FEATURE ARTICLE

Warrior Ethos versus Well-Being: Correcting a Cultural Dichotomy

Yasmine L. Konheim-Kalkstein, United States Military Academy

Orin Strauchler, United States Military Academy

Ryan G. Erbe, United States Military Academy

Brian Gerardi, United States Military Academy

Jeffrey D. Peterson, United States Military Academy

ABSTRACT

The Army's warrior mindset, while crucial for being successful in battle, can also lead to chronic suppression of emotions, and hamper help-seeking behavior. Messages to prioritize well-being are often presented in a confusing juxtaposition to the warrior mindset. In spite of the Army's emphasis on a "People First Strategy," accompanied by calls to reduce the stigma associated with help-seeking behaviors, the culture of toughness created by the Warrior Ethos continues to be an imposing obstacle for those in need of help. We integrate the Healthy Minds framework with the Army ethos, to focus on the development of foundational skills: mindfulness, connection, insight, and purpose. Our hope is this framework will contribute to a culture that views the Warrior Ethos and well-being as complementary, rather than conflicting, ideas.

Keywords: Well-Being, Warrior Ethos, Army, Mindfullness, Emotional Regulation

Introduction

Cadets at the United States Military Academy memorize the Warrior Ethos during their first week of training: "I will always place the mission first. I will never accept defeat. I will never quit. I will never leave a fallen comrade." Cadets are taught physical and mental toughness: to manage pain and fatigue during ruck marches and summer military training, and to conquer fear in classes like boxing. This "tough" messaging is crucial to their indoctrination as Army officers. Enduring hardships and managing stress are part of building the capacity to handle future challenges and develop resilience, which the Army defines as "the mental, physical, emotional, and behavioral ability to face and cope with adversity, adapt to change, recover, learn, and grow from setbacks" (Department of the Army 350–53, 2014). The Warrior Ethos and the message of perseverance against all odds are embedded throughout the Army's culture (i.e., the 1st Infantry Division's motto is "No Mission Too Difficult, No Sacrifice Too Great, Duty First!").

While the Warrior Ethos can create a culture of determination and motivation, it can also encourage soldiers to be stoic and to ignore their feelings (Piellusch, 2017; Weiss & Coll, 2011). Edgar Schein's (2004) organizational culture model provides "artifacts" as observable manifestations of a culture's unobservable "espoused beliefs and values" and even deeper, the "underlying assumptions." Some observable artifacts are the hierarchical rank structures that drive decisions, the use of uniforms and standardization across personnel, equipment, and even regulations, and dedicated daily time for physical fitness training. Even this superficial list of artifacts demonstrates organizational norms and values of obedience, subordination, sacrifice, conformity, reliability, strength, and resilience. The underlying assumptions that support these values are that the military is a high-performance organization and one that relies on the consistency of its members to achieve this, that group collectivism and teamwork is an important part of the organizational framework, and that

individual fitness and reliability contribute to these ends (Gerras et al., 2008). Considering this culture, it follows that soldiers would shirk individualism and concern for themselves, as they may directly contradict the needs of the group.

The reality is being successful in battle *does* require leaders to temporarily suppress fear, discomfort, and stress to focus on the task at hand; remaining calm during combat helps the soldier focus on their mission first (Bryan et al., 2012). For the long-term, however, chronic ignoring of or suppressing of feelings may lead to difficulties with identifying, understanding, accepting, and modulating emotions (Gross, 2002; Gross & Levenson, 1997), and sustained lack of emotional awareness or expression can create longer-lasting emotional difficulties (Davies et al., 2019). Consistently ignoring or suppressing emotions should not be equated with *emotion regulation* (a positive strategy to exert influence over emotions). The habitual suppression of emotional distress, common to military culture even away from the battlefield, is related to negative outcomes such as heavy alcohol consumption and illicit drug use, inappropriate aggressive behavior and violent outbursts, domestic violence, and physical or sexual assault (reviewed in Stanley & Larsen, 2021). Ironically, the ethos intended to strengthen a warrior during combat may lead to long-term emotional damage once combat is over (Davies et al., 2019).

Compounding the problem, the Army's culture of toughness has been implicated in impeding help-seeking behavior, with many service personnel believing that those who seek help are "weak" (Weiss & Coll, 2011). Seeking help can appear to run counter to the military culture's emphasis on perseverance and self-reliance (Gibbons et al., 2014). Individuals with strong beliefs and values about honor tend to be concerned with how seeking help for mental health issues will negatively impact their reputations (Brown et al., 2014; Foster et al., 2020; Gul et al., 2021). Gender norms must also

be taken into account when considering this issue. Men make up 82.8% of the Department of Defense's (DoD) active duty force and 84.5% of the Army's active duty force (United States Department of Defense, 2020). In general, men are less likely to seek help for mental health issues than women (DeBate et al., 2018; Silvestrini & Chen, 2022), as are individuals who conform to dominant United States masculinity norms (Vogel et al., 2011). Militaries have historically valued and promoted traits more commonly associated with stereotypical masculinity and the Army is no exception to this cultural practice (Do & Samuels, 2020; Schaefer et al., 2021). The perceived masculine cultural ideal may be incongruous with soldiers' perceptions of the acceptability of seeking help or treatment (Cogan et al., 2021).

