



# TOOLS FOR SELF - CARE

Resources and strategies for everything from managing stress, to addressing nutrition, quitting smoking and getting enough sleep.

**STRENGTHENING THE  
ENERGISER LES FORCES**





**This notebook is a resource for deployed military members to use when addressing challenges in specific areas of life. This resource presents a situation and offers strategies to address it, and where possible includes resources.**

**PLEASE NOTE - THIS IS AN ADDITIONAL RESOURCE AND IS NOT INTENDED AS A REPLACEMENT NOR DOES IT SUPERSEDE CAF BASED TRAINING OR INFORMATION.**



**This toolkit was curated for the Garrison Petawawa  
deploying members and their families by the Health  
Promotion Team.**

**We strive to help you maintain optimal health and  
wellness so you can be operation ready at all times.  
Our hope is that this resource will add to your Shield  
Of Readiness.**

**Your Health Promotion Team  
Adeline, Dylan, Kevin, Megan and Juannittah**



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# MENTAL FITNESS



# Mental Fitness

Mental Fitness is a state of well-being, in which an individual is psychologically and emotionally resilient. It is the ability to spring back after struggling through difficult and stressful times in one's life and move forward, to grow and thrive.





# Strategies for Improving Mental Fitness

## Tactical Breathing

- Reduces the effects of the stress response.
- Rapidly reducing anxiety and arousal by bringing the body to a physiologically relaxed state.
- Follow these steps:
  - **Inhale:** Breathe in through your nose for a count of four, focusing on the air entering your lungs.
  - **Hold:** Hold your breath for a count of four.
  - **Exhale:** Slowly exhale through your mouth for a count of four.
  - **Hold:** Hold your breath again for a count of four before inhaling again.
  - **Repeat:** Continue this cycle for several minutes to help calm your mind and body.

## Mindfulness

- “Bringing one’s attention to the present experience on a moment-by-moment basis”. Which means paying attention on purpose. Mindfulness provides an antidote to living “unconsciously” or being on auto pilot
- One activity you can try is the 5,4,3,2,1 method:
  - List 5 things you see
  - List 4 things you can feel / touch
  - List 3 things you can smell
  - List 2 things you can hear.
  - List 1 thing you can taste.



# Strategies for Improving Mental Fitness

## Resilience

- Take care of yourself:
  - Sleep (Refer to page 12).
  - Nutrition (Refer to page 28).
  - Manage stress (Refer to page 18).
  - Avoid addictive substances to manage distress.

## Build Social Support Network:

- Stay connected with family and friends by phone calls, video chats, text messaging, writing letters, etc.
- Engage with others on deployment such as roommates, other nations, other units, etc.
- Get involved in social activities such as PSP led excursions and recreational activities, outings, sports, card games etc.
- Be proactive: Ask for help
- Utilize CAF Resources (Refer to page 42)

## Positive Self-Talk

- Positive Self-talk is the internal narrative you hold about yourself to show self-compassion and understanding for who you are and what you've been through. For example, "I can do better next time," or "I can learn from my mistakes."

Practice/learn more about mental fitness: (Refer to the R2MR app. Info on page 43)



**GETTING  
ENOUGH  
SLEEP**



## Getting Enough Sleep

Getting enough sleep (7-9 hours per night) is essential for optimal performance and functioning. On deployment this may not always be an option; many things make sleep a challenge, including combat operations, long workdays or 24-hour watch duty.

Deployed members may be anxious, concerned about their own safety or missing home. And they may face uncomfortable sleeping surfaces and unusual sleep-wake cycles.



# Strategies to Fall Asleep Easier

When possible:

- Go to sleep when you are sleepy.
- Take a warm shower before heading to bed.
- Be consistent. If possible, go to bed at the same time each night and get up at the same time each morning, including on the weekends.
- Make your sleeping area as comfortable and relaxing as possible.
  - Use a sleeping mask and/or earplugs if needed.
- Limit your use of electronic devices, such as TVs, computers and smart phones, before sleeping.
  - It is recommended that you stop electronic usage 30-90 minutes before bedtime.
- Avoid large meals, caffeine and alcohol before bedtime.
  - It is recommended to not eat a large meal within 2-3 hours prior to bedtime.
- Get some exercise. Being physically active during the day can help you fall asleep more easily at night.
  - Stop exercising at least 2 hours before bedtime



# Tactical Naps

A "tactical nap" is a short, intentional sleep period of 10-30mins taken to maintain optimal function during demanding situations where full sleep is not possible. "The practice of tactical napping" can help reach the recommended seven hours of sleep per 24 hour.

