunity to receive the same evidence-based materials in an on-line format.

What was the impact on other disciplines?
Nothing to report

What was the impact on technology transfer?
Nothing to report.

What was the impact on society beyond science and technology?
Nothing to report.

5. CHANGES/PROBLEMS:

Changes in approach and reasons for change
The following has previously been discussed in Quarterly Reports.
In the initial grant proposal for this project, the HFS mobile website (Goal 1) was intended as a
supplemental option for HFS participants to have greater access to program materials. During
the initial award period, the Peer Review Panel provided feedback recommending inclusion of a
comparison condition for HFS. This feedback resulted in a significant design modification to a
quasi-experimental study comparing 1) HFS group participation to 2) a Web-based version of
HFS delivered via the mobile website. This strengthened the overall design of the study and will
allow more meaningful interpretation of the impact of HFS. However, this modification meant
that the HFS mobile website had to be operational prior to initiation of any other project (e.g.,
participants could not be enrolled in HFS if both Web-based and Group conditions weren’t
viable; providers should receive HFS training near to the time of launching their first HFS group
to avoid loss of knowledge). Thus, the overall timeline was modified to prioritize the
development of the mobile website.

Actual or anticipated problems or delays and actions or plans to resolve them
Development of the HFS mobile website was delayed for several months after receipt of funding
because our collaborating team at the Center for Health Communications Research needed to
clear staff effort for the project. CHCR staff salary effort on the project was delayed
accordingly. In Quarter 2 of funding, CHCR staff launched a sprinting development for the
website, and as projected, we have completed the site in this funding year.

Changes that had a significant impact on expenditures
Because of the change in timeline and prioritizing Goal 1 (HFS mobile website development), the bulk of activities for Goal 2 (Training community providers) and Goal 3 (Enrolling participants into HFS Group/Web-based conditions) have been adjusted to launch in Year 2. Accordingly, we have delayed the hiring of staff critical for Goals 2 and 3 and have preserved a significant portion of the overall budget.

**Significant changes in use or care of human subjects, vertebrate animals, biohazards, and/or select agents**
Nothing to report

**Significant changes in use or care of human subjects**
Nothing to report

**Significant changes in use or care of vertebrate animals.**
Nothing to report

**Significant changes in use of biohazards and/or select agents**
Nothing to report

6. **PRODUCTS:**

**Publications, conference papers, and presentations**
As this year has focused primarily on development of the mobile website and project logistics, there have been no publications or presentations from data generated under this award. However, there have been two publications this year on HFS that are highly relevant to the project and contribute to the foundational support of this intervention. There have also been several presentations outlining the theoretical model of HFS and the study design of this project.

**Journal publications**


**Presentations**


**Website(s) or other Internet site(s)**
As described, the HFS mobile website and the HFS Administrative Console (Goal 1) have been completed during this funding period. To access the development portal of the website, please use the following website address, with the provided username and password. Please note that this is the development site, with sample and nonsensical answers on some pages. Screenshots of the HFS Administrative Console are available in Appendix A, and screenshots of the HFS website are available in Appendix B.

https://kees.miserver.it.umich.edu/main
username: test@example.com
password: test

**Technologies or techniques**
Nothing to report

**Inventions, patent applications, and/or licenses**
Nothing to report.

**Other Products**
Nothing to report.

7. **PARTICIPANTS & OTHER COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS**

What individuals have worked on the project?

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<th>Michelle Kees, PhD</th>
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<tr>
<td>Contribution to Project:</td>
<td>Dr. Kees is responsible for implementing all aspects of the project. She is the lead author on the HFS program materials, including the curriculum, participant workbook, training materials, and program content for the mobile website.</td>
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<th>Margy Howes</th>
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<td>Researcher Identifier (e.g.):</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
<td>Anne Hathaway</td>
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<td>Ms. Meadowbrooke has contributed to the methodological design and the IRB proposal. She is also setting up the Qualtrics database for both the provider and participant surveys.</td>
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<td>Contribution to Project</td>
<td>At CHCR, Ms. Steppe has directed the technical implementation activities of the HFS mobile website and the administrative console.</td>
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Contribution to Project:

At CHCR, Ms. Chang has provided technical engineering, programming, and production services for the HFS mobile website.

Funding Support:

No other support

Has there been a change in the active other support of the PD/PI(s) or senior/key personnel since the last reporting period?
Nothing to report.

What other organizations were involved as partners?
Nothing to report.

8. SPECIAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS
Nothing to report

9. APPENDICES
   A. HFS Administrative Console screen shots
   B. HFS Mobile website screen shots
   C. Paradata sample files
A. HFS Administrative Console screen shots

Assignment to HFS Group or Web-based Condition
When a new participant enrolls in HFS, the following information will be completed on the Administrative Console, and the participant will select either the Group or Web-based (Home) Condition.

HFS: Tracking HFS Condition
All enrolled participants can be tracked by Condition (Web-based/Home vs. Group) and enrollment date.
HFS Group: Establishing a Cohort.
When a new group starts, the “Cohort” will be defined in the Administrative console, based on the name of the group (Name of City, 1), and then the dates will be entered for each scheduled group. Participants will then receive reminder texts/emails weekly to let them know when the session content is available. HFS program staff will be able to override the date in the Administrative Console if a group session is cancelled or postponed for some reason.
HFS Groups: Monitoring cohorts
Through this function on the Administrative Console, each of the group cohorts can be viewed and tracked, which will be helpful for program management and planning assessments.

HFS Web-based/Home Condition: Monitoring participants
Through this function, on the Administrative Console, participants in the Web-based/Home Condition can be viewed and tracked, which will be helpful for program management and planning assessments.
B. HFS Mobile Website screen shots
Below are screen shots from the HFS mobile website.

