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# Warrior Resiliency Program

*Warrior Ethos for Non-Combative Roles in the U.S. Air  
Force*

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*This book is intended to be used as a guide for those looking to implement a Warrior Resiliency Program on their military institution. It is not endorsed by the U.S. Air Force, nor does it reflect the views or opinions of the U.S. Air Force. The work contained in this book has been created and compiled by the author to be used as a reference; readers are expected to verify any information and participate in all exercises and activities at their own risk. The author is not a doctor or personal trainer. All exercise and health information has been included based on the author's own research and experiences. Readers may follow suggestions at their own risk.*

*Warrior Resiliency Program*

*Warrior Ethos for Non-Combative Roles in the U.S. Air Force*

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## Author's Note

This guide was written to be used by airmen of the United States Air Force at all levels. It has been written from a National Guard/Reserve perspective, but it may easily be adapted for use by Active Duty units as well. The intention for this guide is to be a helpful resource for those looking to implement or expand a Warrior Resiliency Program at their duty location. The information within has been compiled based on the author's personal experiences and through preliminary research into applicable topics. It is by no means a comprehensive guide, but it aims to offer a basic structure and starting point for those interested in the Warrior Resiliency Program. The inclusion of the resources and references at the back of this guide are provided to offer further in-depth information for the reader.



# 1

## Program Introduction & Theory

### ***B.L.U.F. (Bottom Line Up Front)***

- *There is a lack of emphasis on warrior resiliency and capability for airmen in non-combative roles in the U.S. Air Force;*
- *The Warrior Resiliency Program is a Physical Training (PT) and skills-based program that was created to strengthen the mental and physical resiliency of airmen.*

\* \* \*

The concept for the Warrior Resiliency Program arose when several Air Force maintainers recognized a lack of physical, mental, and technical readiness in airmen outside of combat-centered career fields. In these non-combative roles, the primary focus is generally on the tasks of the job itself, which does not include any emphasis on warrior resiliency or capability. Within these non-combative career fields, airmen are not required to be physically fit. Instead, that responsibility falls entirely on the individual — which means that too often, non-combative airmen

are not exhibiting physical excellence. As a matter of fact, a 2022 study<sup>1</sup> found that among more than two hundred airmen from a support squadron on an active duty Air Force base, sixty-four percent were obese and thirty percent failed the Air Force Physical Fitness Test. This study highlights the critical need for improved physical fitness among non-combatative airmen.

With physical fitness comes emotional, spiritual, and mental fitness. The Air Force maintainers saw the need for a structured program allowing their fellow maintainers, and personnel in other non-combatative roles, to develop a warrior mindset. This “warrior mindset” entails facing outward challenges with perseverance and determination, while also turning inwards to ensure personal well-being and mental health.

Thus began the initial structuring of the Warrior Resiliency Program. There are both inward and outward facing components designed to strengthen all aspects of a warrior — both physical aspects and the less-tangible social, mental, and spiritual aspects. You will see many of these original components reflected in this guide. This includes personal habits, like proper resource management, as well as physical components taken from the field of sports medicine and the experiences of military veterans like Pat McNamara. The idea of the Warrior Resiliency Program is to provide a structure for airmen in non-combatative roles to improve their physical and mental resilience, while supporting their fellow airmen to do the same. This program will require you to take personal responsibility for your actions and experiences, and it will encourage accountability so that each participant is held to the same high standard. It is designed to challenge you to push past your perceived barriers, intentionally pursue your goals, and ultimately form you into a stronger and more resilient warrior.

## 2

# Necessary Tools & Equipment

### ***B.L.U.F.***

- *Participation in a Warrior Resiliency Program requires minimal tools or equipment;*
- *Most items can be acquired at low-cost or constructed by hand.*

\* \* \*

To make this program more accessible to a wide range of members, it has been designed so that all activities can be performed with minimal tools or equipment.

### *Physical Training Equipment:*

Much of this equipment can be found at a local gym, or made inexpensively at home out of items purchased from the hardware store (see the Resources & References section at the back of this guide for more information). The exercises available to you with this limited list of

equipment also do not require extensive training or coaching to perform, making them more accessible to those without a personal trainer or weight-lifting background.

- Pull-up bar

Practicing pull-ups regularly improves upper body strength and grip strength, preparing warriors for the physical strain of routine tasks and emergency situations.

- 20" x 24" x 30" wooden plyometric box or similar

Performing step-up exercises or box jumps with a plyometric box is a simple way to improve leg and core strength, balance, and overall endurance.

- Weighted sandbag (twenty-five to eighty pounds)

A sandbag can be used in conjunction with other exercises (such as box step-ups or squats) to increase the level of difficulty, or it can be packed into a backpack for ruck marches. You can start out with a lighter bag and increase the weight as you grow stronger.

- A backpack capable of holding thirty-five to seventy pounds

A backpack with a hip belt and chest strap is ideal, but not absolutely necessary. Anything big enough to carry your sandbag in addition to some basic supplies is sufficient. A weighted backpack can be used for ruck marches or to make body weight exercises more challenging.

### *Tools for Practical Skills:*

- Lensatic compass or similar device

Land navigation can be a difficult skill to learn and requires practice. A lensatic compass is important in helping warriors understand and employ the basics of land navigation. If you will be navigating by way of paper maps, it would be helpful to acquire a military protractor and ultra fine point pen as well.

- 24”-36” length of thick paracord or climbing rope

The importance of knot tying will be discussed in a later section of this guide. In order to learn and practice the knots included in this program, members should carry a length of thick paracord or climbing rope on their person at all times. Take advantage of periods of downtime within your day and practice the knots you have learned.

### *Optional Personal Equipment:*

- IFAK (Individual First Aid Kit)

Warriors should be prepared to respond to any and all difficult situations that may arise on a daily basis, which includes a basic knowledge of life saving techniques. Carrying an IFAK wherever you go will provide you with the basic tools you may need to save a life. Consider including a tourniquet in your IFAK. There are many styles and brands of tourniquets readily available online. If you have young children or pets in your home, you may look into tourniquets that can accommodate smaller limbs. See the Resources & References section at the back of this guide for a link to a build-your-own-IFAK page.