Tactical naps are ideally in a space that is dark, quiet, and comfortable, but realistically anywhere that is safe.

Tactical naps can also be used to get extra sleep before upcoming sleep loss, to increase alertness during major operations, and to help recover more quickly after sleep loss. And though napping may lead to initial grogginess when you wake up, using the combination of naps and caffeine strategically can reduce that.

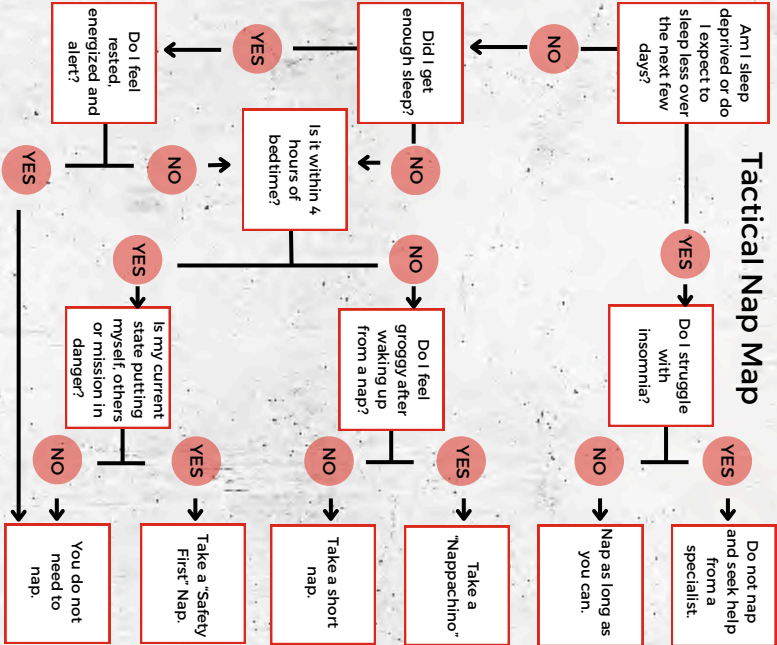
Potential benefits of tactical naps:

- To bank sleep before a period of unavoidable sleep loss (e.g., pre-mission) to help pay down sleep debt and sustain performance during that sleep loss,
- To grab whatever sleep possible during continuous or extended operations, where longer consolidated sleep is not possible, to help sustain or restore performance.
- To recover performance and alertness more quickly following sleep loss.

Please see Tactical Nap Map on page 15.



# Tactical Nap Map



Naps of any duration make it difficult to fall asleep at night. Unless your current state puts yourself, others or the mission at risk, it's important to avoid napping and seek help from a specialist.

When you have the chance, napping as long as possible helps offset some of the effects of acute sleep deprivation. You can also use this strategy to bank sleep hours before expected acute sleep deprivation.

It takes about 20-30 minutes after intake for caffeine to act on your brain. Having some coffee before you take a nap helps to reduce grogginess upon awakening.

Napping for 20-30 minutes is enough to refresh your attention, boost your energy and improve memory.

Sleep as long as you need to ensure you, others, and the mission are safe. If you struggle with insomnia, you might want to see a sleep specialist to make sure you're not putting yourself, others and the mission at risk in the future.

You don't need a nap if you're feeling rested, alert, energized. Also naps aren't recommended within four hours of bedtime or if they interfere with your mission demands.



# When to Consult with a Health Care Provider

- Trouble falling asleep, waking up multiple times at night, or waking up early
- Snoring and 'gaspings for air' at night
- Abnormal movements or sensations during your sleep, in particular in your legs
- Waking up not feeling refreshed
- Falling asleep or very drowsy when not intending to (e.g. reading, watching a movie)
- Lack of energy, lack of motivation, trouble focusing
- Increased irritability and noticing changes in mood
- Craving simple sugars or junk food





# **COPING WITH STRESS**



# Coping With Stress

Stress is a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that “demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize.”