HomeFront Strong Welcome
HomeFront Strong Program Overview

Program Overview

The core of HomeFront Strong is the House you see above. Each topic in the House represents strategies you will learn more about in HomeFront Strong, including:

Manage Stress
- How does stress work?
- What are your personal red flags for feeling stressed?
- Learn techniques to manage stress.

Cultivate Optimism
- What are your personal red flags for feeling stressed?
- Practice gratitude, optimism, and realism.

Rethink Thinking
- What thoughts are you thinking?
- How can you (re)orient your thinking?
- Learn the 2 C's of controlling your thinking: Dispute, Discover, Distance.

Build Community
- What kind of friends do you want and need in your life?
- Learn how to build a strong social support network.

Allow Emotions
- What experiences are positive to you?
- How can you be in the moment?
- Explore new strategies for coping with uncomfortable feelings.

Practice Grounding
- What does resilience mean to you?
- What are your barriers to resilience?
- The story you tell yourself matters: what is your story as a veteran partner?

Foster Resilience
- Ask of the modules, put together, will Foster Resilience.

The pillars of the House are Grounding Strategies. Each session includes a self-care activity that teaches you how to center yourself in the moment:
- Optimism
- Breathing
- Affirmations and Mantras
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Visualization
- Guided Imagery
- Mindfulness
Session 1: Foster Resilience

Resilient people tend to do better during stressful situations. They bounce back quicker and have fewer negative effects from stress. They are also less likely to develop post-traumatic stress, depression, or other anxiety disorders.

Here are some ways to increase resilience:

- Practice self-care. Try to find time each day to prioritize yourself, whether it is 5 minutes alone time or an hour reading a book.
- Healthy body. Get a good diet, get enough sleep, cut harmful habits, and be physically active.
- Focus on the good. Find something each day that you are grateful for. Think about what you have accomplished each day rather than what you haven't.
- Draw from your own previous experiences. Think about specific times when you overcame a challenge. Use past successes to improve your confidence and your problem-solving skills.
- Ask for help. It's important to have good problem-solving skills, but it's just as important to know when and how to ask for help.
- Be kind to yourself. Remind yourself of your achievements and learn to give yourself a break. Think about what you have accomplished each day rather than what you haven't, and set realistic expectations for yourself.
- Increase your social support network and nurture existing relationships. Surround yourself with caring people who make you feel safe and supported.
- Learn to say no. It's common to commit to too many social or professional activities. Try to be honest with yourself about what's reasonable without pushing yourself over the edge.
- Focus on things you can change rather than things you can't. List all the things you have no control over.

Can you think of a few moments about which of these practices you use most often? Are there some that you would like to start using?

Resilience is a skill—like bike riding or running—that can be learned AND improved with practice.

FIB 1: As a veteran partner...

Every session of HomeFront Strong will include a FIB (Fill In the Blank) worksheet that asks you to share your thoughts and feelings about your experiences as a veteran partner. Your answers are completely private, confidential, and for your use only.

What is your story as a veteran partner?

We all have a story we tell ourselves— a running dialogue inside our head. Think about the story you tell yourself about the most challenging parts of being a veteran partner. What was— or are— some of the hardest moments for you and for your family?

This conversation is very important—please try to complete every question.

When I think about Michael's time in the military, my first thoughts are...

When I think about Michael's time in the military, I feel...

When I think about Michael's time in the military, I am afraid...

Because of Michael's time in the military, I can't...

When I think about Michael's time in the military, I am proud...

When I think about Michael's time in the military, I wish...

When I think about my relationship with Michael's time in the military, I am grateful...

When I think about my relationship with Michael's time in the military, I am grateful...

When I think about my relationship with Michael's time in the military, I am grateful...

When I think about my relationship with Michael's time in the military, I am grateful...

When I think about my relationship with Michael's time in the military, I am grateful...
Session 1: Foster Resilience

The Power of Gratitude

Practicing Gratitude Can Increase Happiness by 25!%

Gratitude is more than simply saying "thank you" to someone or expressing appreciation for a gift. Gratitude is a shift in perspective that focuses your attention on the good moments of the day for many of us, it's natural to focus on what went wrong in a situation. Unfortunately, paying attention to those daily troubles can increase feelings of stress and negativity. Gratitude, on the other hand, brings your attention to the good things in a moment.

Learning Gratitude

Many strategies help foster gratitude. "What Went Well" or "Hunt the Good Stuff" are two common exercises that are drawn from work by Dr. Martin Seligman and the field of Positive Psychology. HomeFront Strong will teach you "What Went Well!"

Research has shown that regularly practicing gratitude can help you:

- Focus on the positive things that happen each day
- Appreciate the good things that happen each day
- Build resilience during times of stress
- The more you practice gratitude, the more it will begin to incorporate itself into your daily life.

Grounding Strategy: Gratitude

Try to do this exercise at night before going to sleep.

Step 1: Think about anything good that happened to you today.

Ask yourself: "What went well?" It can be any moment from the day that was positive. It could be small. I wake up when my alarm clock first went off. Or it could be big, like getting a promotion or a workout.

Step 2: Write down 3 positive things.

For example, you might say:

- You woke up when your alarm clock first went off because you needed to get to bed at a reasonable time last night.
- You got a promotion because you've been working extra hours lately and you earned it.

Try to include at least 3 things. Even if you have to stretch for that third one. And try not to skip a night. If you do, come back to it the next night.

Consider the positives!

For more information about this exercise and related content, see Dr. Martin Seligman's "Learned Optimism" (2006).

Track Your Practice: Gratitude

Try to do this exercise each night before going to sleep.

Try to include at least 3 things, even if you have to stretch for that third one. And try not to skip a night. If you do, come back to it the next night.

What went well for you today? Reflect on why these things went well.

Thank you for joining us for Session 1. We encourage you to practice gratitude throughout the next week. We will see you next time for Session 2: Manage Stress.
Welcome back to HomeFront Strong! In this session we are going to focus on managing stress. Let’s get started.