## Mental & Spiritual Resilience

### ***B.L.U.F.***

- *A foundation of mental and spiritual resilience is essential for the overall well-being of every warrior and their loved ones;*
- *Practicing mindfulness, connecting with your community, and identifying your purpose can all contribute to improved mental and spiritual resilience.*

\* \* \*

One author defines resilience as “the capacity of a system, be it an individual, a forest, a city or an economy, to deal with change and continue to develop.”<sup>2</sup> In our constantly-changing world, it is essential that warriors establish personal resilience and continue to grow amidst uncertainty and adversity. Having such resilience allows you to process tense situations, problem solve, face challenges, and recover from setbacks much more quickly. Resilience looks like having a desire to grow and continuously learn, to adapt, and to persevere. It means being

goal-oriented and having a strong work ethic. In this resource guide, we will refer to such mental resilience, or mental fitness if you will, as having a “warrior mindset.”

Mental fitness encompasses a range of qualities that, when combined, equip an individual for all of life’s obstacles: resilience allows you to bounce back from past challenges, grit involves a certain preparation for future difficulties, along with passion and perseverance for long-term goals,<sup>3</sup> and toughness is how you deal with the struggles of today. More specifically, one study defines mental toughness as “a personal capacity to produce consistently high levels of [...] performance despite everyday challenges and stressors as well as significant adversities.”<sup>4</sup> Some individuals may view mental toughness or resilience as a learned or inherited trait, rather than a mental state. However, research suggests that “at least a portion of mental toughness is state-like and can change over time.”<sup>5</sup>

While mental toughness may be a state of being, one study found that individuals with a high level of inherent mental toughness may not be accessing their entire capacity of mental toughness; their “functional mental toughness” (the mental toughness they *are* accessing) is only optimized through actively incorporating the concepts of “thrive, prepare, and activate”<sup>5</sup> in their daily activities. The study defines these three terms respectively as “the value placed on overall foundational well-being,” to “make ready beforehand for some purpose, activity or use” (including having a clear vision or goal), and “attentional control, self-talk, and feedback”.<sup>5</sup> It is clear that warriors must practice thriving, preparing, and activating to maximize their mental toughness.

Collectively, the trifecta of resilience, grit, and toughness comprise the foundation of mental fitness. Practically, warriors with strong mental fitness will be able to call on their toughness in the midst of struggle, heal and progress through resilience, and find long-term purpose by

approaching life with a sense of grit.

In an age where military members are returning from deployments with prevalence rates for depression and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder over thirty percent,<sup>6</sup> and thousands of veterans dying by suicide annually,<sup>7</sup> mental support and resilience are more important than ever before. Additionally, studies show that it is not just military members being affected by negative mental health — military spouses and children experience the effects of their military member's experiences too. Deployments can be especially difficult for military families, with research revealing occurrences of military children experiencing attachment and trust issues with their at-home parent.<sup>8</sup> Improving mental fitness, or maintaining a warrior mindset, is crucial for the well being of both warriors *and* their loved ones.

The path to achieving mental fitness goes beyond simply maintaining good mental health, although good mental health does contribute to good mental fitness. According to one source, mental fitness is comprised of mental flexibility, endurance, and strength, and it can reduce the impacts of depression, anxiety, and stress.<sup>9</sup> In a military context, a 2015 study examining the effects of mindfulness training in military cohorts found evidence to suggest that such training, especially that which involves active mental engagement, may enhance performance and improve the resilience of “cognitive capabilities” for soldiers in combat or similarly stressful environments.<sup>10</sup> To gain the benefits of mental resilience, however, you must begin with simple habits. Implementing a mental fitness routine in your daily life may involve meditation, reflection, journaling, stepping outside your comfort zone, or putting yourself in challenging situations to learn how to better respond. Mental fitness may also involve having the strength to consult a mental health professional when needed, to evaluate yourself

introspectively, and to seek insight into the challenges you have faced. Mental fitness will look different for everyone, but should be a key aspect of each warrior's daily life and certainly integrated into any Warrior Resiliency Program.

The benefits found through mental resilience can be gained from spiritual resilience as well. Spirituality can be defined as “a search for inner peace,”<sup>11</sup> and while religion can exist within spirituality, spirituality is not exclusively defined according to religious beliefs or doctrines. According to one Air Force Chaplain,<sup>11</sup> there are three pillars for a healthy spiritual life. The first of these is connection; connection to family, connection to community, and to interpersonal relationships. Being comfortable around the people in your life and feeling connected to the environment around you is essential to spiritual resilience. The second pillar for a healthy spiritual life is meaning. It is important to identify your values, your goals, your purpose, and what drives you. These things dictate how you live your life. Suffering and hardship are a part of life, but having meaning can relieve these difficulties. Furthermore, when we live according to our values, our mind is calmed and suffering is eased. The third and final pillar necessary for a healthy spiritual life is practice. Having daily activities that align with your purpose and values will move you towards inner peace. Practicing the tools for mental resilience mentioned above will strengthen both your mind and spirit.

To better support mental and spiritual resilience within your own Warrior Resiliency Program, take advantage of both local and Air Force-wide resources. These are not limited to but may include:

- Chaplain — a great resource for spiritual and mental guidance;
- Master Resiliency Trainer — usually someone who has performed

## WARRIOR RESILIENCY PROGRAM

extensive resiliency training and may offer regular classes at your duty location on a variety of applicable life topics;

- Psychological Health Services — usually they offer personal counseling, but some locations may offer discussion groups or alternatives to traditional counseling;
- Fitness Center — most base fitness centers offer yoga classes, and some may offer meditation or mindfulness classes as well;
- Airman & Family Readiness Center — these personnel can assist you and your family with matters relating to health, finances, career, community involvement, and more.

While having a warrior mindset does mean persevering through adversity and tackling challenges head-on, it also means having the wisdom to know when to change course or reassess a challenge. Most importantly of all, having a warrior mindset means being a wing man to your fellow warriors. Learn to develop mental and spiritual resilience within yourself, and then share your knowledge and skills with those around you.

## 4

# The Importance of Physical Fitness

### ***B.L.U.F.***

- *A key element of any Warrior Resiliency Program is physical fitness;*
- *Even thirty minutes of physical activity a day has many health benefits.*

\* \* \*

The introduction of this guide discussed the need for a program that challenges and improves the physical and mental fitness of airmen, in order to create more resilient warriors. Improved physical and mental health can contribute to a better quality and longevity of life, as well as improved performance in personal and career-related tasks. This section will expand on the previous discussion of mental and spiritual resilience, giving an overview of the many benefits of a program that implements physical training and focuses on the formation of the “warrior ethos.”