Indeed, soldiers who met the screening criteria for a mental health problem were twice as likely to report concerns about stigma and other barriers to care than those who did not meet the criteria (Hoge et al., 2004). Notably, the mental health care utilization rate is lower for military members than for the general population (Hom et al., 2017). This lower utilization may partially explain the discrepancy in diagnoses; 8.4% of active service members were diagnosed with a behavioral health disorder in 2019 (Defense Health Agency, 2020), compared to a rate of 20.6% within the general population (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2020).

While these statistics could be interpreted to mean that there are fewer mental health problems in the Army, other data suggest this is likely *not* the case. In 2020, one-third of military medical evacuations from the Middle East were for mental health (Kime, 2021). Even more notably, in 2020, the suicide rate of active-duty troops rose to an all-time high of 28.7 per 100,000 (Department of Defense, 2021). When the data were adjusted for demographic factors, the Army's suicide rate had been similar to the general population up until 2008, when it began to exceed the general population

(Griffin et al., 2021). Whereas the suicide rate for the general U.S. population declined in 2019 and 2020 (Hedegaard et al., 2021), the military's rate continues at an all-time high, and is dangerously close to double that of 2008 (DoD, 2021). After the publication of the 2020 Suicide Report, Department of Defense Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin (2021) stated "We must all do more, at every level, to end the stigma against getting help. We all need counsel, community, and connection. Reaching out is a sign of strength and resilience."

In fact, the Army had been addressing Austin's concern for several years in programs like Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness (CSF2), the Army's People First Strategy, and "This is My Squad." In 2020, the U.S. Army even replaced the reception basic trainees had long endured from shouting drill sergeants (aka "Shark Attack") with "First 100 Yards" approach intended to introduce basic trainees to the Army with a focus on team cohesion through trust building and teaching values (Cox, 2020).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, efforts to present a different image of Army culture have led to accusations that the U.S. military is "going soft." Major General Hughes addressed the idea that the Army is going soft when he spoke about emotional intelligence in a 2018 ROTC seminar:

> "A few years ago someone would have asked why are we talking about this squishy stuff? This soft science? Why is it important to leadership? But after 35 years of experiential learning, I've learned there is one truism and that is the business of the Army is people...You can fly a helicopter, shoot a cannon or be whatever you want, but technical skills are just that – skills that can be taught to anyone...Cognitive skills, interpersonal skills and the ability to work with people, is something I've learned we've failed to talk about in the Army... You need to get to know [your soldiers], not only to let them know

you care, but you know what makes them tick. That's what you need to understand as you move out and take over these platoons – it's all about caring." (Maddox, 2018)

The statistics and trends cited earlier in this article indicate that help-seeking and mental health continue to be an issue for the Army. Efforts that do not directly consider the development of well-being within the context of the military's cultural norms are likely to struggle to fully take root. Balancing messages of well-being (e.g., "take care of yourself") with toughness (e.g., "don't give in") is challenging. However, what if well-being was not an additional message placed in an often-confusing juxtaposition to the warrior mindset? What if instead, well-being was seen as something that enables stronger warriors, and allows warriors to recover after the challenge of battle? We propose that well-being enhances the Warrior Ethos and builds traits necessary to persevere in combat without the negative impact of emotional suppression and unhealthy stoicism.

A framework recently proposed by Dahl et al. (2020) promotes well-being skills that can complement the Warrior Ethos. The framework proffers four core malleable dimensions of well-being: mindfulness (what they call "awareness"), connection, self-insight, and purpose. Growing these dimensions enhances an individual's emotion regulation, mental and emotional health, resilience, prosocial behavior, and reduces stress, anxiety, depression, and risk-taking behaviors (Dahl et al., 2020). This framework was chosen because of the empirical support from both psychosocial and neuroscience research for its ability to enhance the model's psychological well-being components that align well with the Holistic Health and Fitness (H2F) doctrine (Department of the Army, 2020). Specifically, the capabilities of H2F's mental readiness align with three components of Dahl's et al.'s (2020) model: H2F's cognitive and emotional capability aligns with "mindfulness/