Stress is normal. Stress is a natural part of life. When you are worried, your body releases hormones that help you cope. Your body recognizes that there is a threat, and prepares for either flight or fight.

If you were in physical danger, you would be able to survive by either fighting or fleeing. When the emergency ends, your body sends a signal to relax and return to its normal state. This type of stress is acute, meaning it is sudden and short-term — like a near-miss auto accident or an emergency medical situation.

A little stress can be a good thing. A fire alarm alerts you to avoid danger. A car horn can help you respond quicker to an urgent situation. A little stress can also energize you and help you perform better, such as having a deadline for a project or speaking before an audience.

Chronic stress builds up. Chronic stress occurs when you have repeated or ongoing stress, or when you feel like you cannot control the stress in your life. Your body does not have a chance to return to its normal, relaxed state. This kind of stress can affect your physical health, your mood, your performance at work, and your relationships.

Are you experiencing stress? Here are some common indicators of stress:

- Muscle tension in your shoulders, neck, back, jaw, chest, etc.
- Trouble concentrating, easily distracted
- Racing thoughts
- Strong emotions (crying, yelling, overly frustrated, or angry)
- Sleeplessness
- Headaches
- Irritability or impatience
- Overwhelmed by day-to-day activities
- Easily agitated, irritable, or annoyed
- Eating too much or not enough
- Feeling tired throughout the day
- Restlessness or difficulty sleeping

Do any of these sound familiar?

The good news is that we can reduce our stress!
Session 2: Manage Stress

GROUNDBNG STRATEGY: FOCUSED BREATHING

Breathing is something we do all day, every day. But we rarely take the time to focus on it.

Breathing is a core Grounding Strategy for HomeFront Strong. It is easy to do anywhere, anytime, and takes only a few minutes. Try to practice breathing exercises every day.

Press the Play button to hear an audio file of our Breathing exercise. We invite you to do this exercise often, or to come up with your own breathing practice.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOST STRESSFUL THING ABOUT MICHAEL’S TIME IN THE MILITARY? WHAT WAS ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT TIMES YOU HAD?

THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU FIND STRESSFUL AS A VETERAN AND HOW YOU COPE WITH THIS STRESS. THEN TAKE A MOMENT TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS...
Session 2: Manage Stress

Track Your Practice: Breathing

You can improve your resiliency with grounding techniques like deep breathing. Try to set aside time each day and each week for self-care strategies that lower your stress.

- May 11, 2015
- May 12, 2015
- May 13, 2015
- May 14, 2015
- May 15, 2015

Did you practice your breathing exercises? Stress rating before practice Stress rating after practice

Yes
No

Add Entry
Save

Track Your Practice: Gratitude

Try to do this exercise each night before going to sleep. Try to include at least 3 things, even if you have to stretch for that third one. Just try not to skip a night. If you do, come back to it the next night.

What went well for you today? Reflect on why those things went well.

Sept. 26, 2015

Gratitude Archive

Thank you for joining us for Session 2! We encourage you to practice breathing exercises, in addition to your daily gratitude practice. We will see you next time for Session 3: Cultivate Optimism.
Session 3: Cultivate Optimism

Welcome back to HomeFront STRONG! This session focuses on how to cope in a positive way—with difficult situations. Let’s get started.

Positive Coping

There are many ways to cope with stressful or challenging situations. For example:

- Share with someone close. Talking to a close friend can help release tension and give you a new perspective.
- Use distraction. Relax with a book, TV show, or movie. Listen to music, spend time with family or friends. Do something pleasant that takes your mind off the stressful situation.
- Get regular exercise. Physical activity can reduce stress and turn negative energy into a positive activity. Get some fresh air by going for a walk or a jog.
- Reframe negative thoughts. Try to turn negative thoughts into more positive ones. You might discover that the way you are thinking about a situation is not helpful.
- Practice grounding and relaxation techniques. Meditation, mindfulness, visualization, progressive muscle relaxation, and deep breathing are great coping skills to use in stressful situations.
- Schedule your worries. Sometimes it helps to put a positive spin on stressful situations. Try setting aside a specific time and place to worry. This can help reduce anxiety. If you notice yourself thinking about worries throughout the day, try to set up those thoughts and your scheduled worry time.
- Let yourself laugh. Laughter can improve your mood and help you feel relaxed.

Coping Strategies

Below is a list of different kinds of coping strategies. For the next week, try doing something each day from the list below. Along with coping strategies that you already use, consider trying something on the list that you’ve never tried before.

Check the coping strategies that you’d like to use this week, and we’ll save them in a list for you.

- Taking a shower or bath
- Listing to music
- Watching TV or a movie
- Going for a long drive
- Going outside for fresh air
- Playing board games or videogames
- Exercising
- Going for a walk or a run
- Practicing mindfulness
- Socializing with friends or family

Your Coping Strategies

Here are the coping strategies you said you’d like to use this week:

- Writing in a journal
- Practicing mindfulness
- Socializing with friends or family
Session 3: Cultivate Optimism

Thought Circles

We’ve gone over some different coping strategies to use when something is stressful or challenging. These strategies work because they help you change what you are thinking. Once you start doing something else, your mind is less focused on your problem.

Our thoughts, our feelings, and our actions are all connected. The things we think influence how we feel and what we do. If you are feeling upset, it is likely because of something that you are thinking.

What are your thoughts?

What is your situation?

What are your feelings?

What are your actions?

Here are some examples:

Think back to the first session of HomeFront Strong. You may have had mixed feelings about joining a program for veterans. Let’s take a look at two different ways you may have felt. After you look at the thoughts, feelings, and actions for Scenario #1, read through Scenario #2 and see how they are different.

