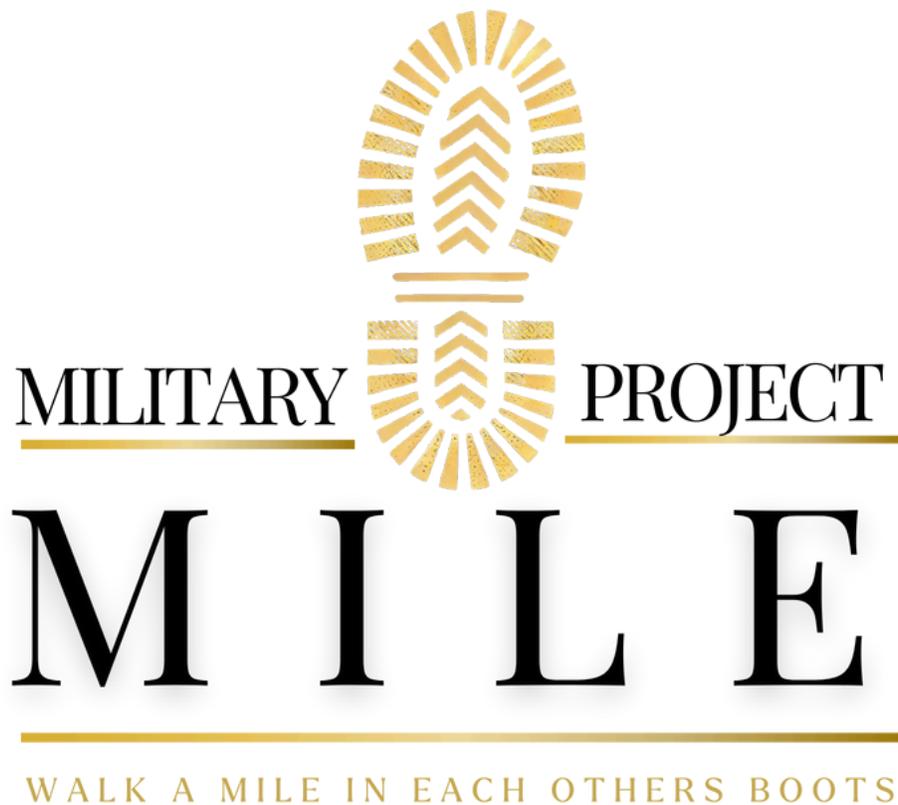


MILITARY MILE

TRAINING PACKET



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www.giveanhour.org 

info@giveanhour.org 

“Everyone has Mental Health”



Mental health is part
of *being human*



It's not always illness,
it's experiences



Everyone will be
touched by it



It's *not* only the
bad stuff



It's impacted by
everything around us



You have the *power* to
make a difference

Breaking Stigma Starts With You

- Start real conversations — even if they feel uncomfortable
 - Lead with empathy instead of assumptions
 - Stay curious, ask questions and really listen
 - Speak up when you hear stereotypes
- Promote the truth: a mentally fit force is a stronger force
 - Model that asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness
 - Use your influence — no matter your rank — to create spaces where conversations about mental health can happen
- Say it clearly: “It’s okay to ask for help”
 - Share stories, moments, and messages that make support-seeking feel normal
 - Remind others: struggling doesn’t make you broken — it makes you human

Understanding Trauma



Trauma refers to the emotional, psychological, and physical response to a deeply distressing or disturbing event. This could be a one-time event or ongoing stress.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), trauma is a widespread experience that affects people regardless of their age, gender, socioeconomic background, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.

Over 60% of adults in the U.S. report having experienced at least one traumatic event in their lifetime

Trauma isn't just about the event itself but the lasting impact it leaves on a person's mental and emotional well-being. Recovery is possible with the right support, coping strategies, and trauma-informed mental health care.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN MIND & BODY

Trauma is Emotional & Physical



Trauma is not just emotional; it can also affect physical health. People who have experienced trauma may have chronic health issues like heart disease, digestive problems, or autoimmune disorders due to prolonged stress.



The body may remain in a heightened state of stress, leading to a "fight or flight" response long after the danger has passed.