The importance of maintaining physical fitness as a member of the

Armed Forces may seem obvious. As a military member, you can be called to physically defend national assets, your own life, or the lives of others at any time, and you must be prepared for that situation. Some jobs in the military, especially non-combative positions, may not inherently require you to be physically fit, but the warrior who maintains their physical fitness will be better equipped for potential combat and even daily life. In fact, the CDC reports that participation in physical activity can lead to “improved sleep; decreased risk of depression and anxiety; decreased risk of chronic conditions such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, and high blood pressure; and reduced symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.”<sup>12</sup> Gaining these benefits and maintaining physical fitness may be easier than you expect. Using the tools in this guide (specifically, see Section 8: “Recommendations for Physical Training”), you can find ways to easily incorporate physical fitness into your weekly routine. The American Heart Association<sup>13</sup> and the World Health Organization<sup>14</sup> both recommend 150 minutes of aerobic activity each week. This averages out to thirty minutes a day during the week, which could be accomplished during a lunch break! Not only does physical fitness improve your health and well being, but it also increases the opportunities available to you in life. Only forty percent of young adults meet the physical requirements for basic military training,<sup>12</sup> and if you are reading this, you might be among them. Recognize that privilege and the work it took you to reach that point, and continue to build on it.

In the last two sections, you learned about how improving either your physical or mental fitness alone could contribute to a plethora of general health benefits. Now, imagine what improving both of these components could do for your overall well being. Together, these two aspects of life constitute the warrior ethos: being physically and mentally fit so you can take on any challenge. The warrior ethos should be embraced and practiced every day for optimal results. The Warrior Resiliency

## THE IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL FITNESS

Program has been designed around this fundamental concept and strives to improve the warrior ethos of the U.S. Air Force and the U.S. military as a whole.

## 5

# Program Structure & Implementation

### ***B.L.U.F.***

- *Starting a Warrior Resiliency Program at your duty location can be done in three easy steps: obtaining leadership approval, recruiting participants, and then implementing the program;*
- *There may be obstacles that you encounter while implementing the Warrior Resiliency Program, so it is best to prepare and plan ahead as much as possible.*

\* \* \*

This section will outline the program structure and implementation used by the author, but it should be adapted to best fit the needs and capabilities of each reader's duty location. Specifically, the structure suggested here assumes the program will be implemented at a Guard or Reserve unit, but the main ideas apply to Active Duty units as well.

## Step One: Leadership Approval

Before approaching your squadron or group leadership about implementing a Warrior Resiliency Program at your duty location, you should have a detailed plan to present to them. At the very least, this plan should include the following points:

- The purpose behind the program (see Section 1, “Program Introduction & Theory”);
- Why you believe the implementation of a Warrior Resiliency Program is necessary or could be beneficial to your squadron/group;
- Who will participate (i.e. just a specific squadron, anyone in the group, etc.);
- Requirements for member participation (i.e. possess at least a 5 skill-level within their AFSC, be up to date on all training and medical requirements, be in good standing with their chain of command);
- How the program will fit into your squadron’s deployment cycle, if applicable (it may be necessary to have a “down period” during times of deployment preparation and while on deployment; participants should maintain personal fitness standards during this time but other program involvement will be at a minimum);
- What resources will be necessary (specify if you expect to use any shared meeting spaces, athletic equipment, etc. This should take time into consideration as well: how much of the duty day do you expect to use, or will the program be conducted outside of normal duty hours? Could allotted PT time be used?);
- What topics will be covered in the program (i.e. resource management, PT, survival skills, land navigation, etc.);
- How you expect to measure the progress of participants (i.e. quizzes or practicals on past material, fitness tests, participation in a Best Warrior competition or similar);

- A proposed schedule of training for the upcoming months/year (for Guard or Reserve units, it may be beneficial to plan out a rough schedule for the entire year. However, you should account for at least two months of no activity due to training obligations, holidays, or unforeseen circumstances).

## Step Two: Recruiting Participants

Once you have obtained approval from the proper leadership, you can begin recruiting participants for your Warrior Resiliency Program. The plan you presented to your leadership should give you a good basis of information to provide to interested airmen. Ideally, you should visit each “shop,” or office, in your squadron personally to invite its members to participate in the Warrior Resiliency Program. It may be helpful to reach out to shop supervisors or flight chiefs ahead of your visit to coordinate the best time for your announcement. You can give a brief overview of the program and its main topics, provide a time and location for the first program meeting, and offer your contact information to each shop you visit. Once individuals begin to reach out to you with interest, consider creating a group chat for all participants in a secure app like Signal to streamline communication.

## Step Three: Program Implementation

Now that you have communicated your intentions to your leadership and fellow wingmen, it is time to fully implement your program. This is where the ideas and schedule you outlined in the proposal to your leadership will come into action. The first meeting with interested participants should outline your expectations for their participation (see below), include an overview of the program and its purpose, and include mention of your proposed schedule for upcoming meetings. Moving

forward, each meeting should include aspects of PT, knowledge, skills (see section 7: “Practical Skills”), and repetition (reviewing knowledge and skills previously covered). Knowledge and skills are vital parts to this program, but the emphasis should be on PT and the maintenance of physical and mental fitness (see Section 4: “The Importance of Physical Fitness”).

### *Expectations for Participants:*

The expectations set for participants in the Warrior Resiliency Program will vary from base to base. However, it is important to determine your expectations for participants and communicate them clearly from the beginning. Participants who continuously do not meet expectations may be removed from the program. Expectations for participants may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Active participation in any group communications (via Signal or otherwise) — this could mean updating group members on personal fitness accomplishments, sharing goals or relevant local events, commenting on other members’ contributions, or even just liking a message to show acknowledgment;
- Maintaining personal fitness outside of group meetings — to become and remain physically resilient, participants must put in their own time and effort;
- Reviewing knowledge and skills outside of group meetings — this contributes to mental resilience and will improve the quality of group meetings if less time is spent re-teaching previous knowledge;
- Remaining in good standing with their shop supervision (keeping training requirements up to date, no disciplinary action, progressing in upgrade training as expected).

### *Potential Obstacles & Overcoming Them*

The obstacles encountered in the process of implementing a Warrior Resiliency Program will vary between bases and even squadrons. You may meet resistance from leadership, have difficulty securing a location to meet, have inconsistent participation, or encounter a myriad of other problems. One of the best ways to combat these obstacles before they even appear is to make as detailed of a plan as possible. The more information you include and research you do for the plan you present to your leadership, the better equipped you will be to overcome the obstacles in your path. You may even find it beneficial to read through your plan several times and rehearse out loud what you plan to present to your leadership, mentally preparing for any questions or concerns that may arise. This will ensure that you are not only prepared for the challenges that may be thrown your way, but also that you know your plan inside and out.