FIB 3: Veteran Life... Thoughts and Feelings

In this exercise, we will show you 4 examples of thoughts that other veterans have shared with us about their time in the military. Each example has a negative and positive way of thinking. Please read the Thoughts, and fill in the blanks with a feeling that could happen if you had that thought. And then, what might be some actions that follow?

After you’ve gone through the 4 examples, you will see some blank pages where you can fill in your own examples.

Negligent example (1 of 4)

Your situation...

As a veteran family,

Your thoughts might be...

Michael will never be the same person after his time in the military.

Your feelings might be...

Your actions might be...

Positive example (1 of 4)

Your situation...

As a veteran family,

Your thoughts might be...

Our family will be closer because of our experiences as a veteran family.

Your feelings might be...

Your actions might be...

As you can see, having different thoughts—even in the same situation—can influence your feelings and your actions.

What are your thoughts?

What is your situation?

What are your feelings?

What are your actions?
Grounding Strategy: Affirmations

Affirmations are positive statements that can help when you feel upset or trapped in negative thoughts. When you notice this happening, stop and repeat your affirmation instead of your negative thoughts. Different affirmations may work better for different situations.

The story we tell ourselves matters, and affirmations can help us shape that story.

Check the affirmations that you’d like to use this week, and we’ll save them in a list for you. Practice using your affirmations throughout the day.

- This will pass
- I can do this
- Move on
- This won’t last forever
- I’m getting through
- Be done
- Put one foot in front of the other
- Get through the day
- I’m where I’m supposed to be
- I’ll be fine

What are 2 affirmations that have helped you with your experience as a veterans partner?

Your Affirmations

Here are the affirmations you said you’d like to use this week:

- I can do this
- I’m getting through
- Be done

Track Your Practice: Gratitude

Try to do this exercise each night before going to sleep.

Try to include at least 3 things, even if you have to stretch for that third one. And try not to skip a night, if you do, come back to it the next night.

What went well for you today? Reflect on why these things went well.

- Date: 26, 2015

Thank you for joining us for Session 3! We encourage you to practice affirmations, mantras, and mantras, in addition to your daily gratitude practice. We will see you next time for Session 4: Rethinking Thinking Part 1.
Session 4: Rethink Thinking, Part 1

Welcome back to HomeFront Strong!

We have been talking about how the story we tell ourselves about veteran life matters. Sometimes this story starts to become negative. The 3 D’s are strategies to help us rethink our negative thinking: Dispute, Discover, and Distraction. In this session, we’ll focus on the first 2 D’s: Dispute and Discover.

**Discover**

Dispute is just what it sounds like — dispute your negative beliefs. Challenge those thoughts, prove your negative self-wrong. You can’t always control the first thought that comes into your head, but you can control the second thought and what you do with that thought. When using Dispute to test your negative thoughts, ask yourself these questions:

- Is there any evidence for that thought?
- Is this really important? Am I blowing this out of proportion?
- Am I exaggerating or generalizing? You can often spot this when you use “always” and “never” in your thoughts.
- How useful are my beliefs? Are they working for me? Would I benefit more from different beliefs?

Let’s practice Dispute.

Let’s look at an example. Imagine you are on the phone with Michael, and he suddenly hangs up on you. You might have some thoughts about this, and they might not be positive. In the example below, talk yourself through how you might dispute these negative thoughts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your thoughts: He’s angry at me again. Every day! I can’t do anything right. I don’t even know why I try.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ask yourself...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this really true?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How likely is this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What's the evidence for this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this really important?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am I catastrophizing or blowing this out of proportion?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am I exaggerating?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How useful are my beliefs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this working for me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would I benefit from a different belief?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Session 4: Rethink Thinking, Part 1**

---

### Discover...What's Another Perspective?

Optical illusions are common. The images below show that your perspective - in any one scene - can change what you see. In our next skill, **Discover**, we want to focus on ways to change your perspective.

**Discover**

1. **Dispute and Discover**
2. **Grounding Strategy: Muscle Relaxation**

**Your Practice:**

1. **Discover**
2. **Dispute and Discover**
3. **Grounding Strategy: Muscle Relaxation**

---

### Discover

In **Discover**, we begin to consider other perspectives. What are other possible explanations? Why else might this person have acted this way? What else could be going on?

1. Consider other possible explanations. Why else might the other person have acted this way? What else could be going on?
2. **Your Practice:**
   - **Discover**
   - **Dispute and Discover**
   - **Grounding Strategy: Muscle Relaxation**

---

**Discover...What's Another Perspective?**

- What's another perspective on the situation?
- What else might be happening?
- What else might the other person have done?
- **Your Practice:**
  - **Discover**
  - **Dispute and Discover**
  - **Grounding Strategy: Muscle Relaxation**
FIB 4: Dispute and Discover

Think about a very stressful experience you’ve had as a veteran partner. In the box below, type in a negative thought you have about that experience.

Now, let’s work to change that negative thought by answering these questions for dispute and discover.

Dispute

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ask yourself...</th>
<th>Your answer?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is this really true?</td>
<td>(Your answer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How might I feel?</td>
<td>(Your answer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s the evidence for this?</td>
<td>(Your answer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this really important?</td>
<td>(Your answer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am I catastrophizing or blowing this out of proportion?</td>
<td>(Your answer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am I exaggerating?</td>
<td>(Your answer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How useful are my beliefs?</td>
<td>(Your answer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this working for me?</td>
<td>(Your answer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would this benefit a different belief?</td>
<td>(Your answer)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discover

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ask yourself...</th>
<th>Your answer?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>what’s another explanation?</td>
<td>(Your answer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What else might be happening?</td>
<td>(Your answer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What else is going on with the other person?</td>
<td>(Your answer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this really about me?</td>
<td>(Your answer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what’s the other person’s perspective?</td>
<td>(Your answer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What might another friend say to me about this?</td>
<td>(Your answer)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Session 4: Rethink Thinking, Part 1

Grounding Strategy: Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

For the grounding strategy this session, we’d like to teach you a relaxation technique called PMR. Progressive Muscle Relaxation is a relaxation technique that involves tensing and then relaxing your muscles. You will be asked to apply tension to specific muscle groups, and then pay attention to how your body feels when you stop applying tension.