THE HEALING JOURNEY

Many people who experience trauma recover with time and support. Factors like having a solid support system, practicing self-care, and developing coping skills can aid in healing.

Individuals who have practiced resilience are able to "bounce back" from trauma. Resilience is reinforced through positive relationships, self-compassion, and mental health care can improve recovery outcomes.

TYPES OF TRAUMA

Acute

Results from a single, isolated event (e.g., a car accident, natural disaster).

Chronic

Repeated and prolonged exposure to traumatic events (e.g., domestic violence, ongoing bullying).

Complex

Exposure to varied and multiple traumatic events, often of an interpersonal nature, over a long period (e.g., childhood abuse).

Vicarious

Secondary trauma experienced by individuals (e.g., first responders, caregivers) who hear or witness someone else's traumatic experiences.

WHAT IS TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

This approach recognized the prevalence of trauma and ensures that services do not retraumatize individuals. It emphasizes safety, trustworthiness, collaboration, and empowerment.

Common Reactions to Stress

Emotional

Feelings & Mood

Physical

Body & Health

Social

Relationships &
Interactions

Cognitive

Thoughts &
Perceptions

Behavioral

Actions &
Habits

Spiritual/ Existential

Beliefs
& Purpose

Often our friends, neighbors, co-workers, and family members are suffering emotionally and don't recognize the symptoms or won't ask for help. If you recognize that you or someone else needs help, reach out, show compassion and a willingness to find a solution when the person may not have the will or drive to do it alone.

Here are five signs that may mean someone is in emotional pain and might need help:



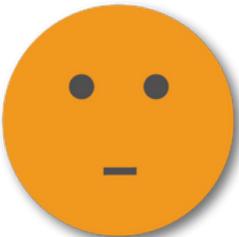
PERSONALITY CHANGES

You may notice sudden or gradual changes in the way that someone typically behaves. People in this situation may behave in ways that don't seem to fit their values, or the person may just seem different.



UNCHARACTERISTICALLY ANGRY, ANXIOUS, AGITATED, OR MOODY

You may notice the person has more frequent problems controlling his or her temper and seems irritable or unable to calm down. People in more extreme situations of this kind may be unable to sleep or may explode in anger at a minor problem.



WITHDRAWAL OR ISOLATION FROM OTHER PEOPLE

Someone who used to be socially engaged may pull away from family and friends and stop taking part in activities that used to be enjoyable. In more severe cases the person may start failing to make it to work or school. Not to be confused with the behavior of someone who is more introverted, this sign is marked by a change in a person's typical sociability, as when someone pulls away from the social support typically available.



MAY NEGLECT SELF-CARE AND ENGAGE IN RISKY BEHAVIOR

You may notice a change in the person's level of personal care or an act of poor judgment. For instance, someone may let personal hygiene deteriorate, or the person may start abusing alcohol or illicit substances or engaging in other self-destructive behavior that may alienate loved ones.



OVERCOME WITH HOPELESSNESS AND OVERWHELMED BY CIRCUMSTANCES

Have you noticed someone who used to be optimistic and now can't find anything to be hopeful about? That person may be suffering from extreme or prolonged grief, or feelings of worthlessness or guilt. People in this situation may say that the world would be better off without them, suggesting suicidal thinking.

Timeline Activity: Mapping Growth, Strength & Resilience

Using the provided timeline template, take a few minutes to plot significant events in your life. These may include:

Major Transitions (Life changes that marked a new chapter)

- First deployment – Leaving home, adapting to an operational environment.
- Promotion to leadership – Taking on greater responsibility.
- Marriage, divorce, or starting a family – Major relationship shifts
- Graduation from boot camp or training – A milestone that tested your endurance
- First duty station assignment – Adjusting to a new location, expectations, or culture

Losses (Moments of grief, change, or identity shifts)

- Losing a teammate or mentor – Navigating grief in a military setting.
- End of a relationship due to military demands – Coping with distance and duty.
- Medical event or injury – Facing unexpected career and life changes.
- Losing confidence in leadership or the system – Moments of disillusionment

Hardships (Struggles that tested you mentally, physically, or emotionally)