awareness" and "self-insight"; H2F's interpersonal capability aligns with "connection"; H2F's spiritual readiness component aligns with "purpose." This well-being framework advances H2F by providing the empirical support for each dimension, while also providing evidence-based mental training strategies to enhance each component. Additionally, developing the model's components may increase the likelihood of help-seeking by encouraging soldiers to develop their purpose (providing the motivation to seek help), their self-insight and awareness (better recognizing when help is needed) and connection with others (a mental capacity that underlies seeking social support). In the following sections, we use Dahl et al.'s (2020) framework to provide ideas on how Army leaders can promote well-being in a way that supports the Warrior Ethos.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the self-regulation of attention on immediate experiences, with an orientation characterized by curiosity, openness, and acceptance (Bishop et al., 2004). The research on how mindfulness improves well-being has exploded over the past two decades (Baminiwatta & Solangaarachchi, 2021), with positive impacts of mindfulness training suggested for gambling behavior (Griffiths et al., 2016), emotional regulation (Hülsheger et al., 2013; Teper et al., 2013), and anxiety and depression (Blanck et al., 2018). In the military, one type of mindfulness training, meditation, enhanced both cognitive and emotional regulation capacities, leading to better emotion regulation, resilience, and overall well-being (Jha et al., 2010, 2015). In a more recent Army sample, Hepner et al. (2022) found benefits of mindfulness training in attention control, emotion regulation, and stress reduction. Additionally, Sun et al.'s (2021) meta-analysis concluded that mindfulness meditation can alleviate symptoms related to military post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

An important facet of mindfulness is noticing the thoughts and emotions that arise when experiencing

a set-back or difficulty, along with paying attention to the treatment of oneself during such an experience. Self-compassion requires seeing one's struggle as a common human difficulty, while holding painful thoughts and memories in mindful awareness and not overidentifying with them (Neff, 2003). Self-compassion has been shown to aid soldiers in their ability to successfully navigate stress in the face of adversity (Mantzios, 2014), and is identified as an important protective factor against PTSD (Forkus et al., 2019) and comorbid substance abuse (Forkus et al., 2020).

Meditation practices, even those of only five minutes (e.g., Mahmood et al., 2016), can improve mindfulness and self-compassion. Even online mindfulness interventions have been shown to effectively enhance mindfulness and reduce stress (Jayewardene et al., 2017), and research suggests intervention via an app might be as successful as in person mindfulness-based training (Orosa-Duarte et al., 2021).

How a Leader Can Foster Mindfulness in Their Unit
Acknowledging emotions is one way to promote mindfulness in the self and others. Encouraging self-compassion in a military context can be as simple as a leader acknowledging "what we are doing is hard right now." This does not mean that leaders can or should allow soldiers to stop doing something because it is hard. The warrior perseveres, but we can acknowledge our struggles, and not criticize ourselves for experiencing normal human emotions and reactions. Most importantly, a leader can set the example with the language they use to talk about their own challenges (e.g., "this is challenging, but I will keep working at it," or "we all have our strengths and weaknesses").

A leader can spend a few moments before or after a briefing or mission having their team focus on their breathing and tuning into their thoughts, emotions, and desired reactions to help soldiers become more mindful. Practicing in low-stress environments first, such as taking five minutes at the beginning or end of physical training to practice mindful breathing, trains the mind for more high-stress environments.

Connection

According to Dahl and colleagues' (2020) model of well-being, connection is conceptualized as a person's subjective sense of care for and togetherness with others that enhances supportive relationships and prosocial behavior. This component of well-being is developed through cultivating gratitude, appreciation, and compassion for others. In fact, the aforementioned practice of meditation can inculcate compassion (Kreplin et al., 2018).

Powerful evidence for the importance of relationships for well-being comes from the Grant study, which tracked Harvard graduates over an 80-year period. As one of the study's lead researchers explains, the results of this study show that when it comes to living a satisfying life, "the only thing that really matters in life are your relationships to other people" (Shenk, 2009). Social connections lead to better psychological health and can act as a buffer against mental and emotional health disorders such as anxiety and depression (Santini et al., 2015; Teo et al., 2013). Notably, the importance of relationships was emphasized for the DOD's National Suicide Prevention Month in 2021 which bore the theme "Connect to Protect: Support is Within Reach."

Brooks and Greenberg (2018) conclude that relationships should be prioritized for psychological well-being of military personnel. One way to promote connection is by improving communication skills, which enhance relationship strength (Petrovici & Dobrescu 2014; Eğeci & Gençöz 2006). Furthermore, ensuring soldiers are connected to community matters; in a recent study, connections to community predicted ability to cope with military demands (O'Neal et al., 2020).

Caring for others (prosocial behavior) increases feelings of well-being (Martela & Ryan, 2016), and Hui

(2022) recently highlighted the dynamic, reciprocal relationship between prosocial behavior and well-being. Being kind matters; a meta-analysis of 27 experimental studies suggests a small to moderate effect of kindness interventions on the actor's well-being (Curry et al., 2018). This is not limited to your loved ones—research suggests the effect of performing acts of kindness is independent of the type of relationship between the actor and recipient (Rowland & Curry, 2019).

How a Leader Can Foster Connection in Their Unit
A simple practice that can help build connection is allowing time for people to reflect on who they are grateful for in their unit and why, and then presenting opportunities for people to express that gratitude verbally. To further foster connection in their unit, a leader must focus on caring for their soldiers. For example, a leader can ask about someone's children or family by name or help soldiers find the time to connect with their families. It may be possible to have a later start one day a week so that soldiers can have breakfast with their children and put them on the school bus.