Press the Play button to begin the exercise.

With practice, you can learn how to modulate relax and lower your stress level.

Track Your Practice: Progressive Muscle Relaxation

You can improve your resilience by using grounding techniques like Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR). Try to set aside time every day for activities that help lower your stress. Use this space to track your practice of Progressive Muscle Relaxation. Note your stress level before and after doing PMR.

Track Your Practice: Gratitude

Try to do this exercise each night before going to sleep. Try to include at least 3 things, even if you have to stretch for that third one. And try not to skip a night. If you do, come back to it the next night.

What went well for you today? Reflect on why these things went well.

Thank you for joining us for Session 4. We encourage you to practice progressive muscle relaxation, in addition to your daily gratitude practice. We will see you next time for Session 5: Rethink Thinking Part 2.
Session 5: Rethink Thinking 2

Welcome back to Resilient Front!

Remember the 3 Ds from the last session: Dispute and Discover. Now we'll focus on the 3rd D: Distractions.

Let's start with a quote from the Russian author Dostoevsky: “Try to pass for yourself this task: not to think of a white bear and you will see that the second thing will come to mind every minute.”

Although it was written in 1863, this sentence still rings true today. When we try not to think about something, it seems like that's all we can think about. We may try to ignore unwanted thoughts, but a part of our mind can't stop thinking about them. So what can we do?

Sometimes, our strategies of Dispute and Discover work well for changing negative thoughts. Other times, we just need a break from thinking. It's at these times that we recommend the 3rd D: Distraction.

Distraction is anything you do to purposely get your mind off of what's bothering you. It's powerful and is not escaping or procrastinating. It is consciously using something else – another thought, activity, or sensation – to remove your mind away from unhelpful thoughts. Distraction techniques provide a mental break from having to think. You can then choose a later time to return to your thoughts, when you are better able to use Dispute and Discovery strategies.

**Tips for Distraction**

Whatever distracts you – even temporarily – will allow your brain to break the cycle of negative thinking. Here are some ideas:

- **Anything you enjoy**
- **Anything that keeps you busy**
- Read a book, solve a puzzle, or listen to music.
- Exercise or take a walk.
- Spend time with friends.
- Start or complete a project.
- Watch TV, read, or listen.
- Take care of a task or errand.
- Actively play with children or pets.

Sometimes distraction techniques serve a double purpose: cleaning the house means we checked something off of the “to do” list, or going for a walk makes us exercised. These techniques get our mind off of negative thinking and give us something to feel good about.

Let's Practice Distraction

Let's go back to our example: you're on the phone with Michael and he hangs up on you. If those same negative thoughts come up, how might you apply distraction?

What are some ways you could distract yourself in this situation?

---

**Session 5: Rethink Thinking, Part 2**

Tips for Distraction

Try a New Way of Thinking

FIB 5: Thought Swapping

Grounding Strategy: Visualization

Track Your Practice: Visualization

Talk Your Practice: Gratitudes
Session 5: Rethink Thinking, Part 2

Try a New Way of Thinking

Let's practice your new thinking strategies this week. If a negative situation comes up, use the thought circle to write down the thoughts, feelings, and actions that follow. Also, try to use Dispute, Discover, and Distract to counter those negative thoughts.

Dispute

Ask yourself:.... Your answer?
- Is this really true?
- How likely is this?
- What is the evidence for this?
- Is this really important?
- Am I catastrophizing or blowing this out of proportion?
- How useful are my beliefs?
- Is this working for me?
- Would I benefit from a different belief?

Discover

Ask yourself:.... Your answer?
- What's another explanation?
- What else might be happening?
- Why else is going on with the other person?
- Is this really about me?
- What's the other person's perspective?
- What might another friend say to me about this?

Distract

Ask yourself:.... Your answer?
- What can I do to distract myself?
Session 5: Rethink Thinking, Part 2

FIB 5: Thought Swapping

A key part of resiliency is to train your brain to swap out negative thoughts for thoughts that are positive or neutral.

Below is a sample of thoughts and feelings that you may have had at some point in your experience with your new life. Please read through each example, and give an alternative thought. Some of these examples might not apply to you and your family. That’s ok. Just give it a try. Imagine what an alternative thought might be for those examples you...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you are thinking or feeling...</th>
<th>Instead you might think...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am exhausted managing everything in our lives.</td>
<td>I am tired but this part of my life isn’t going to last forever.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am anxious about so many things.</td>
<td>It is normal to be scared and anxious. I have a list of other things to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am worried about something bad happening to someone else.</td>
<td>I am worried but I can’t do anything to help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am angry about my experiences as a veteran partner.</td>
<td>I am angry about my experiences as a veteran partner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am frustrated.</td>
<td>I am frustrated but I can’t do anything.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grounding Strategy: Visualization

Our grounding strategy this week is Visualization. Find a comfortable place for this activity, and press the Play button to begin.
Session 5: Rethink Thinking, Part 2

Track Your Practice: Visualization

You can improve your resilience by using grounding techniques like visualization. Try to set aside time everyday for activities that help lower your stress.

- June 1, 2015
- June 2, 2015
- June 3, 2015

Did you practice guided imagery? | Stress rating before practice | Stress rating after practice
--- | --- | ---
Yes | 5 | 2
No | | |

Add row | Save

- June 4, 2015
- June 5, 2015
- June 6, 2015
- June 7, 2015

Track Your Practice: Gratitude

Try to do this exercise each night before going to sleep. Try to include at least 3 things, even if you have to stretch for that third one. And try not to skip a night. If you do, come back to it the next night.