# 6

## Resource Management

### ***B.L.U.F.***

- *All warriors should become experts at managing and maximizing the resources in their lives;*
- *Resources may include money, time, and even personnel.*

\* \* \*

When you hear the term “resource management,” there may be several ideas that come to mind. You may picture the many resources involved in running a company, or perhaps you envision dollar signs and budgets. In this guide, we will consider resource management in both military and personal contexts.

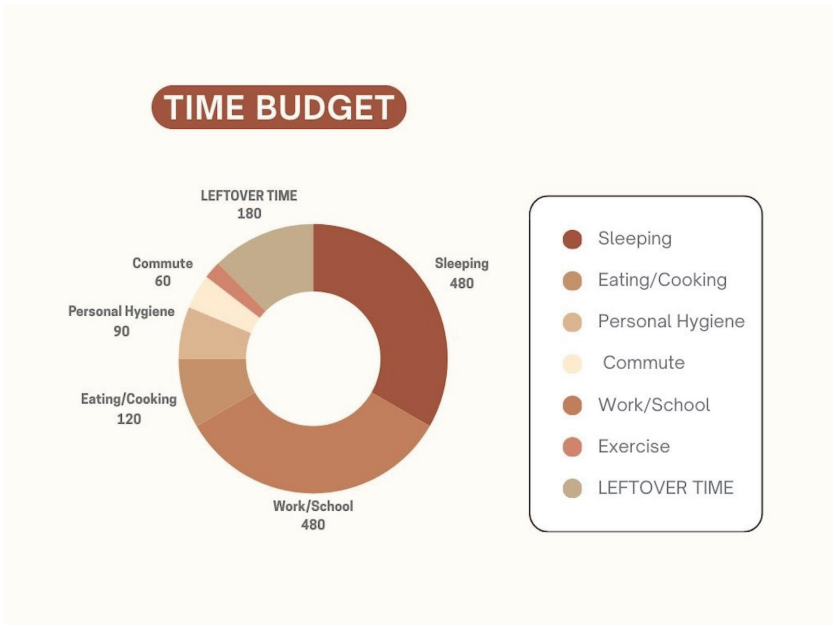
During training for your military career, and certainly once you reached your first duty station, you likely received many reminders to manage military resources appropriately. Everything from office supplies, to tools, to medical equipment, to government computers should be used

and acquired with discretion and according to its intended purpose. Additionally, your time and that of the military should be treated as a resource and managed accordingly. The question is then, how can you manage your time better?

### *Time Management*

There are 1,440 minutes in a single day. Assume you sleep an average of eight hours a night and complete a generic set of tasks within a reasonable amount of time each day. Let’s perform a thought experiment with this information, breaking down a single day by minutes:

Activity	Hours/Day	Minutes/Day
Sleeping	8	480
Eating/Cooking	2	120
Personal Hygiene	1.5	90
Commute	1	60
Work/School	8	480
Exercise	0.5	30
<b>Total</b>	21	1260



This comes out to 1,260 minutes of the day spent with relatively essential tasks. However, there are 180 minutes, or three whole hours, remaining in a day with the assumptions made in the minute-by-minute breakdown above. Many people spend more time than that mindlessly scrolling on their phones in a single day. But what if you used that time more productively? What if you increased the amount of time you spend exercising each day? Or what if you decided to learn a new skill or language in that time? What if you woke up an hour earlier to spend time meditating or journaling? You could probably do all of those things in three hours if you really wanted to. It is important to recognize that your time is a valuable resource. Just like money, you can squander it and see it slip away, or you can invest it wisely in things that will develop you physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.

## *Money Management*

The same principles for managing your time can be applied to your money. Look at your bank account transactions for the past month and take note of what you tend to spend money on. Do you limit yourself to the necessities, only splurging once in a blue moon? Do you choose fast food multiple times a week because it's convenient? Do you find yourself spending money you don't have by way of a credit card? Whatever the case may be, break down your spending into categories. Prioritize the things you need to survive (rent, groceries, gas to get to work, etc.) and aim to limit the rest.

## *Military Resources*

Why is resource management important? To begin with, it can improve your personal and professional relationships, along with your overall well being. Additionally, as member of the Armed Forces, you are a military resource that must be managed appropriately. The basic monthly pay in 2024 for an E-1 to E-3 with less than two years of service was \$2,107 to \$2,377.<sup>15</sup> Basic training and technical school can vary in length from three months to two years, which would equate to \$6,321-\$57,048 in pay, depending on your entry rank and the length of your training. This is basic pay alone and does not account for housing or food costs, not to mention the costs of maintaining a functioning base, paying instructors, or equipment costs. One study found that training and replacing airmen discharged due to fitness test failures in particular costs the Air Force an estimated \$137 million annually.<sup>1</sup> By mismanaging your time or not taking care of your physical and mental health, you are mismanaging this money.

In a more extreme example, the cost to train an F-16 fighter pilot

was about \$5.6 million in 2019, and \$10.9 million for an F-22 pilot.<sup>16</sup> Thus, a fighter pilot mismanaging their time or neglecting their duties has huge financial implications, reiterating the importance of resource management in a military context.

At the end of the day, it is important to manage your time, money, and health because they are all valuable resources. It is your responsibility to make sure you are putting your best foot forward and doing your part to protect the military's investment in you. Resource management should be included in the content of your Warrior Resiliency Program to inform members of its importance, offer tips and skills to improving resource management, and to ultimately lead them to become better stewards of their personal and professional resources. Contact your local Military and Family Readiness Center for further information on topics such as these.

# 7

## Practical Skills

### ***B.L.U.F.***

- *Every Warrior Resiliency program should place an emphasis on combat skills and basic survival skills;*
- *These skills may include but are not limited to knot tying, land navigation, shelter building, fire craft, combatives, first aid, tactical reporting, and weapons familiarization.*

\* \* \*

This section is not meant to be a step-by-step guide of how to perform each skill. Instead, it recommends several key skills that should be encompassed by any Warrior Resiliency Program. Some of these skills are things that are covered in Basic Military Training, whereas others are more specialized and may only be taught within certain military career fields. By introducing each skill through your local Warrior Resiliency Program, you can ensure that your program members are properly equipped for challenges in daily life and on the battlefield. Please refer

to the Resources & References section for more information on each skill listed below.