Beyond this, developing appropriate coaching or mentoring relationships can help soldiers beyond providing feedback on duty performance; this demonstrates an investment in their growth and is supported by regulation (Table 6-3 in ADP 6-22 clearly delineates between coaching, counseling, and mentoring).

Insight

Insight, or self-awareness, is a type of self-knowledge that includes understanding the ways in which thoughts, beliefs, emotions, and other factors influence an individual's subjective experience, especially their sense of self (Dahl et al., 2020). Self-insight around one's own thinking and emotions positively relates to psychological health and life satisfaction (Harrington & Loffredo, 2010). This self-awareness is also a key component in several impactful mental health treatment modalities such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), which helps individuals alter their maladaptive beliefs in exchange for more adaptive beliefs. Empirical research suggests CBT can reduce stress and alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression (Hofmann et al., 2012). There is also initial evidence that insight development via a type of mental training known as deconstructive meditation can undo maladaptive cognitive patterns and increase healthy emotion regulation strategies. This technique helps individuals to develop insight into their internal models of the self, other, and the world as well as exploring the dynamics of perception, emotion, and cognition (Dahl et al., 2015; Singer & Engert, 2019).

> Notably, Army Doctrine Publication: Army Leadership and the Profession (2019) (ADP 6-22) specifically emphasizes the importance of self-awareness for their leaders:

> Self-awareness is fundamental to understanding one's abilities. Leaders should know their strengths and weaknesses: what they do or do not know, what they are or are not skilled at, and what is in their span of control...Leaders require self-awareness if they are to accurately assess their own experience and competence as well as earn the trust of those they influence. (p. 1–17)

This concept of self-awareness is woven through the entirety of ADP 6-22 and discussed as a crucial component of several aspects of Army leadership including humility, interpersonal tact, leading with confidence in adverse and changing conditions, leader preparation, and resiliency. In fact, given the importance of developing self-awareness, the U.S. Military Academy has recently instituted daily reflective practices during Cadet Basic Training.

How a Leader Can Foster Insight in Their Unit
Creating time for reflection can help us be more insightful. Some might want to journal; others might benefit more from peer-to-peer discussion, unit discussions, or

meditation. Creating a built-in time for these types of practices can be beneficial. Our own cadets experienced an interpersonal after-action review after their field training exercise, where they focused on their relationships and how they felt during the experience. This type of deliberate, "sensing session" can allow people to focus on points of friction for the good of the unit; in this scenario, a leader should go into a listening role—simply facilitating and taking notes.

As a leader, counseling subordinates is a real opportunity to help others develop greater insight. Asking a subordinate during counseling to reflect on their own strengths and areas for improvement helps them become more self-aware.

Purpose

Purpose can be defined as a sense of clarity regarding personally meaningful aims and values that can be applied in daily life. Having a strong sense of purpose can foster the self-perception that an individual has aims and values which they can embody. In turn, this self-perception can help us to feel that our life and goals have meaning and significance (Dahl et al., 2020). Purpose and meaning in life can improve well-being; research has demonstrated outcomes on improved physical and psychological health, as well as reduced risk of chronic diseases (Dahl et al., 2020).

Feeling a sense of purpose can serve as a protective factor against mental illness. In an active-duty military sample, those who perceived more meaning in life had reduced emotional distress and suicide risk, as well as an increase in performance across several domains (Bryan et al., 2013). Relatedly, a meta-analysis of studies using U.S. military personnel found that meaning in life plays a critical role in adjusting to traumatic events (Fischer et al., 2020). Finally, other work has found that military leader-provided purpose may promote resilience and reduce risk for suicidal ideation among active-duty soldiers (Trachik et al., 2020).

Recent work has suggested that purpose and meaning in life can be clarified and strengthened through targeted interventions that promote healthy behaviors and increase resilience such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and the Healthy Minds Program (Dahl et al., 2020). ACT, which focuses on acceptance and affirming personal values, has been shown to enhance both emotional resilience as well as physical functioning (Bramwell & Richardson, 2018). Such interventions need not be overly complex, cumbersome, or time-consuming. For example, the previously mentioned Healthy Minds Innovations app includes a series of guided meditations to help affirm an individual's values toward developing a clearer sense of their purpose in life.

How a Leader Can Foster Purpose in Their Unit

Taking time to reflect on or remind others of the purpose of a mission or task is a simple way to keep others grounded in what they are doing, and why. One evidence-based activity to help people clarify what matters the most to them is *Values Affirmation*, whereby one identifies what is most important to them, why, and how they can better live these values out (Cohen & Sherman, 2014; Duckworth, 2020). This practice better enables what is most important in life to be salient (Dahl et al., 2020).