What went well for you today? Reflect on why these things went well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sept. 26, 2015</th>
<th>Gratitude Archive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Add row | Save

Thank you for joining us for Session 5! We encourage you to practice visualization in addition to your daily gratitude practice. We will see you next time for Session 6: Build Community.
Welcome back to Homefront STRONG! This week’s focus is on friendship and getting the support you need.

Social Support - What kind of support do you need?

When we go through stressful times, people may say, “I’m not sure if you need anything” but it can be really hard to figure out exactly what we need.

There are 4 kinds of support that we might need from our community:

* Emotional: Someone we can share our feelings with and who will listen to us.
* Practical: Someone who can do things for us, this may be family, a friend, or a co-worker.
* Informational: Someone who can answer questions and give us information.
* Companionship: Someone we can hang out with and have fun.

Thinking about your community, which of your friends fits each of these categories?

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Session 7: Allow Emotions

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Session 8: Stay Strong

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Session 6: Build Community

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FIB 6: Social Support and Military Life

For this week’s FIB, please focus on friendships and relationships. THINK about your relationship with Michael.

Who do you confide in or go to when you want to talk?

Who do you do things with when you need help getting something done?

Who do you go to when you need information or advice?

Who do you go to when you want to relax or have fun?

What is it about these relationships that makes you feel close to this person/these people?

Throughout your veteran life experiences, how have these relationships changed?

Do you have any job openings? What can you do about that?
Managing Expectations

Are your expectations realistic?

As you look at your friendships and the types of support you need, you may notice that you have certain expectations of people in your life. Are your expectations being met? If yes, great! Thank that person and keep that relationship going strong.

If your expectations are not being met, are your expectations realistic? We are not asking if your expectations are fair, but whether they are realistic for that person. If you are often angry, frustrated, irritated, annoyed, sad, or disappointed with someone — your expectations probably aren’t realistic for that person.

It is hard, and often unfair, when our expectations are not met. But sometimes people are just not able or willing to live up to what we want or need. You might need to adjust your expectations to reduce your own disappointment and frustration.

Managing Expectations

Are your expectations realistic? If you are often angry, frustrated, irritated, annoyed, sad, or disappointed with someone — your expectations probably aren’t realistic for that person.

Let’s think about expectations.

For these next questions, think about someone in your life who didn’t live up to your expectations. For example:

• Someone who wasn’t there for you or who didn’t come through for you when you expected them to

• Someone who did something hurtful that you wouldn’t have expected

What expectations did you have of this person?

Were these expectations realistic? Was this person really capable of giving you what you wanted or needed? (Hint: If you have to ask yourself this question, unfortunately the answer is probably no.)

How could you revise your expectations of this person?

Grounding Strategy: Guided Imagery

Next we’d like to walk you through a Guided Imagery exercise. Guided imagery is a grounding technique that can help you manage stress and build resilience.

To begin, move to a quiet room or space where you can be alone and will not be tempted by distractions. Then, press the Play button to begin.

< Back Next >
Session 6: Build Community

Track Your Practice: Guided Imagery

You can improve your resiliency by using grounding techniques like Guided Imagery. Try to set aside time every day for activities that help lower your stress.

Track Your Practice: Gratitude

Try to do this exercise each night before going to sleep.

Try to include at least 3 things, even if you have to stretch for the third one. And try not to skip a night. If you do, come back to it the next night!

What went well for you today? Reflect on why these things went well.

Thank you for joining us for Session 6! We encourage you to practice guided imagery. In addition to your daily gratitude practice, we will see you next time for Session 7: Allow Emotions.
Welcome back to HomeFront Strong! This session is about focusing on your emotions.

Session 7: Allow Emotions

Building Positive Experiences

When life gets busy or stressful, we often skip the fun things we really enjoy. NOW is the time to increase your positive experiences!

For the next week, try doing something each day from the list below. Along with activities that you already do, consider trying something on the list that you’ve never tried before.

Check the activities that you'd like to do this week, and we'll save them as a list for you. Have fun!

- Go for a walk or jog
- Spend time outdoors
- Sit in the sun
- Read a book or magazine
- Go out to lunch or dinner
- See a movie
- Watch a TV show
- Plan a vacation or weekend getaway
- Find an organization you can volunteer for
- Organize your house
- Browse the internet
- Read or write a blog
- Write in a journal
- Reach out to friends or family members you don’t see enough
- Practice meditation or yoga
- Go to the beach
- Go skiing
- More

Your Positive Experiences

Here's what you said you'd like to do to build your positive experiences this week. Use this list as a reminder to do something fun every day!

- Spend time outdoors
- Sit in the sun
- Reach out to friends or family members you don’t see enough

Next
Allow Emotions

Your feelings are real and valid. Earlier in Home Front Strong, we talked about how we can’t stop our thoughts. The same is true for feelings: we can’t stop or change them. It’s helpful to find a way to cope with these feelings.

Home Front Strong has a strategy for managing strong feelings: Observe, Experience, and Allow. It takes time and practice to learn this new strategy and to make it a habit. As with all skills, the more you practice, the easier it will be for you.

Whenever you find yourself in a situation with strong feelings, keep these 3 steps in mind:

1. **Observe**
   - Notice you are having a feeling.
   - Step back. Take a breath.
   - What are you feeling? Put the feeling into words in your head.
   - I have the feeling of ________.

2. **Experience**
   - Let yourself feel.
   - Watch the feeling come and go, like a cloud moving through the sky.
   - Try not to block emotion. Don’t push it away.
   - At the same time, don’t hold on to it. And don’t make it bigger than it is.

3. **Allow**
   - It is there.
   - You are not your emotion.
   - You don’t have to act on these feelings.
   - Remember times when you have felt different, and know that you will feel better again.