- Feeling isolated during deployment – Being away from family and support.
- Struggling with mental health or burnout – Coping with stress, PTSD, or anxiety.
- Balancing service with family responsibilities – Managing duty and home life.
- Being stationed somewhere you didn't want to be – Learning to find meaning despite circumstances
- Financial struggles – Learning financial stability

Turning Points (Pivotal moments that changed your mindset or path)

- Experiencing failure but pushing forward – A moment that redefined resilience
- Learning to advocate for yourself or others – Finding your voice in the system
- Coming to terms with a major life or identity shift – Adapting to who you've become

Moments of Resilience (Times you overcame adversity and grew from it)

- Helping a fellow service member through a tough time – Showing up for others
- Speaking up when it was hard – Demonstrating courage despite fear
- Receiving unexpected encouragement from a mentor – A moment of clarity.
- Recovering from an injury or illness – Strengthening your body and mind

Instructions:

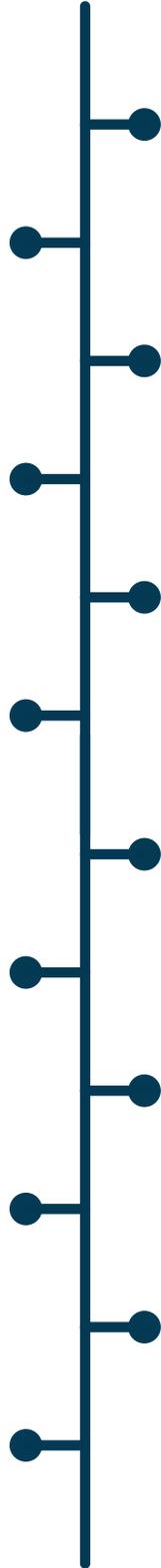
Mark key events along your timeline.

Write a few words or phrases to describe each event.

What did you feel during each event? Happy, Overwhelmed, Isolated, Determined?

Reflect: *What patterns do you see? How have you changed over time? What did you gain from difficult experiences?*

Timeline Activity: Mapping Growth, Strength & Resilience



Helpful or Harmful

What's the Behavior

Statement	What's the Behavior	Say this Instead	Skill
"It's probably not that big of a deal."	Invalidating	"It makes sense that it's hitting you this way. Everyone reacts differently when we're under pressure."	Validating
"I'm always here for you – anytime, day or night."	Unhealthy Boundaries	"I care about you and I'll support you however I can. Let's talk about what kind of help you'd find most useful right now."	Boundaries
"You just need to toughen up."	Judging	"That sounds really hard. Want to talk more about what's been weighing on you?"	Empathy
"When I went through that, I did..."	Unsolicited Advice	"I've been through something kind of similar, but I know everyone's experience is different. Do you want to talk about yours?"	Listening to Understand

Open Ended Questions

Who, What, Where, How

Who do you consider your closest allies or support system and how have they assisted you in coping with stress on the job or in your personal life?

What aspects of your relationship do you find most challenging to navigate? (“What’s been going on between you guys?”)

What, if any, specific concerns or responsibilities do you find overwhelming? (“What are your biggest concerns right now?”)

When you imagine a future where stress is minimized, **what** changes do you see happening in your habits or circumstances?

Where do you feel the most pressured or stressed?

How have recent events affected your friendships and social interactions?

How do you envision resolving the current issues you are facing? (“What could be a solution to this issue?”)

How has the recent situation impacted your emotions and well-being? (“Talk me through where your heads at.”)

Supporting vs. Shouldering: Understanding the Difference

Understanding the difference between showing support and shouldering is crucial in setting boundaries; ensuring we can provide effective emotional support without compromising our mental health.



Supporting

Supporting is being empathetic and showing concern for others without taking on their burdens. Supporting EMPOWERS the other person, and when you support, you maintain healthy boundaries to protect your own mental health and well-being, preventing you from becoming overly involved or affected by the other person's problems. Supporting doesn't mean it's YOUR job to FIX or find solutions; instead, it is to show care and compassion to the other person so that they can find their own solutions. Supporting is a BALANCED approach that shows commitment to helping without sacrificing yourself.