On a more macro-level, there are ways to ensure others feel a sense of purpose. In the military, reminding the soldiers of the oath they made, swearing to defend the constitution of the United States, can help focus them on their task. In addition to this organizational purpose, a leader can ask soldiers during counseling what is most important to them and help them see alignment between their own personal goals and goals of their service.

Conclusion

Focusing on well-being should not come at the expense of developing the warrior; rather, it should be seen as an

integral part of the mission. An approach that develops mindfulness, connection, self-insight, and purpose will support soldiers' readiness and resiliency, not weaken them. Given the reluctance to seek help during a crisis, this skills-building approach will likely work better with military personnel, as it focuses on prevention and training to promote resiliency. Furthermore, the benefits of training skills of well-being will extend beyond soldiers' years of active duty and yield mentally healthier veterans.

Ideally, this work can be integrated into other aspects of military training and preparation. For example, mindfulness can be integrated into physical training, discussing purpose can be part of counseling or prior to engagement, reflection time can be added during training to build self-awareness, and leaders can prioritize the development of relationships within a team.

Of course, humans are motivated by the incentives around them. It is worth asking if the systems in place properly incentivize the pillars of well-being through training, allocation of time, rewards, and promotion criteria. By integrating the pillars of well-being into our military's culture and training, as well as developing effective messaging to soldiers and cadets that highlight how the construct of warrior and well-being are complimentary rather than contradictory, we can correct a cultural dichotomy to help form better leaders who serve and defend the American people.

References

Austin, L. J. (2021). Secretary of defense statement on DoD annual suicide report (CY2020). https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/2794170/secretary-of-defense-statement-on-dod-annual-suicide-report-cy2020/#:~:text=As%20I%20have%20said%2C%20mental,-sign%20of%20strength%20and%20resilience

Baminiwatta, A., & Solangaarachchi, I. (2021). Trends and developments in mindfulness research over 55 years: A bibliometric analysis of publications indexed in web of science. *Mindfulness*, *12*(9), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-021-01681-x

Bishop, S. R., Lau, M., Shapiro, S., Carlson, L., Anderson, N. D., Carmody, J., Segal, Z. V., Abbey, S., Speca, M., Velting, D., & Devins, G. (2004). Mindfulness: A proposed operational definition. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice, 11*(3), 230–241. https://doi.org/10.1093/clipsy.bph077

Blanck, P., Perleth, S., Heidenreich, T., Kröger, P., Ditzen, B., Bents, H., & Mander, J. (2018). Effects of mindfulness exercises as stand-alone intervention on symptoms of anxiety and depression: Systematic review and meta-analysis. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, *102*, 25–35. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brat.2017.12.002

Bramwell, K., & Richardson, T. (2018). Improvements in depression and mental health after acceptance and commitment therapy are related to changes in defusion and values-based action. *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy*, *48*, 9–14. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10879-017-9367-6

Brooks, S. K., & Greenberg, N. (2018). Non-deployment factors affecting psychological wellbeing in military personnel: Literature review. *Journal of Mental Health*, *27*(1), 80–90. https://doi.org/10.1080/09638237.2016.1276536

Brown, R. P., Imura, M., & Mayeux, L. (2014). Honor and the stigma of mental healthcare. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 40*(9), 1119–1131. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167214536741

Bryan, C. J., Elder, W. B., McNaughton-Cassill, M., Osman, A., Hernandez, A. M., & Allison, S. (2013). Meaning in life, emotional distress, suicidal ideation, and life functioning in an active duty military sample.

The Journal of Positive Psychology, *8*(5), 444–452. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2013.823557

Bryan, C. J., Jennings, K. W., Jobes, D. A., & Bradley, J. C. (2012). Understanding and preventing military suicide. *Archives of Suicide Research*, *16*(2), 95–110. https://doi.org/10.1080/13811118.2012.667321

Cogan, A. M., Haines, C. E., & Devore, M. D. (2021). Intersections of U.S. military culture, hegemonic masculinity, and health care among injured male service members. *Men and Masculinities*, *24*(3), 468–482. https://doi-org.usmalibrary.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/1097184X19872793

Cohen, G. L., & Sherman, D. K. (2014). The psychology of change: Self-affirmation and social psychological intervention. *Annual Review of Psychology, 65*, 333–371. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010213-115137

Cox, M. (2020). The Army is pivoting to a kinder, gentler start to basic training. *Task & Purpose*. https://taskandpurpose.com/news/army-basic-training-changes/

Curry, O. S., Rowland, L. A., Van Lissa, C. J., Zlotowitz, S., McAlaney, J., & Whitehouse, H. (2018). Happy to help? A systematic review and meta-analysis of the effects of performing acts of kindness on the well-being of the actor. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *76*, 320–329. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2018.02.014

Dahl, C. J., Lutz, A., & Davidson, R. J. (2015). Reconstructing and deconstructing the self: Cognitive mechanisms in meditation practice. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, *19*(9), 515–523. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2015.07.001