There is Good Stress or Eustress which provides stimulation and challenge and is essential for growth, development and change.

There is also Bad Stress or Distress which is a reaction to pressure, either external or self-imposed, that causes psychological and physiological changes of an undesirable nature.

Coping with stress effectively and healthily can decrease your risk of health problems, improve your mood and sleep patterns, enhance your focus and concentration, and can give you an increased sense of well-being and energy.



# Strategies for Coping with Stress

## **Learn stress management:**

- The more we practice healthy stress management, the more we can handle life's demands, prevent acute and chronic health conditions and live happier, healthier, productive lives.
- **For example;**
  - Breathing exercises, focusing on physical sensations, and engaging with the environment. (Refer to page 9)

## **Keep a daily routine:**

- Having a daily schedule can help us use our time efficiently and feel more in control.

## **Get plenty of sleep:**

- Getting enough sleep is important for both body and mind. Sleep repairs, relaxes and rejuvenates our body and can help reverse the effect of stress. (Refer to page 12)

## **Engage in Group Activities:**

- Participate in PSP led excursions, recreational activities, outings, sports, etc.



# Strategies for Coping with Stress

## **Keep In touch with family and friends:**

- Connecting with others can lift our mood and help us feel less stressed (Refer to page 10.)

## **Eat healthy:**

- What we eat and drink can affect our health. Try to eat a balanced diet and to eat at regular intervals. Drink enough fluids. Eat lots of fresh fruits and vegetables if you can. (Refer to page 28).

## **Exercise regularly:**

- Regular daily exercise can help to reduce stress. This can include walking, as well as more intensive exercise.
- Regular exercise is 2.5 hours total per week. This includes; walking, running, weight training, yoga, sports, etc.
- Contact local PSP fitness rep for fitness advice and expertise.

## **Limit time following news:**

- Spending too much time following news on television and social media can increase stress. 30 minutes - 2 hours per day.



# MANAGING ANGER



# Managing Anger

Anger is a strong emotion oriented toward some real or perceived grievance; past, present or future. It can be an emotional signal to let us know we are over stressed.

Anger can be directed at self or others.

## Why Do We Get Angry?

- Response to a perceived threat to people, things or ideas that are important to us
- Unmet expectations or perceived injustice
- Frustration of our goals
- Hurt, embarrassed, humiliated
- Harassment



# Types of Anger

## Constructive Functions of Anger

- Persevere when facing frustration or injustice
- Activate psychological resources like determination
- Protect self-esteem
- Create energy to resolve conflict, accomplish a task, right a wrong

## Destructive Functions of Anger

- Triggers aggressive behaviour, rumination, passivity
- Potential to damage important relationships.
- Trigger distressing emotions, such as sadness, fear and disappointment.
- Lead to a loss of respect from others and loss of self-respect
- Negative impact on physical and mental health



# When Anger Becomes a Problem

Anger becomes a problem when...

- It becomes our main response to certain people or situations
- It becomes our main response to most people or situations
- Is too intense
- It lasts too long
- It occurs in inappropriate situations
- It has a negative impact on relationships
- It leads to aggression





# Strategies for Coping with Anger

## Be aware of your triggers

- Anger triggers are the things that set you off. Knowing your triggers, and being cautious around them, will reduce the likelihood of your anger getting out of control.

## Practice deep breathing

- Deep breathing is a simple technique that's excellent for managing emotions. Not only is deep breathing effective, it's also discreet and easy to use at any time or place. (Refer to page 9).

## Keep an anger log

- Following an episode of anger, take a few moments to record your experience. This practice will help you identify patterns, warning signs, and triggers, while also helping you organize thoughts and work through problems.

## Use diversions

- The goal of diversions is to buy yourself time. E.G. go for a walk, read a book, play a sport, listen to music. If you can distract yourself for just 30 minutes, you'll have a better chance of dealing with your anger in a healthy way. Remember, you can always return to the source of your anger later—you're just setting the problem aside for now. However, when returning to the source of anger DO NOT return in anger.