Shouldering

By comparison, Shouldering refers to taking on responsibility for someone else's problems. Shouldering is when you get SO involved in helping someone that their issues begin to weigh you down. Shouldering can lead to a sense of feeling OVERLY responsible for someone else's well-being, to the detriment of your own mental health. You can feel drained of energy, empty, or as though without you, everything would fall apart. Shouldering can lead to controlling behaviors, burnout, and can cross a line from support to dependency.

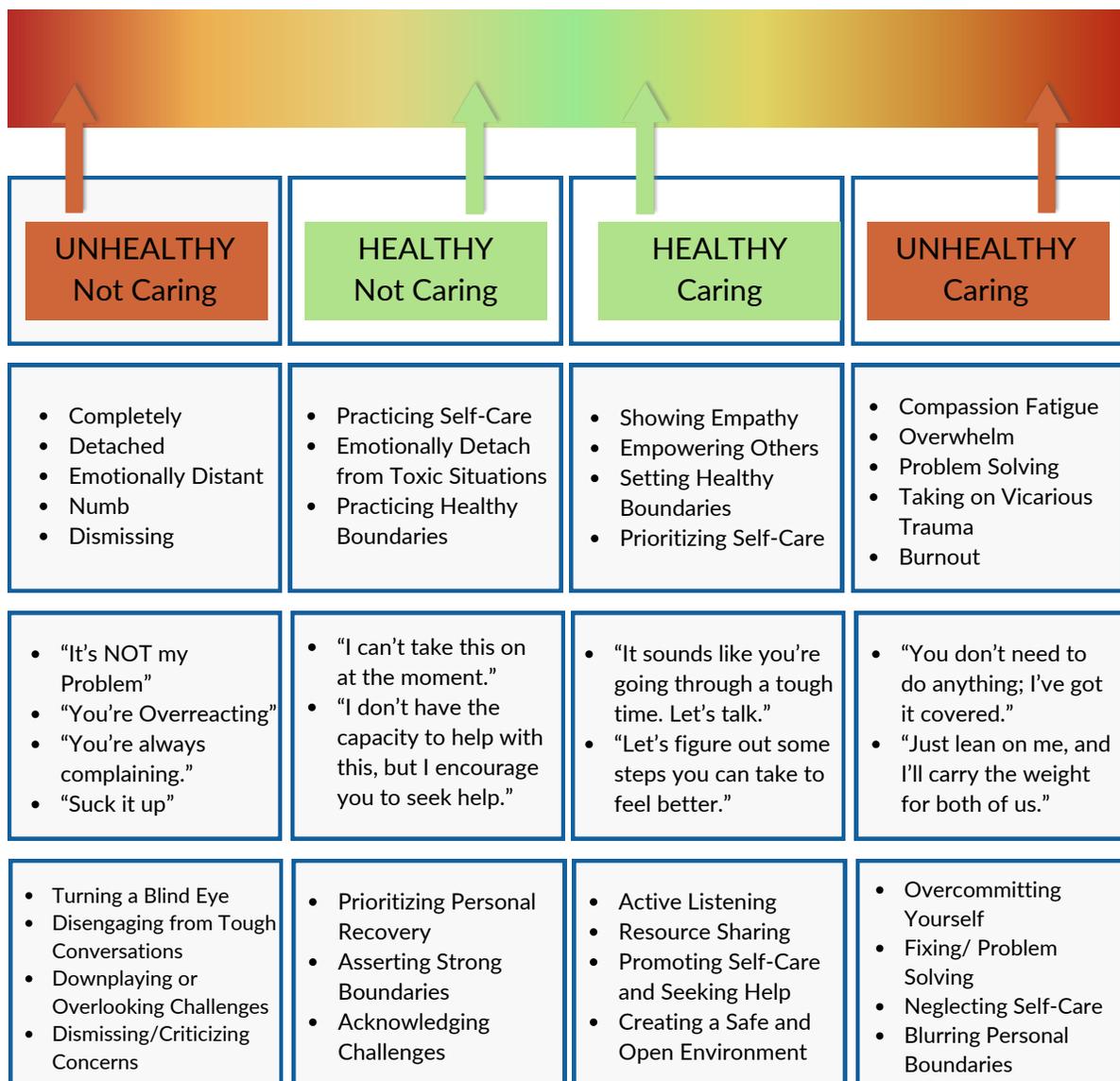
Is It Supporting or Shouldering?