Dahl, C. J., Wilson-Mendenhall, C. D., & Davidson, R. J. (2020). The plasticity of well-being: A training-based framework for the cultivation of human flourishing. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, *117*(51), 32197–32206. https://www.pnas.org/doi/pdf/10.1073/pnas.2014859117

Davies, R. L., Prince, M. A., Bravo, A. J., Kelley, M. L., & Crain, T. L. (2019). Moral injury, substance use, and posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms among military personnel: An examination of trait mindfulness as a moderator. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 32*(3), 414–423. https://doi.org/10.1002/jts.22403

DeBate, R. D., Gatto, A., & Rafal, G. (2018). The effects of stigma on determinants of mental health help-seeking behaviors among male college students: An application of the information-motivation-behavioral skills model. *American Journal of Men's Health*, *12*(5), 1286–1296. https://doi.org/10.1177/1557988318773656

Defense Health Agency. (2020). *Department of Defense Health of the Force 2019*. https://www.health.mil/Military-Health-Topics/Combat-Support/Armed-Forces-Health-Surveillance-Branch/Reports-and-Publications

Department of Defense (DoD). (2020). *2020 demographics profile*. https://www.militaryonesource.mil/data-research-and-statistics/military-community-demographics/2020-demographics-profile/

Department of Defense (DoD). (2021). *Annual suicide report: Calendar year 2020*. https://www.dspo.mil/Portals/113/Documents/CY20%20Suicide%20Report/CY%202020%20Annual%20Suicide%20Report.pdf?ver=0OwlvDd-PJuA-igow5fB-FA%3D%3D

Department of the Army. (2014). *Comprehensive soldier and family fitness* (Army Regulation 350–53). https://www.armyresilience.army.mil/ard/images/pdf/Policy/AR%20350-53%20Comprehensive-20Soldier%20and%20Family%20Fitness.pdf

Department of the Army. (2019). *Army Leadership and the Profession,* Army Doctrine. https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/ARN20039-ADP_6-22-001-WEB-0.pdf

Department of the Army. (2020). *FM 7-22: Holistic health and fitness.* Department of the Army, United States of America.

Do, J. J., & Samuels, S. M. (2020). I am a warrior: An analysis of the military masculine-warrior narrative among U.S. Air Force officer candidates. *Armed Forces & Society, 47*(1), 25–47. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X20931561

Duckworth, A. (2020). *Know thyself: Your values are your compass.* Character Lab. https://characterlab.org/tips-of-the-week/know-thyself/?fbclid=IwAR-0s0WRmFNppg4rusHokmDho93X3_imH8pF-bIkRMDNDsAJFaLG4N7x9XP_Q

Eğeci, İ., & Gençöz, T. (2006). Factors associated with relationship satisfaction: Importance of communication skills. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, *28*(3), 383–39. https//doi.org/10.1007/s10591-006-9010-2

Fischer, I. C., Shanahan, M. L., Hirsh, A. T., Stewart, J. C., & Rand, K. L. (2020). The relationship between meaning in life and post-traumatic stress symptoms in US military personnel: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, *277*, 658–670. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2020.08.063

Forkus, S. R., Breines, J. G., & Weiss, N. H. (2019). Morally injurious experiences and mental health: The moderating role of self-compassion. Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice & Policy, 11(6), 630–638. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi.org/10.1037/tra0000446

Forkus, S. R., Breines, J. G., & Weiss, N. H. (2020). PTSD and alcohol misuse: Examining the mediating role of fear of self-compassion among military veterans. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice and Policy*, *12*(4), 364–372. https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000481

Foster, S., Carvallo, M., Lee, J., & Bernier, I. (2020). Honor and seeking mental health services: The roles of stigma and reputation concerns. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 52*(2), 1–6. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022120982070

Gerras, S. J., Wong, L., & Allen, C. D. (2008, November). *Organizational culture: Applying a hybrid model to the U.S. Army.* US Army War College. https://ssl.armywarcollege.edu/dclm/pubs/Organizational%20Culture%20Applying%20a%20Hybrid%20Model%20to%20the%20U.S.%20Army%20Nov%2008.pdf

Gibbons, S. W., Migliore, L., Convoy, S. P., Greiner, S., & DeLeon, P. H. (2014). Military mental health stigma challenges: Policy and practice considerations. *The Journal for Nurse Practitioners*, *10*(6), 365–372. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nurpra.2014.03.021

Griffin, B. A., Grimm, G. E., Smart, R., Ramchand, R. Jaycox, L. H., Ayer, L., Leidy, E. N., Davenport, S., Schell, T. L., & Morral, A. R. (2021). *Comparing the Army's suicide rate to the general U.S. population: Identifying suitable characteristics, data sources, and analytic approaches (RR-3025-A).* RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR3025.html

Griffiths, M., Shonin, E., & Van Gordon, W. (2016). Mindfulness as a treatment for gambling disorder: Current directions and issues. *Journal of Gambling and Commercial Gaming Research, 1*, 1–6. https://doi.org/10.17536/jgcgr.2016.004

Gross, J. J. (2002). Emotion regulation: Affective, cognitive, and social consequences.