# Strategies for Coping with Anger

## Know your warning signs

- Anger warning signs are the clues your body gives you that your anger is starting to grow. E.G. feel hot / turn red, clenched fists, headaches, becoming argumentative, raised voice. When you learn to spot your warning signs, you can begin to address your anger while it's still weak.

## Take a time out

- Time-outs are a powerful tool for relationships where anger-fueled disagreements are causing problems. When someone calls a time-out, individuals walk away from the problem, and then return once they have had an opportunity to cool down.

## Communicate

- Communication is how we express our ideas, thoughts and feelings. It is how we gain respect and credibility or lose respect and credibility if we communicate with anger and aggressiveness. The better we communicate, the more likely we are to have our ideas welcomed and accepted by others. Good communication assists us to make decisions, solve disagreements and problems and reach agreements with others



# MAINTAINING HEALTHY EATING HABITS



# Maintaining Healthy Eating Habits

Maintaining healthy eating habits and eating well is vital to maintaining overall good health, as it gives you more energy and concentration to complete tasks and lowers your risk of developing health problems.

This is especially important while on deployment because you may not be able to prepare your own meals and will instead rely on the food served at the cafeteria.

Making healthy food choices can help you develop a healthy eating pattern. A healthy eating pattern refers to what you eat and drink on a regular basis and it helps you improve your overall health.

Use the proportions of foods on the Canada's Healthy Plate (refer to page 29) as a tool to help you make healthy meals or snacks.



# A Healthy Plate

**Step 1:** Make half your plate vegetables and fruits. Vegetables and fruits should always make up the largest proportion of the foods you eat throughout the day. Fill this half of your plate first.

**Step 2:** Make one-quarter of your plate protein foods. Choose protein foods that come from plants more often.

**Step 3:** Make one-quarter of your plate whole grain foods.

**Step 4:** Make water your drink of choice. Unsweetened coffee, tea or milk are acceptable options. Caffeine should be limited to 400mg per day example; 1 Large Tim Hortons coffee is 270 mg per cup.

Have plenty of  
vegetables and fruits

Eat protein foods

Make water  
your drink  
of choice



The size and amount of each food shown on the plate is not meant to show how much to eat at one time. A larger person may have a larger plate than a smaller person, or a child vs. an adult.

The make-up of the plate should remain the same, in general in terms of the half, quarter and quarter.

You can choose a variety of healthy foods that you enjoy. Healthy food choices can be fresh, frozen, canned or dried.



# SMOKING CESSATION



# Smoking Cessation

The best way to quit smoking is the one that works for you. Combining the right tools and support can improve your chances of quitting.

Explore your options and make your plan using the Tools for a Smoke-Free Life resources from

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/campaigns/quit-smoking.html>

You can obtain NRT at the pharmacy there if need be. Medications like varenicline and Zyban are not as easy and should be brought along.





# Strategies to Quit Smoking:

## Make lists

- Try making a list of the situations when you smoke to help you identify what triggers you to light up and then write down the benefits you see in quitting. Keep the list handy so you can re-read it, and picture yourself doing different activities instead of smoking, like going for a walk or run.

## Get moving

- Exercise relaxes the mind and body and helps repair some of the damage smoking has done to your health. Contact local PSP for fitness expertise.

## Avoid triggers

- Figure out what situations make you crave a cigarette and try to avoid or change them. If you usually smoke while drinking coffee, try tea or water. Instead limit smoking to only at parties, or try to avoid them until you feel confident about enjoying these occasions without smoking

## Reduce cravings

- Try these simple activities – even if they sound too simple – to reduce your nicotine-craving breathe deeply to help yourself relax, drink water to keep your hands and mouth busy (it helps flush the toxins from your system, and you can raise a glass to your success)



# Strategies to GRADUALLY Quit Smoking:

You may find it easier to quit gradually.