Aspect	Supporting	Shouldering
Empowerment	Empowers others	Overly responsible for others
Boundaries	Maintains healthy boundaries	Sacrifices personal wellbeing
Role	Shows care, not fixing	Feels the need to fix others' problems
Mental Health Impact	Positive, balanced approach	Draining, leads to burnout
Behavioral Outcome	Encourages self-reliance in others	Can lead to controlling behaviors
Respect, Empathy, and Compassion	Shows respect, empathy, and compassion	Self-serving, micromanaging

Healthy Care *Boundaries*

Maintaining healthy boundaries is crucial for balancing support for others without shouldering their emotional burdens. These boundaries help define the extent of care you can offer while preserving your own mental well-being. Supporting others in their time of need doesn't mean self-abandonment. Setting clear boundaries helps you understand the limits of your care and empathy, preventing the shift into shouldering behaviors that can lead to resentment, overwhelm, and burnout.

Where do you sit on the scale between caring too little and caring too much?



Self-Regulation: Strategies for Stress Management and Resilience

Emotional self-regulation is about managing your emotions and reactions in different situations. It starts with self-awareness—noticing and understanding your feelings and what activates them. Once you're aware, self-regulation helps you handle tough emotions and express them in a healthy way.

In the workplace, self-regulation is important for managing stress, communicating well, and staying productive, even when things get difficult. It's not always easy, especially when dealing with competing priorities, unexpected problems, or personal challenges.



Challenge: For the next 6 weeks, practice one of these self-regulation techniques per week.

Self-Awareness: Understand and Recognize Emotions

- Check-In Regularly:** Take short breaks to notice how you're feeling. Are you stressed, calm, frustrated, or content?
- Recognize Activators:** Notice what sparks your emotions, whether it's a specific event, interaction, or thought. Understanding these activators helps you prepare for and manage your emotional responses more effectively.
- Label Feelings:** When you feel a surge of emotion, identify it. Simply naming feelings (like anger, anxiety, or joy) can lessen their intensity and help you think more clearly.

Use Positive Self-Talk

- Reframe Negative Thoughts:** If you're feeling overwhelmed, change your inner dialogue. For example, replace "I can't do this" with "I'm finding this hard, but I can take it one step at a time."
- Affirmations and Encouragement:** Remind yourself of past successes, and use affirmations to build confidence, like "I am capable" or "I have managed challenges before."

Practice Gratitude and Self-Compassion

- Focus on Positives:** Spend a few minutes each day reflecting on things you're grateful for, as this can shift your mindset toward positivity.
- Forgive Mistakes:** Be kind to yourself when you fall short. Accept that setbacks happen, and focus on learning from each experience.

Develop a Healthy Routine

- Establish Regular Sleep and Nutrition Habits:** Adequate rest and a balanced diet play a big role in mood and resilience, helping you stay in control when faced with challenges.
- Set Time for Reflection:** Daily or weekly, take time to reflect on what went well and where you could improve, allowing you to make adjustments with intention.

Pause Before Responding

- Use a Cushion Before Responding:** When emotions are activated, your rational brain needs time to catch up. Responding in the heat of the moment can escalate conflicts. Instead, create a "cushion" by pausing—take a brief walk, sip some water, or give yourself a moment to cool down—before you react.
- Don't Feel Pressured to Respond:** When our buttons are pushed, we might need some time to percolate before we respond. Sleep on it (if you can), what seems critical in the moment can seem like no big deal after a good night's sleep.

Build a Support Network

- Talk It Out:** Find a trusted friend or mentor you can turn to for advice or a listening ear. Sharing challenges helps you find solutions or see.
- Encourage Accountability:** Having someone who knows your goals can help you stay on track and offer encouragement. Find an accountability partner!

Reflect: Which one(s) worked the best for you?