Psychophysiology, 39, 281–291. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0048577201393198

Gross, J. J., & Levenson, R. W. (1997). Hiding feelings: The acute effects of inhibiting negative and positive emotion. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 106*(1), 95–103. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-843X.106.1.95

Gul, P., Cross, S. E., & Uskul, A. K. (2021). Implications of culture of honor theory and research for practitioners and prevention researchers. *American Psychologist, 76*(3), 502–515. https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000653

Harrington, R., & Loffredo, D. A. (2010). Insight, rumination, and self-reflection as predictors of well-being. *The Journal of Psychology, 145*(1), 39–57. https://doi.org/10.1080/00223980.2010.528072

Hedegaard, H., Curtin, S. C., & Warner, M. (2021). *Suicide mortality in the United States, 1999–2019 (Report no. 398).* Center for Disease Control. https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db398-H.pdf

Hepner, K. A., Bloom, E. L., Newberry, S., Sousa, J. L., Osilla, K. C., Booth, M., Bialas, A., & Rutter, C. M. (2022). The *impact of mindfulness meditation programs on performance-related outcomes: Implications for the U.S. Army.* RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1522-1.html

Hofmann, S. G., Asnaani, A., Vonk, I. J. J., Sawyer, A. T., & Fang, A. (2012). The efficacy of cognitive behavioral therapy: A review of meta-analyses. *Cognitive Therapy and Research, 36*, 427–440. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10608-012-9476-1

Hoge, C. W., Castro, C. A., Messer, S. C., McGurk, D., Cotting, D. I., & Koffman, R. L. (2004). Combat duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, mental health problems, and barriers to care. *New England Journal of Medicine, 351*(1), 13–22. https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMoa040603

Hom, M. A., Stanley, I. H., Schneider, M. E., & Joiner, Jr, T. E. (2017). A systematic review of help-seeking and mental health service utilization among military service members. *Clinical Psychology Review, 53*, 59–78. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2017.01.008

Hui, B. P. (2022). Prosocial behavior and well-being: Shifting from the "chicken and egg" to positive feedback loop. *Current Opinion in Psychology, 44*, 231–236. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2021.09.017

Hülsheger, U. R., Alberts, H. J., Feinholdt, A., & Lang, J. W. (2013). Benefits of mindfulness at work: The role of mindfulness in emotion regulation, emotional exhaustion, and job satisfaction. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 98*(2), 310–325. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031313

Jayewardene, W. P., Lohrmann, D. K., Erbe, R. G., & Torabi, M. R. (2017). Effects of preventive online mindfulness interventions on stress and mindfulness: A meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. *Preventive Medicine Reports, 5*, 150–159. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pmedr.2016.11.013

Jha, A. P., Morrison, A. B., Dainer-Best, J., Parker, S., Rostrup, N., & Stanley, E. A. (2015). Minds "at attention": Mindfulness training curbs attentional lapses in military cohorts. *PLoS One, 10*(2), e0116889. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0116889

Jha, A. P., Stanley, E. A., Kiyonaga, A., Wong, L., & Gelfand, L. (2010). Examining the protective effects of mindfulness training on working memory capacity and affective experience. *Emotion, 10*(1), 54–64. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018438

Kime, P. (2021). *Mental health issues accounted for one-third of military medevacs from middle east in 2020.* https://www.military.com/daily-news/2021/06/22/mental-health-issues-accounted-one-third-of-military-medevacs-middle-east-2020.html

Kreplin, U., Farias, M., & Brazil, I. A. (2018). The limited prosocial effects of meditation: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Scientific Reports*, *8*(1), 2403. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-018-20299-z

Maddox, M. (2018, February 21). *Cadets learn leadership, emotional intelligence from top brass.* https://www.army.mil/article/200870/cadets_learn_leadership_emotional_intelligence_from_top_brass

Mahmood, L., Hopthrow, T., & Randsley de Moura, G. (2016). A moment of mindfulness: Computer-mediated mindfulness practice increases state mindfulness. *PLoS One*, *11*(4), e0153923). https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0153923

Mantzios, M. (2014). Exploring the relationship between worry and impulsivity in military recruits: The role of mindfulness and self-compassion as potential mediators. *Stress and Health: Journal of the International Society for the Investigation of Stress*, *30*(5), 397–404. https://doi.org/10.1002/smi.2617

Martela, F., & Ryan, R. M. (2016). Prosocial behavior increases well-being and vitality even without contact with the beneficiary: Causal and behavioral evidence. *Motivation & Emotion*, *40*(3), 351–357. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-016-9552-z

Neff, K. D. (2003). The Development and validation of a scale to measure self-compassion. *Self and Identity*, *2*(3), 223–250. https://doi.org/10.1080/15298860309027