Smoke less often, smoke fewer cigarettes in a row or try to go longer between smokes. Some people battle the addiction by developing new habits such as:

- Using matches instead of a lighter because they run out sooner and are harder to light.
- Putting cigarettes in an out-of-the-way spot instead of having them on you, so you have to go get them.
- Butting out after half a cigarette instead of finishing it.
- Delaying your first smoke of the day by an hour and then adding another 15 minutes to the time before the next one, a half hour to the next and so on.

Write down a plan and stick to it.

- Writing down why you want to quit, and how you'll do it, makes it more real. You'll be more committed.

Commit

- Being more committed, you'll probably want to talk to other people who get it: former smokers whose own attempts seemed destined to fail - but weren't.

Talking to friends and co-workers, you may find a buddy - someone who wants to quit with you, who'll help you stick to the plan.



# CANNABIS CESSATION



# Cannabis Use

Using cannabis is a personal choice, but it can have short- and long-term effects on your health. Cannabis can affect your thinking, physical co-ordination and control, and increase your risk of accidents, injuries, reproductive issues and mental health problems, including dependence. Smoking cannabis can increase your chances of having lung problems.

Some people who use cannabis develop problems and may become dependent. Don't hesitate to seek support if you think you need help controlling your cannabis use, if you experience withdrawal symptoms or if your use is affecting your work, school or social and family life. You can find help online, or through a doctor or other health professional.

Please keep in mind that cannabis is **not legal** in all countries. Those on deployment who are dependent on cannabis may experience symptoms of withdrawals. (refer to page 40).

The strategies listed on pages 38 and 39 to quit/reduce one's use of cannabis are best practiced **before** one goes out on deployment.



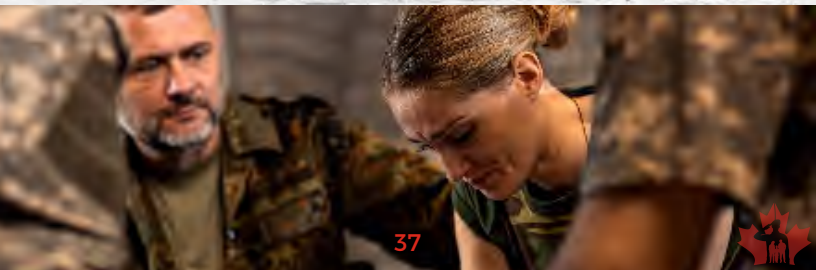
## When to Seek Support

Signs you may need help with your cannabis or other substance (drug) use include:

- Ignoring responsibilities at work, school, or home.
- Giving up activities that you find important or enjoyable.
- Using the substance (drug) more often.
- Feeling unable to cut down or manage your use.
- Changes in mood (e.g., feeling irritable and paranoid).
- Changing friends.
- Having difficulties with family members.
- Being secretive or dishonest.
- Changing sleep habits, appetite, or other behaviors.

Don't hesitate to get help if using cannabis is affecting your life. There are places to go to if you need help managing your use or if you have withdrawal symptoms. If you are concerned about yourself or someone else, seek help from:

- Your health care provider.
- Drug and Alcohol Helpline (18+) 1-800-565-8603.



# Strategies for Quitting / Reducing Cannabis Use

The following strategies for quitting/reducing cannabis use are best practiced **before** you deploy.

## Plan Ahead

If certain people or places lead you to use cannabis more than you want to, then avoid them. If using at home is a problem, don't have cannabis in the house. When an urge to use hits, accept that it will crest like a wave and pass. Remind yourself of your reasons for reducing your use, and focus on healthier ways to spend your time.

## Find Fun

Get involved with an activity that doesn't involve cannabis. Fill free time with hobbies and family and friends that make you feel good. If you used cannabis to help you feel comfortable in social situations or to cope with stress, explore new techniques and strategies. This can include breathing exercises, meditation, yoga or replacing negative self-talk with positive self-talk.

## Pace Yourself

If you do use on one day, skip using for at least the next day. An important part of reducing your use is to break the pattern of daily use. The personal cannabis tracker is a tool that you can use to help track and manage this.



# Strategies for Quitting / Reducing Cannabis Use

## Don't Mix

Try not to use cannabis with alcohol or other drugs.