Notably, all of the skills described here are also vital in a survival context. In the Air Force, S.E.R.E. Specialists are highly trained individuals tasked with teaching such skills to pilots, aircrew, and other personnel likely to end up in a survival situation during military operations. S.E.R.E. Specialists are trained in tactics related to Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape. When implementing a Warrior Resiliency Program at your duty location, consider contacting your nearest S.E.R.E. Specialist (they are less prolific in the National Guard and Reserves, but there should be at least one in your region) for training opportunities.

### *Knot Tying*

The oldest known fossils of knots and ropes date back to 13,000 BC, with knots being used in everything from garments, to rudimentary weaponry, to sailing, to surgery, to outdoor recreation, across history.<sup>17,18</sup> In a military context, knots can be helpful in emergency rescue operations, cargo securement, and shelter building. Additionally, some military cadets are trained to tie knots in stressful situations to prepare them for completing other lifesaving tasks under pressure.

The movie *Hacksaw Ridge* has a scene where a soldier uses knots learned in his military training to safely lower casualties to the bottom of a steep cliff during World War II.<sup>19</sup> While a slightly humorous and perhaps exaggerated example, the scene highlights how something as simple as a knot can save lives.

## *Land Navigation*

Land navigation is much more than just getting from point A to point B by using a map and compass. If you find yourself stranded in an unfamiliar area, possessing basic land navigation skills can improve the odds of someone finding YOU or of getting yourself to safety. It also requires a high level of situational awareness, which can be translated into countless other areas of your life. Being situationally aware can ease social tensions, provide cues of impending danger, and potentially save lives. Warriors should at the very least be familiar with map reading and orientation, compass fundamentals, and how to keep a proper pace count (pace beads — a.k.a. Ranger beads — are helpful for this!).

## *Shelter Building*

It is well known that shelter is one of the basic human necessities, as highlighted in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.<sup>20</sup> Shelter protects us from harsh environments and is a requirement for survival. Whether for a simple camping trip or an actual wilderness survival situation, understanding the basics of shelter building can be the difference between life and death. A successful member of any Warrior Resiliency Program should know at least several basic shelter types and how to construct them from any readily available man-made or natural materials.

For instance, the A-frame, lean-to, and diamond fly shelters can all be made with a tarp and some paracord.<sup>21</sup>

## *Fire Craft*

Fire has been used by humans as a tool and means of survival for hundreds of millennia. Fire has historically played a role in several key aspects of survival, including cooking food for consumption, providing warmth in harsh climates, acting as a deterrent against predators, and even offering a means to sterilize tools for medical use. All of these applications of fire craft make it an invaluable skill for any warrior to possess. At the most basic level, Warrior Resiliency Program members should understand the fire triangle<sup>22</sup> and be able to construct a sustainable fire using natural materials.

## *Combatives*

The inclusion of this skill may be more self-explanatory than some of the other skills listed in this section. Warriors should be capable of defending themselves against adversaries. This is made easier when peak physical fitness is maintained (see Section 8: “Recommendations for Physical Training” for suggestions), and when combative skills are regularly put to practice. Contact your local Security Forces squadron to coordinate training opportunities for your program members.

## *First Aid*

While all military members are taught the basics of lifesaving first aid, Warrior Resiliency Program members will find benefit in expanding on this knowledge. It may also be beneficial to construct your own personal “IFAK” (Individual First Aid Kit) to carry with you on a daily basis (see the Resources & References section for a do-it-yourself IFAK guide). First aid training can come in handy in countless real-world situations, on and off the battlefield. Consider partnering with a local Red Cross or

your Security Forces squadron for advanced first aid training.

### *Tactical Reporting*

This is a skill not always taught in Basic Training. The fundamentals are usually covered, but Warrior Resiliency Program members should be familiar with multiple forms of tactical reporting (SALUTE report, 9-line Medevac/UXO report, Call for Fire, etc.). For successful delivery of a tactical report, you must be clear, concise, and cool under pressure. These are all attributes that will benefit other areas of your life as well. Consider contacting your local Communications squadron for training on radio programming to further enhance your team's capabilities.

### *Weapons Familiarization*

Every warrior should be intimately familiar with their weapon, from assembly and reassembly, to cleaning and troubleshooting. If your career field does not directly involve the use of weapons, search for opportunities to become more proficient. This can be through a partnership with your duty station's Security Forces, or even classes taught at your local shooting range. Be comfortable with handling different styles and models of firearms to improve your personal versatility.

*Handle and store all firearms safely, adhering to local regulations and guidance.*

## Recommendations for Physical Training

### ***B.L.U.F.***

- *The fitness portion of any Warrior Resiliency Program should include a varied training plan for optimal results;*
- *There are sample workout plans provided below, along with information on the benefits of each major exercise included.*

\* \* \*

There is an overwhelming amount of information publicly available on the internet and through other sources with advice and training plans when it comes to diet and exercise. It can feel impossible to know where to start or which sources are reliable, especially since physical fitness is extremely unique to each individual. This guide does not constitute professional counsel, but it does offer a compilation of advice and suggestions based on the author's own experiences, successes, and research.

As mentioned in Section 5, “Program Structure and Implementation”, physical training should be a primary component of any Warrior Resiliency Program. You can structure your physical training program off of existing military tests and standards, or find inspiration from other sources. At the very least, it is suggested that any physical training contains the components included in the Air Force PT test: running, sit-ups, and push-ups. Depending on the fitness level of the members of your program, you may wish to incorporate pull-ups, rucking, and/or water confidence (assuming a pool facility is available to you) into your fitness regimen as well. According to a 2022 study<sup>23</sup> analyzing the benefits of two different training programs for ROTC cadets completing the Army Fitness Test, “training programs that emphasize intensity, train a wide variety of movements, maximize adherence, and are adaptable to a variety of situations” were the most likely to result in improved fitness test scores. With all of this in mind, some sample workout ideas have been included at the end of this section for your reference.

Any Warrior Resiliency Program will likely have significant time constraints within which it must operate. So, while physical training should be a focus of your program, there must be an understanding that all members practice physical training on their own time in addition to the group workouts. Below is a selection of scholarly information on the exercises mentioned, to emphasize the value of their inclusion in your physical training programming.