O'Neal, C. W., Richardson, E. W., & Mancini, J. A. (2020). Community, context, and coping: How social connections influence coping and well-being for military members and their spouses. *Family Process*, *59*(1), 158–172. https://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12395

Orosa-Duarte, Á., Mediavilla, R., Muñoz-Sanjose, A., Palao, Á., Garde, J., López-Herrero, V., Bravo-Ortiz, M. F., Bayón, C., & Rodríguez-Vega, B. (2021). Mindfulness-based mobile app reduces anxiety and increases self-compassion in healthcare students: A randomized controlled trial. *Medical Teacher*, *43*(6), 686–693. https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159x.2021.1914324

Petrovici, A., & Dobrescu, T. (2014). The role of emotional intelligence in building interpersonal communication skills. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *116*, 1405–1410. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.01.406

Piellusch, M. (2017, August 25). *Toxic leadership or tough love: Does the US Military know the difference?* The War Room. US Army War College. https://warroom.armywarcollege.edu/articles/toxic-leadership-tough-love-u-s-military-know-difference/

Rowland, L., & Curry, O. S. (2019). A range of kindness activities boost happiness. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, *159*(3), 340–343. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.2018.1469461

Santini, Z. I., Koyanagi, A., Tyrovolas, S., Mason, C., & Haro, J. M. (2015). The association between social relationships and depression: A systematic review. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, *175*, 53–65. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2014.12.049

Schaefer, H. S., Cotting, D. I., Proctor, E. S., Ryan, D. M., & Lerner, R. M. (2021). The military hypermasculine mystique: Sex, status, and emotional control at the United States Military Academy. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, *22*(4), 611–626. https://doi.org/10.1037/men0000365

Schein, E. H. (2004). *Organizational culture and leadership.* Jossey-Bass. http://www.untag-smd.ac.id/files/Perpustakaan_Digital_2/ORGANIZATIONAL%20CULTURE%20

Organizational%20Culture%20and%20Leadership,%203rd%20Edition.pdf

Shenk, J. M. "What Makes Us Happy?" *The Atlantic*, 1 Jun, 2009, p. 48.

Silvestrini, M., & Chen, J. A. (2022). "It's a sign of weakness": Masculinity and help-seeking behaviors among male veterans accessing posttraumatic stress disorder care. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0001382

Singer, T., & Engert, V. (2019). It matters what you practice: Differential training effects on subjective experience, behavior, brain and body in the ReSource Project. *Current Opinion in Psychology, 28*, 151–158. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2018.12.005

Stanley, E. A., & Larsen, K. L. (2021). Difficulties with emotion regulation in the contemporary U.S. armed forces: Structural contributors and potential solutions. *Armed Forces & Society, 47*(1), 77–105. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X19848018

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2020). *Key substance use and mental health indicators in the United States: Results from the 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health*. https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt29393/2019NSDUHFFRPDFWHTML/2019NSDUHFFR1PDFW090120.pdf

Sun, L. N., Gu, J. W., Huang, L. J., Shang, Z. L., Zhou, Y. G., Wu, L. L., Jia, Y. P., Liu, N. Q., & Liu, W. Z. (2021). Military-related posttraumatic stress disorder and mindfulness meditation: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Chinese Journal of Traumatology*, *24*(04), 221–230. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cjtee.2021.05.003

Teo, A. R., Choi, H., & Valenstein, M. (2013). Social relationships and depression: Ten-year follow-up from a nationally representative study. *PLoS One*, *8*(4), e62396. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0062396

Teper, R., Segal, Z. V., & Inzlicht, M. (2013). Inside the mindful mind: How mindfulness enhances emotion regulation through improvements in executive control. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 22(*6), 449–454. https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721413495869

Trachik, B., Tucker, R. P., Ganulin, M. L., Merrill, J. C., LoPresti, M. L., Cabrera, O. A., & Dretsch, M. N. (2020). Leader provided purpose: Military leadership behavior and its association with suicidal ideation. *Psychiatry Research*, *285*, 112722. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2019.112722

Vogel, D. L., Heimerdinger-Edwards, S. R., Hammer, J. H., & Hubbard, A. (2011). "Boys don't cry": Examination of the links between endorsement of masculine norms, self-stigma, and help-seeking attitudes for men from diverse backgrounds. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 58*(3), 368–382. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0023688

Weiss, E., & Coll, J. E. (2011). The influence of military culture and veteran worldviews on mental health treatment: Practice implications for combat veteran and help-seeking and wellness. *International Journal of Health, Wellness, & Society, 1*(2), 75–86. https://doi.org/10.18848/2156-8960/CGP/v01i02/41168

Department of the Army (2014) *Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness* (Army Regulation 350-53) www.armyresilience.army.mil/ard/images/pdf/Policy/AR%20350-53%20Comprehensive20Soldier%20and%20Family%20Fitness.pdf