Cannabis can interact with other substances in ways that may lead to unwanted side effects. It is also a good idea to avoid using cannabis if you're taking certain over-the-counter and prescription medications. To learn more, check out these resources [Cannabis and Other Substances](#) and [Cannabis and Your Medications](#) at [ccsa.ca/cannabis](https://ccsa.ca/cannabis).

## Don't Drive

Don't drive or operate heavy machinery when using cannabis.

Cannabis can interfere with your thinking and motor skills that can make it difficult for you to drive.

Cannabis use doubles your risk of a crash. This risk is even higher when you use cannabis and alcohol at the same time.

## Buy Legal

**Please keep in mind that cannabis is not legal in all countries.** Cannabis that you get from a dealer or other illegal source is not regulated. This means that you don't know if it's contaminated with harmful chemicals, pesticides, mold and other substances. Legal cannabis products are strictly regulated and tested for quality and safety. Reduce your risk by purchasing cannabis from legal and regulated sources. Look for the appropriate symbols to ensure your products are from legal and regulated sources.



# Symptoms of Cannabis Withdrawals

The most common withdrawal symptoms include:

- Anger, irritability and aggression.
- Nervousness, anxiety and restlessness.
- Decreased appetite, which may lead to weight loss.
- Depressed mood.
- Insomnia, disturbing dreams and nightmares.

Less common physical symptoms include:

- Headaches.
- Nausea and vomiting.
- Excessive sweating.
- Abdominal pain.
- Shakiness (tremors).

These symptoms aren't life-threatening, but they can be very uncomfortable. Symptoms of cannabis withdrawal usually begin within the first 24 to 48 hours of stopping or significantly reducing cannabis use after heavy, long-term use. The severity of the symptoms typically peaks by day three.

How long does cannabis withdrawal last?

- How long cannabis withdrawal lasts and the severity of it depends on the amount of cannabis (THC) consumed before stopping.
- Symptoms can last for up to two weeks. But certain symptoms can last up to three weeks or more in people who use cannabis very often.





# RESOURCES



# Resources:

## EMERGENCY SERVICES:

- Sexual Misconduct Support and Resource Centre (SMSRC)
  - 1-844-750-1648
- Mental Health Crisis Line
  - 1-866-996-0991
- Family Information Line
  - 1-800-866-4546 (North America)
  - 00-800-771-17722 (International)
- Drug and Alcohol Helpline
  - (18+) 1-800-565-8603.

## CF MEMBER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM:

- 1-800-268-7708
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/programs/member-assistance.html>

## DIGITAL PLATFORMS:

- Bounce Back:
  - <https://bouncebackontario.ca/>
- Anxiety Canada
  - <https://www.anxietycanada.com/>
- Counselling Connect
  - <https://www.counsellingconnect.org/>
- Cookspiration
  - <https://www.cookspiration.com/>



# APPS



**Canadian Armed Forces App:** A bilingual platform that provides military and civilian employees with the latest updates from leadership, connection to social media feeds, and access to a variety of CAF resources, including health, pay and pension services.



**Maple:** This program provides dependents of Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members living in Canada with 24/7 access to a Canadian-licensed general practitioner virtually. Administered by Maple, this program is a safe and effective way to access routine healthcare from anywhere.



**CAF C&B:** The CAF C&B Mobile App provides CAF members with the ability to perform pay-related actions anywhere at any time. Active Reserve members will have the ability to view individual duty and training schedules.



**OSI Connect:** OSI Connect is a free mental health learning and self-management mobile app developed to help OSI patients and their families understand the nature of operational stress injuries (OSIs) and to provide help through the OSI Clinic Network across Canada.



**PTSD Coach Canada:** The PTSD Coach Canada app can help you learn about and manage symptoms that can occur after trauma. Features include reliable information on PTSD and treatments that work, tools for screening and tracking your symptoms, convenient, easy-to-use tools to help you handle stress symptoms, direct links to support and help, always with you when you need it.



**R2MR:** A mobile training tool developed to improve short-term performance and long-term mental health outcomes. R2MR training is layered and tailored to meet the relevant demands and responsibilities CAF personnel and families encounter at each stage of their career and while on deployment.





**HEALTH PROMOTION  
PROMOTION DE LA SANTÉ**