Soothe Your Nervous System

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Deep Breathing



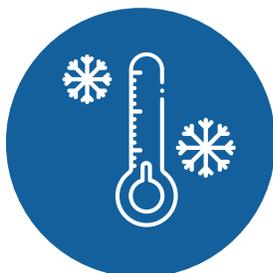
Progressive Muscle Relaxation



Humming, Singing Chanting



Grounding techniques



Cold Exposure



Rhythmic Movements



Intentional Touch



Extended Exhales

MICRO-RESETS

15 MINUTES TO A MORE REGULATED YOU



Leadership today often means being “always on.” The work is nonstop, the stakes are high, and the demands rarely pause. Yet your energy has limits—and ignoring those limits erodes clarity, presence, and sustainability. **Micro-resets are small, intentional pauses that help you regulate your nervous system**, sharpen focus, and model resilience for your team. These mini interventions can be scheduled on your calendar like any other meeting, used before or after key transitions, or simply sprinkled throughout your day. **Short practices like these are not indulgences; they are tools for sustainable leadership.**

Four Core Reset Practices



Breath Resets (Fastest nervous system regulation)

Box Breathing: Inhale 4 • Hold 4 • Exhale 4 • Hold 4 (4x)

Physiological Sigh: Deep inhale • Small second sip • Long, slow exhale (3x)

4-7-8 Reset: Inhale 4 • Hold 7 • Exhale 8 (great before high-stakes conversations)



Sensory Grounding (Re-anchor to the present)

- **5-4-3-2-1 Scan:** 5 things you see • 4 feel • 3 hear • 2 smell • 1 taste
- **Temperature Shifts:** Press a cold object (water bottle, pen) to wrists or temples for 30 sec.



Micro-Movements (Release tension, boost energy)

- **90-Second Release:** Shoulder rolls forward/backward (10x each) • Gentle neck stretches
- **Stand & Shake:** Loosen knees, shake arms/shoulders for 30 sec.
- **Walking Micro-Break:** Slow walk for 30–60 sec. while focusing on your breath



Brain Pauses (Clear mental clutter)

- **90-Second Mind Clearing:** Eyes closed, let thoughts drift without judgment
- **One-Word Intention:** Pick a grounding word (clarity, calm, purpose) and breathe into it
- **Visual Reset:** Every 45 min., look at something 20 ft away for 20 sec.

PRO-TIP

SCHEDULE RESETS



Block 3–4 resets on your calendar daily. Even 2 minutes makes a difference.

MODEL SUSTAINABILITY



Share your reset practice out loud—your team will follow your lead.

FUEL YOURSELF



Treat resets as fuel, not indulgence.

ENERGIZING CONVERSATIONS, STRONGER TEAMS, AND MORE RESILIENT OUTCOMES.

Micro-resets are not a pause in the work. They are the work of sustainable leadership. These small but powerful practices build the stamina required to make clear decisions, respond with intention instead of reactivity, and stay grounded when pressures rise. They are not distractions from your leadership responsibilities—they are what allow you to carry them with integrity.

OPTIONAL READING FOR LEADERS WHO WANT TO GO DEEPER:

- Rest Is Resistance — Tricia Hersey
- The Practice of Adaptive Leadership — Heifetz, Linsky & Grashow
- We Can Do Hard Things Podcast: “Make Rest Your Revolution”





UNDERSTANDING PEER SUPPORT

WITH GIVE AN HOUR



WHAT IS PEER SUPPORT?

Peer support **BUILDS** resilience and **RECOVERY** through shared **LIVED** experiences. Peer supporters provide support, share knowledge, teach skills, and connect individuals with resources. These sessions are led by trained facilitators from diverse backgrounds who truly **UNDERSTAND** your experiences because they've lived them. *Peer support is not therapy or professional counseling.*

WHAT IS TIPS?

Give an Hour's peer support program, "TIPS," stands for Trauma Informed Peer Support, and is an evidence-informed and customizable peer support training program designed specifically for those affected by trauma.



PEER SUPPORT IS:

- ✓ OPEN TO ALL
- ✓ JUDGEMENT FREE
- ✓ COMMUNITY BUILDING
- ✓ LONG-TERM SUPPORT
- ✓ OTHERS LIKE YOU WHO JUST GET IT
- ✓ ASSESSIBLE/ VIRTUAL

1

Peer Supporters focus on wellness needs and strengths. They help their peer identify needs, build on strengths and resources, and help others in achieving goals.

2

TIPS Supporters provide support and ensure that all individuals served build on their self-care skills to achieve and/or maintain personally meaningful goals.