FIB 7: Observe, Experience, Allow

For this FIB, think of something that happened this week where you felt some kind of negative emotion. Try to think of a situation that was not too challenging but still brought up negative feelings, like being stuck in traffic, waiting at a restaurant, losing your car keys, or feeling frustrated with a friend.

Answer the questions below using the steps Observe, Experience, Allow:

- **Observe**
  - What was the situation?
  - What was your emotion or feeling in this situation?
  - Thinking of your Stress Rating Scale, how intense was the emotion on a scale of 1-10?

- **Experience**
  - Did anything feel good about this emotion? What did you like about having this emotion?
  - Did you ignore your feelings? How did that make the situation better or worse?
  - Were you able to pay attention to the emotion, without making it stronger? How so?

- **Allow**
  - Did you act on the emotion? If yes, what happened? If no, why not?
  - Is this emotion permanent? Will you feel differently again?
Session 7: Allow Emotions

Mindfulness in Daily Life

The practice of mindfulness has been linked to greater resilience, and improved physical and mental health. Here are some suggestions for including mindfulness in your daily activities.

Sometimes it’s hard to remain fully present in the moment, and you may notice yourself being pulled into negative thoughts or feelings. That’s ok — allow it to happen and gently return your mind to the present.

Mindful chores

Think about all the routine tasks you do throughout the day: washing dishes, doing laundry, or driving to work. When you do these activities, practice directing your attention fully to the task.

- When you wash dishes, notice how the water feels against your skin, the temperature, the sensation of soap bubbles. You may notice the sound of dishes clanging together or the rushing of the water from the faucet.
- When you might otherwise be thinking about things you need to do, or rehearsing something earlier in the day, see if you can be present with all of the sensations and experience the task directly at hand.

Mindful grooming

Think about all the grooming tasks you do each day: brushing your teeth and hair, washing your face and hands, shaving, bathe, getting dressed and undressed. These actions usually happen at the beginning and end of the day, giving you the opportunity to practice mindfulness and be present as you get ready to start the day and again as you wind down. It may be helpful to try with one type of grooming activity to try mindfuly and see what you notice day-to-day. You can experience the same tasks:

- Feel the sensation of the toothbrush against your teeth or the comb stimulating your scalp.
- Hear the sound of the water splashing against your face.

Mindful listening to music

Music often serves as a backdrop to a variety of activities in our daily life. We may play music in the car, hear it in a store or listen to it at home.

- When music is playing, see if you can bring your attention to the rhythm, the melody, and the words (if present).
- You may even practice noticing any emotions the music stirs while remaining present with the music itself.

Mindful conversations

When talking with others, try to be fully present for the conversation. You may drift toward other thoughts that aren’t related to the conversation, but try to notice your mind wandering and bring your self back.

Listen completely when the other person is talking and be fully aware of what you are contributing to the conversation when you speak.

Mindful exercise or walking

When you move your body, you have an excellent opportunity to practice mindfulness. This can be during exercise or just while walking. Some people find it easier to be present with their bodies when they are moving, since the motion of their bodies can anchor them if their minds begins to wander.

- While walking, you can be aware of the rhythm of your walking motion, the feel of your feet making contact with the ground, the swaying of your arms, or the way you hold your shoulders as you move.
- When you exercise, you may also be able to notice feelings of physical tension or stiffness.

Grounding Strategy: Mindfulness

Now we’re going to demonstrate a mindfulness exercise to help you with this week’s grounding strategy. For this activity, please choose a small piece of wrapped candy, but do not open the candy. Press the Play button to begin.
Session 7: Allow Emotions

Track Your Practice: Mindfulness

You can improve your resiliency with stress reduction techniques like mindfulness. Try to set aside time each day and each week for personal activities that lessen your stress.

- June 13, 2015
- June 18, 2015
- June 17, 2015
- June 18, 2015
- June 19, 2015
- June 20, 2015
- June 21, 2015

Did you practice mindfulness stress during before practice stress during after practice

Yes
No

Add Item
Save

Track Your Practice: Gratitude

Try to do this exercise each night before going to sleep.

Try to include at least 3 things, even if you have to stretch for that third one. And try not to skip a night. If you do, come back to it the next night!

What were 3 things for you today? Reflect on why those things went well.

Gratitude Archive

Thank you for joining us for Session 7! We encourage you to practice mindfulness in addition to your daily gratitude practice. We will see you next time for Session 8: Stay Strong.
Welcome back to HomeFront Strong for our 8th and final session. This session focuses on how to stay strong using the tools you've learned through HomeFront Strong.

Overcoming Barriers

Barriers or challenges are common in life. Sometimes things can get in the way of our ability to “bounce back” from a challenge. The key to overcoming barriers is to identify what gets in the way of using the skills you have learned in HomeFront Strong. We’ll help you think about the following questions:

What are some of your personal barriers to bouncing back from a challenge?

How can you overcome these barriers?

Tips for Overcoming Barriers

Our HomeFront Strong house can be a reminder of the new tools you’ve learned, and can help you overcome barriers.

Foster Resilience

Remember that resilience can be improved with practice.
- Use your social support network and ask for help when you need it.
- Learn to let go of things you can’t control.
- Remember your past successes when trying to overcome challenges.

Cultivate Optimism

Remember to look for what went well on a daily basis. Regular gratitude practice can:
- Help you focus on and appreciate the positive things that happen every day.
- Increase your resilience in stressful times.

Manage Stress

When things feel unmanageable, choose a positive coping strategy that works best for you.
- Keep in mind your “red flags” that are cues to your rising stress level.
- Remember to use the Stress Rating Scale to put your stress in perspective.

Rethink Thinking

Thoughts, feelings, and actions are all connected.
- Practice disputing negative beliefs. Discovering other perspectives, and distracting yourself from the cycle of negative thinking.
- If you notice you’re getting stuck, try repeating an affirmation that you believe in.