## *Benefits of a Varied Physical Training Plan*

It is common for athletes to become specialized in one area, or to limit their training to the areas they excel in. However, research and experience suggest that this is not a wise habit to hold. A 2001 study<sup>24</sup> found that three months of weight-based training, combined with “high-intensity endurance training,” improved the time it took a male to travel two miles with a one hundred pound load by more than ten percent. The same study found that half a year of full-body weight-based training, combined with aerobic training, noticeably increased the speed for females carrying a load over distance as well. Conversely, the men and women who only performed one kind of training did not experience any improvements. A similar study from 1997<sup>25</sup> also found benefits of varied physical training plans. The researchers discovered that women who performed running, weight-based training, drills, and backpack hiking experienced a more than thirty percent reduction in their travel time with a load of seventy-five pounds over a distance of two miles.

While somewhat outdated, these studies demonstrate the importance of incorporating a full range of exercises into your training program. This idea is further reinforced by combat veteran and fitness expert Pat McNamara. He notes that only training a single muscle group at a time can compromise performance since our muscles are meant to be used together in a practical manner. McNamara has designed a fitness regimen around the idea of “doing what we can with what we have.”<sup>26</sup> Adopt this mentality in your training plans. Consider movements that strengthen the entire body, offer aerobic and cardiovascular benefits, and include high intensity intervals. Craft your exercises around the resources available to you and your program members, and encourage them to keep their training varied.

### *Pull-ups and Chin-ups*

In the fitness world, there always seems to be a debate on which style of grip is most beneficial when performing pull-ups. A 2013 article<sup>27</sup> from the *Strength and Conditioning Journal* compares the muscular benefits of the pronated (palms facing away from you) and supinated (palms facing towards you, i.e. a chin-up) grip for pull-ups. It was found that the pronated grip triggered increased muscle activity in the lower trapezius (on your back, below the shoulder blades) and infraspinatus (portion of your rotator cuff muscles), while the supinated grip primarily activated the pectoralis major (chest muscle) and biceps brachii (upper arm muscles). This article highlights the benefits of both the pull-up and the chin-up. Since the pull-up tends to activate back and shoulder muscles, while the chin-up activates chest and arm muscles, it may be wise to include both variations in your workouts.

### *Rucking*

A ruck, also known as a “foot march” or “dismounted march,” is a movement of personnel and supplies by foot, regardless of the presence of a designated trail. It may be characterized by heavy loads and slower speeds.<sup>28</sup> It is recommended that participants of any Warrior Resiliency Program complete a ruck march at least two times per month. One study determined that combining a comprehensive fitness program including gradual increases in march distance and load, gradual increases in running distances and resistance training weight, as well as interval training, with twice monthly ruck marches may significantly increase twelve mile ruck march speeds. However, the same study found that such a program combined with ruck marches four times a month was not any more beneficial than the twice-a-month rucks.<sup>29</sup> Considering the

results of this study, Warrior Resiliency Program ruck marches should involve gradually increased distance and weight.

### *Swimming/Water Confidence*

Swimming for exercise has been shown to have an array of physical benefits. For instance, it reduces the stress on your body of bearing weight, it has been linked to decreased blood pressure and improved vascular function, and it can strengthen the respiratory system. It has also been shown to increase muscular blood flow by 225 percent.<sup>30</sup> More specifically, ice swimming (in water at temperatures below 41° F) has been shown to have benefits for the cardiovascular, endocrine, and immune systems, as well as the human psyche.<sup>31</sup> Any amount of swimming would be a valuable addition to a Warrior Resiliency Program training plan. It can be especially useful for those recovering from an injury, given the reduced stress on joints when in water.

In addition to basic swimming routines, it may be beneficial to consider the inclusion of water confidence or water survival training in your plan. Such training is used by Air Force Special Warfare and has very practical applications in combat situations. It also allows participants to practice calming and breathing techniques that can be applied in a variety of every day situations. More information is included in the Resources and References section of this guide.

*There are inherent risks with swimming in freezing temperatures. Please use your best judgment and employ safety practices before incorporating cold-water swimming into a training plan. Never perform water confidence activities without a training partner to act as a spotter in case of emergency.*

## Sample Workouts

The workouts included below should be adapted based on the fitness level of participants, as well as the amount of time allocated for the workout. Each workout can be changed to have greater or fewer cycles and reps. Additionally, you may mix and match components of different workouts for a more comprehensive fitness experience. Consider incorporating elements that mimic real-life or combat actions: farmer carries to simulate litter carrying, stair runs to increase agility and endurance, simulated obstacle courses with household items, etc. For more inspiration, you might research the current fitness tests for the U.S. Army, Coast Guard, Navy, Marines, and all Special Warfare career fields. Challenge the members of your Warrior Resiliency Program to max out each section of a given test (scoring tables are usually easily accessible online).

A quick note on pull-up form: exhale as you pull yourself up, inhale as you lower yourself down. Ensure you complete the motion without swinging your legs for momentum (i.e. no “kipping”).

### *Sample Workout #1: “Old Faithful”*

*This simple workout can be completed with minimal equipment in a short amount of time. It is included here because it works multiple muscle groups through several key movements, and is perfect for that thirty minute lunch break window.*

5 sets of:

- 10 burpees
- 20 situps
- 3 pull-ups

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PHYSICAL TRAINING

- 1 nine-point pushup (*see the Resources & References section*)
- 15 body weight squats (*add weight if desired*)
- 5 dips

### *Mix It In: Rucking Edition*

*Rucking can be a great way to build strength and endurance and is easy to add to any existing workout, or it is sufficient on its own. Increase distance and rucksack weight depending on member fitness level and experience.*

Beginner to Intermediate 3-6 mile ruck:

- Twenty to thirty-five pound rucksack
- Aim to keep pace between 12-20 minutes per mile, alternating between jogging and walking as needed.

Intermediate to Advanced 12-18 mile ruck:

- Twenty-five to sixty pound rucksack
- Aim to keep pace between 10-15 minutes per mile, alternating between jogging and walking as needed.