Military Peer Support Groups

Get no-cost support from those who understand



Why Join

Peer-led support groups offer a space for you to **connect, share experiences, and receive guidance** in a safe environment.

Who

Active duty, retired, guard or reserves military personnel.

What to Expect

- A trained peer supporter will facilitate the group.
- Helpful tips and resources
- Connection with others who understand.
- Safe non-judgmental space.
- Confidential, no-cost support

“It’s Great Connecting with Other Folks Who Just GET IT”

Peer Support Attendee

Register



Mondays 8:00 PM EST (Chris)



Wednesdays 8:00 PM EST (Rebekah)

Meet the Facilitators



Rebekah Edmonson, a U.S. Army veteran, served ten years including nearly three deployed to Afghanistan, where she was part of the Joint Special Operations Command’s Cultural Support Team and worked alongside the 75th Ranger Regiment. She recently received her masters in social work and is a GAH peer support facilitator .



Chris Garcia, an Army veteran and former medic at Fort Bliss, holds a Bachelor of Public Health from New Mexico State University. He also serves as a trainer for Give an Hour’s MILE Project, bringing expertise in planning and a passion for community building.

Military Loved Ones Peer Support Groups

Get no-cost support alongside others who understand



Why Join

Peer-led support groups offer a space for you to **connect, share experiences, and receive guidance** in an environment that nurtures your wellbeing.

What to Expect

A trained peer supporter will facilitate the conversation to create a safe space. Our goal is to create an environment for participants to connect with others who have similar experiences and to provide tips and resources to each other.

Who

Families and caregivers of active duty, retired, guard or reserves military personnel

Register



Mondays 7 PM EST (Tracy)



Wednesdays 7 PM EST (Tracy)



Thursdays 2 PM EST (Jillian)

Meet the Facilitators

Jillian Ryan, Peer Supporter Facilitator



Jillian Ryan, MEd, CSCS, TSAC-F is an active duty spouse and has over 10 years of experience supporting military personnel and families.

Tracy Sahleen, Peer Supporter Facilitator



Tracy Sahleen was a Key Spouse while her husband was active duty and is currently a care giver for her husband and a dedicated advocate for other veterans.

Female Veteran & Service Members Peer Support

Get no-cost support from those who understand



Why Join

Peer-led support groups offer a space for you to connect, share experiences, and receive guidance in a safe environment.

Who

Active duty, retired, or reserve military personnel who identify as female.

What to Expect

- A trained peer supporter with lived experience will lead the group.
- Tips and resources
- Connection with others who understand.
- Safe non-judgmental space.

JOIN US
Every Thursday
3 PM ET

Meet the Facilitator



*Diana N. Graham, MPA, MBA, is a decorated Army Combat Veteran, global speaker, and leadership strategist known for transforming organizations through high-impact workforce and human capital solutions. As the CEO of Crowned for Success Global Consulting, her team equips executives and teams with her signature 3C's of Success framework, Clarity, Communication, and Community, to strengthen leadership, elevate performance, and build high-retention cultures. An author and thought leader, her work continues to inspire professionals worldwide, including her book *Duly Noted*, a powerful blueprint for leadership and personal growth.*



REGISTER HERE!



For any questions, please email:
peersupport@giveanhour.org

What's Next

Take Check on Wellness

ResilienceU is Give an Hour's on demand learning platform.

Check-in Wellness Training Highlights:

- **Flexible Learning:** The course saves your progress, allowing you to start, pause, and return whenever it suits you.
- **Quizzes:** Test your knowledge with short quizzes that can be retaken as often as needed.
- **Lifetime Access:** Enjoy unlimited access to the course materials, giving you the freedom to learn at your own pace and revisit whenever you'd like.

Register



Sign up for a Give an Hour Support Group

We invite you to join our Trauma-Informed Peer Support program. Groups meet weekly for Military Service Members & Veterans and a separate group is held for Military Families & Allies. Visit our website to learn more and submit your interest.

Sign up



giveanhour.org/peersupport

Stay in Touch

Stay connected and informed!

Want access to more resources like this? Want to stay engaged to support the Veteran Community?

Visit Give an Hour's Peer Support webpage to SIGN UP for peer mentorship training and explore resources available to you.

*Stay
Connected*