Build Community

In any situation, we all need different types of social support.
- What kind of support do you need? Emotional; Practical; Informational; or Companionship.
- Do you have any job openings? If so, try to keep open to new experiences and ideas to build your social support network.
Session 8: Stay Strong

Allow Emotions

Feelings are real, true, and valid. Try practicing [Observe, Experience, Allow] when you have a negative feeling.
- Label the feeling, sit with yourself, [Observe, Experience, Allow] without making it bigger, and allow the feeling to exist.
- Remember that you will feel better again.

Practice Grounding

These grounding strategies help both your mind and body. Try them all and see what works best for you.
- Gratitude
- Breathing
- Affirmations, Mantras, and Motifs
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Visualization
- Guided imagery
- Mindfulness

FIB 8: Stay Strong

For this week's FIB, think about how far you've traveled since the beginning of HomeFront Strong. You've come a long way!

Think back to when you first started HomeFront Strong. What did you think the program was going to be like? How has it met your expectations?

What is the most important thing you got out of this program?

What are some skills you've learned?

How will you continue to use these skills?

What are you most proud of in yourself since HomeFront Strong started?

What does Resilience mean to you?
Mindfulness of the Senses

Just like our daily routines, our senses help anchor us in the present. You may find it helpful to connect with your senses throughout the day:

- Try to be present with your senses when you are feeling overwhelmed. This can help calm you and give you some distance or perspective.
- Your mind may wander and draw you into thoughts and emotions. You may notice that you are judging what you see, hear, smell, taste, or touch. Become aware of your thoughts and judgments, and notice them simply as part of the experience of your sensations. Don’t be pushed by them.

**Vision**

There are a variety of visual stimuli you may choose to focus on. For example:

- Simply notice whatever is around you at any moment.
- Become aware of the shape, colors, textures, and movement that you see.
- Notice the visual cues like signal (end of use objects) and the beginning of the next.
- Look for visual experiences that bring you pleasure; a beloved piece of art, an element of nature, or the face of someone you love.
- Be present with the overall visual picture, as well as the small details you see.

**Hearing**

The world is full of sounds, some you may enjoy (bulldozer), and some you may not (fire alarms). Practice being present with any and all noises in your environment, tuning into whatever sounds you hear.

- Also note silence and the sensations associated with it.
- Try practicing with specific sounds, like music, nature sounds, or bells.
- If there are sounds you find soothing, you can train them to demand (e.g., recordings of favorite music or everyday sounds like a ticking clock).
- Practice being present even with unpleasant sounds. You may find these sounds to be more tolerable when you allow them and explore them.
- Try to notice the distinction between the sounds themselves and your emotional reaction to them.

**Touch**

We are in constant contact with the physical world through our sense of touch, though we are not often aware of this contact. Our skin is the largest organ in the body. Through the sense of touch, we have the opportunity to be in the present moment at any time. Try touching the way these things feel:

- Your clothes against your body
- Meat or cold especially on very warm or cold days, noticing what the temperature feels like against your skin or deep in your body
- Physical contact with others, like petting an animal, hugging, or shaking someone’s hand
- Different textures (e.g., soft or coarse fabrics, blankets or clothing)
- The sensation of pressure due to movement (e.g., feet pressing against the ground while walking, fingers pressing against keys while typing on a keyboard)
- The pressure and feel of the body as it comes in contact with different things (e.g., sitting on a hard bench or laying on a soft mattress)

**Taste**

Taste is a key part of our daily experience. You can practice mindful awareness of taste by focusing on your meals and slowing down your eating to truly notice the taste of your food:

- Try noticing the variety of tastes even within a single type of food.
- Become aware of different tastes on different parts of your tongue.
- Try tasting things with strong flavors (e.g., sour lemon, bitter dark chocolate, salty pretzels, sweet maple syrup).
- See if you can eat slowly, truly tasting each bite, and focus your attention on your food without distractions. Try eating in a quiet space, without speaking or doing anything else during your meal.
- Savour each bite, treating it like a very delicious food you do not eat often. Notice how this feels, even for foods you do not enjoy.

**Smell**

We are often only aware of strong smells that are either pleasant or unpleasant. You can practice mindfulness through smell when you notice a particularly strong smell. Even if there isn’t a strong scent, you can direct attention to your sense of smell and notice what is present:

- Become aware of any associations or memories a smell evokes. Perhaps the scent of cardamom baking reminds you of your grandmother. Notice these connections without being drawn into them.
- Try making a list of scents that make you feel good and use these at times when you may be struggling. Some people enjoy the smell of candles, lotions, flowers, or certain foods.
Session 8: Stay Strong

Grounding Strategy: Meditation

Let's do a mindfulness exercise that focuses on your breathing. Take a moment to get into a comfortable position before you begin. Please click here for the exercise.

Track Your Practice: Grounding Strategy

You can improve your resiliency by using stress-reduction techniques like Deep Breathing, Progressive Muscle Relaxation, Gratitude, Affirmations, Visualization, Guided Imagery, or meditation. Try to set aside time every day for activities that help lower your stress. Keep practicing!

Track Your Practice: Gratitude

Try to do this exercise each night before going to sleep. Try to include at least 3 things, even if you have to stretch for that third one. And try not to skip a night. If you do, come back to it the next night!

What went well for you today? Reflect on why these things went well.
C. **Paradata Sample File**

The file below is a screenshot from our internal pilot testing of the HFS mobile website and the paradata.

- Column A – Subject ID
- Column B – The website subpage that was clicked
- Column C – The time when the subpage was clicked
- Column D – The length of time the subpage was active

We are writing syntax to operationalize session dose and session completion based on length of time that subpages are active and numbers of clicks per session topics.

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