### *Sample Workout #2*

*If you don't have a medicine ball accessible, find another heavy object and substitute wood-choppers instead.*

5 sets of:

- 10 pushups
- 10 (per side) curtsy lunges
- 3 pull-ups
- 12 boat-ups

- 10 pushups (*yes, again*)
- 10 medicine ball slams
- 10 box jumps (*see the Resources & References section*)

### *Mix It In: Running Edition*

*It seems that many warriors, even at the Special Warfare level, struggle with the running component of fitness evaluations. Too often, brute strength and muscle growth become the focus, while cardiovascular activity such as running becomes neglected. Like rucking, you can use these runs to supplement an existing workout, or have a longer run stand alone for an entire workout. Alternating between shorter distances with faster speeds and longer distances at a sustained speed can improve your overall running pace.*

- 1 mile run: complete this in one go as fast as you can, or split it into laps and walk for a given amount of time between sprinting the laps. Try this: perform 8 sets of 30 second sprints with thirty to sixty seconds of rest in between each sprint.
- 1.5-2 mile run: this distance is the most common tested running distance for military fitness tests. It is good to practice running this distance regularly, but to improve your pace, you should run other distances as well.
- 3-5 mile run: try to maintain your 1.5-2 mile run pace for this entire distance.
- 6-10 mile run: for this distance, you should be more concerned with completing the run and not as focused on your pace. This can be a more relaxed pace and should be slower than your 1.5-5 mile pace.

### *Sample Workout #3: "Adios Abs"*

*This workout is an abdominal burner! If you still have energy left by the end, throw in some sprints or a short run.*

3 sets of:

- Until failure: shoulder press push-ups
- 30 mountain climbers
- 45 second plank (*add extra time or weight if too easy*)
- 45 second side plank, per side (*add leg raises or extra time if too easy*)
- 5 v-ups
- 20 crunches

## Air Force Standards & Rank Structure

### ***B.L.U.F.***

- *All warriors should strive to exemplify the Air Force Core Values in and out of the uniform;*
- *It is important to understand the responsibilities of each Air Force rank, and to remember our mission as warriors.*

\* \* \*

This section will discuss the importance of adhering to the Air Force Core Values, in and out of uniform, as well as outline some basic Air Force standards and rank structure. Further information can be found in the Resources & References section at the back of this guide. The details of this section should be formally briefed to your Warrior Resiliency Program members, and they should be restated and exemplified as much as possible.

## *Core Values*

As stated in the introduction of “A Profession of Arms: Our Core Values:” “The Core Values are much more than minimum standards. They remind us what it takes to get the mission accomplished. They inspire us to do our very best at all times. They are the common bond among all comrades in arms, and they are the glue that unifies the force and ties us to the great warriors and public servants of the past and guide us into the future.”<sup>32</sup>

### **Integrity First**

Integrity first means doing the right thing, even when no one else is looking. This can look different for everyone and is applicable in every situation. It may mean not cutting corners in your work, putting in just a couple more repetitions during a workout, or speaking up when something is not quite right.

### **Service Before Self**

Service before self embodies the habit of putting the needs of others before yourself. This means doing what it takes to get the mission done, looking out for your wingmen, and always searching out tasks to be completed. Be aware of the needs in your environment and work to fulfill them before they're even noticed.

### **Excellence in All We Do**

Excellence in all we do encompasses the other two Core Values and reminds us to put 100% effort into every endeavor. This can be as simple as maintaining formality with superiors to show respect, ensuring your uniform and appearance are always up to standards, or double checking your work before considering a task complete. Excellence can also look like taking pride in what you do and striving to continuously expand

your knowledge base.

As an airman, whether officer or enlisted, you should incorporate these Core Values into your life each and every day. When you put on that uniform each day you become a representative for the Air Force and the U.S. military as a whole. Your words and actions carry more weight and authority; you are held to a higher standard than others and should act accordingly. Have discipline in everything from your appearance to your physical fitness, hold yourself and others accountable to that higher standard, and do your part to contribute to this team you have joined.

*“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, therefore, is not an act but a habit.”*  
– Aristotle

## *Rank Structure*

“The Enlisted Force Structure”<sup>33</sup> details the expectations for airmen at each tier of professional development: Junior Enlisted Airmen, Non-commissioned Officers, and Senior Non-commissioned Officers. Airmen at each level have the opportunity to develop themselves, others, and ideas. Using the Core Values for guidance, airmen should strive to exceed the expectations described for their specific role and actively pursue opportunities for further development and education. Through the Warrior Resiliency Program, airmen have the opportunity to lead by example and to work as a team to improve unit cohesion. By remembering the “why” behind what they do each day, airmen can better serve others and improve their squadrons, groups, wings, and ultimately, the entire Air Force.

## AIR FORCE STANDARDS & RANK STRUCTURE

In today's world, it has become increasingly common for different military branches to collaborate on missions and work together towards common goals. Thus, it would serve your Warrior Resiliency Program well to learn and practice the enlisted ranks (and warrant officer ranks, where applicable) for all other U.S. military branches. Know how to recognize rank insignia and be familiar with all proper terms of address.

## Resources & Reference Materials

This section includes resources for more information on the content provided previously in this guide, listed according to topic. This section also includes references for all sources consulted in the creation of this guide, listed in the order they appear in the guide. All resources and references are accompanied by a brief description.

*Please note, the provided links may become outdated. If a link does not work, try entering the key terms into a search engine for similar resources.*

### Tools & Equipment Resources

#### *Homemade Pull-up Bar:*

This pull-up bar video shows a simple design for a free-standing, portable pull-up bar that can be made inexpensively with materials found at most hardware stores. There are many videos on YouTube showing how to make other styles of pull-up bars, or you can purchase a bar that fits in your doorway.

[https://youtu.be/oGg3ngeYQlw?si=yH\\_\\_uA1OcNwGdCBM](https://youtu.be/oGg3ngeYQlw?si=yH__uA1OcNwGdCBM)

### *Homemade Crossfit Plyometric Box:*

This video walks you step by step through building your own plyometric box for various exercises and lists the tools and hardware you'll need. It can be built inexpensively from a single sheet of plywood, cut at your local hardware store.

[https://youtu.be/-X9\\_rNjboU?si=l40VsBqoezkY9VfP](https://youtu.be/-X9_rNjboU?si=l40VsBqoezkY9VfP)

### *Homemade Sand Bag:*

This video shows how to easily and inexpensively make a sand bag for exercise, using sand from a local hardware store and a bag purchased online.

<https://youtu.be/HTM89cD8Ioc?si=RQs4ei6maX5DEj56>

### *Tourniquet:*

*Note: The inclusion of the tourniquet link below does not constitute an endorsement of these products or brands. Follow all safety guidelines and instructions for proper use.*

The U.S. military is known to use the Combat Application Tourniquet in training and real world situations. It is easy to use, whether applying it to someone else or yourself, and can be purchased through North American Rescue among other companies.

<https://www.narescue.com/combat-application-tourniquet-c-a-t.html>

### *IFAK:*

This website lists the conventional life-saving items included in any IFAK issued to a U.S. military member. It also has a list of additional items you may consider adding to your own IFAK.

<https://mymedic.com/blogs/journal/how-to-build-an-ifak>

## Practical Skills Resources

### *Knot-tying Guide:*

This link directs you to a pdf version of the Army Mountain Warfare School Knot Guide. It includes directions for tying a variety of helpful knots, and it even has a score sheet in the back so you can challenge yourself to tie each knot in the given amount of time.

<https://www.moore.army.mil/infantry/amws/content/pdf/Knot%20Guide.pdf>

### *Land Navigation:*

This website offers a fantastic overview of map reading and basic land navigation. The information is based off of the Military Grid Reference System (MGRS), which is an easy-to-use coordinate system.

<https://www.itstactical.com/skillcom/navigation/the-complete-guide-to-land-navigation-with-the-military-grid-reference-system/>

### *Shelter Building:*

This is the same website that was referenced in Section 7: Practical Skills. It offers over a dozen different shelter styles that can be constructed with a tarp.

<https://waldenlabs.com/make-tarp-shelter-15-designs/>

### *Fire Craft:*

This Master Class article gives six steps for starting a fire, with helpful tips for structuring the fire and selecting proper tinder and kindling.

<https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-start-a-fire>

### *Combatives:*

This 1992 Army field manual goes into extensive detail on hand-to-hand combat and rifle-bayonet fighting. Many of the classic techniques and skills included here are still relevant for combat situations today.

<https://www.survivalschool.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/FM-21-150-Combatives-1992.pdf>

### *First Aid:*

Today, the U.S. military primarily uses the TCCC (Tactical Combat Casualty Care) method of first aid. All current service members should be trained in TCCC with regular refresher training sessions. This is a quick reference guide for TCCC.

[https://emsa.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/71/2017/07/TCCC\\_Quick\\_Reference\\_Guide\\_2017.pdf](https://emsa.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/71/2017/07/TCCC_Quick_Reference_Guide_2017.pdf)

An invaluable resource to any warrior is the Deployed Medicine website

and/or app. This site offers a variety of guides designed specifically for military personnel. Their guides supply a wealth of information on prolonged casualty care, tactical combat care, canine casualty care, and more.

<https://deployedmedicine.com/>

### *Tactical Reporting:*

Tactical reporting may include but is not limited to the following:

- 9-Line MEDEVAC request (<https://api.army.mil/e2/c/downloads/355651.pdf>)
- SALUTE report (<https://salutestrategies.wordpress.com/the-salute-report/>)
- Call for Fire (<https://www.trngcmd.marines.mil/Portals/207/Docs/TBS/B2C2497%20Call%20For%20Indirect%20Fire.pdf?ver=2015-05-07-105809-593>)

### *Weapons Familiarization:*

This link includes assembly, disassembly, and cleaning instructions for the M16/M4 rifle used by several U.S. military branches. Look for similar resources on whichever weapons you may be required to work with in combat.

[https://foreverwingman.com/bmt\\_course/weapons-familiarization/](https://foreverwingman.com/bmt_course/weapons-familiarization/)

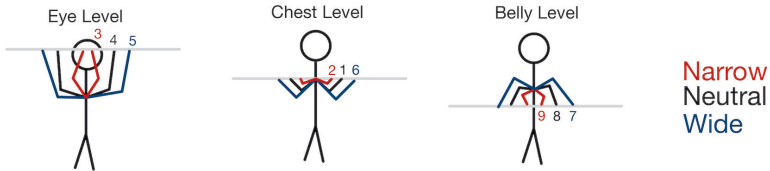
## Recommendations for Physical Training Resources

### *9-Point Pushups:*

These pushups are designed to work multiple muscle groups at once. A single 9-point pushup involves performing one pushup at each of nine hand positions, moving fluidly between each position. The positions are organized into three levels — eye level, chest level, and belly level — with each level having three different hand placements: neutral, narrow, and wide. The order of the pushups is as follows:

1. Chest level, neutral position — Perform a push-up with hands at chest level and neutral hand placement;
2. Chest level, narrow position — Perform a push-up with hands at chest level and narrow hand placement;
3. Eye level, narrow position — Perform a push-up with hands at eye level and narrow hand placement;
4. Eye level, neutral position — Perform a push-up with hands at eye level and neutral hand placement;
5. Eye level, wide position — Perform a push-up with hands at eye level and wide hand placement;
6. Chest level, wide position — Perform a push-up with hands at chest level and wide hand placement;
7. Belly level, wide position — Perform a push-up with hands at belly level and wide hand placement;
8. Belly level, neutral position — Perform a push-up with hands at belly level and neutral hand placement;
9. Belly level, narrow position — Perform a push-up with hands at belly level and narrow hand placement.

## WARRIOR RESILIENCY PROGRAM



*Proper hand placement for 9-point pushups*

### *Water Confidence Events for Air Force Special Warfare:*

- Underwaters — twenty-five or fifty meter swim entirely under water in a single breath;
- Mask and Snorkel Recovery — recover mask and snorkel from the deep end of a pool, put it on correctly, clear it of water, and return to the surface;
- Buddy Breathing — two members share a single snorkel between them, taking turns to breathe, with light to full interference from a third party;
- Treading — tread water with wrists and ears above the water at all times, holding or passing weight overhead occasionally;
- Drown Proofing — members will be restrained and must recover mask from bottom of pool by using a prescribed number of bobbing maneuvers;
- Ten-ups — combination of push-ups and underwaters in a single exercise.

Detailed information on each event can be found here:

<https://www.airforcespecialtactics.af.mil/Portals/80/prototype/asset>

s/Water%20Confidence%20Explanation%20of%20Events\_1%20(2).pdf

*There are inherent risks with these water confidence activities. Never perform water confidence activities without a training partner to act as a spotter in case of emergency. Use your best judgment and follow all proper safety practices.*

## Air Force Standards & Rank Structure Resources

### *Air Force Brown Book*

A brief guide outlining the responsibilities of each rank within the enlisted force structure.

[https://www.doctrine.af.mil/Portals/61/documents/Airman\\_Development/BrownBook.pdf](https://www.doctrine.af.mil/Portals/61/documents/Airman_Development/BrownBook.pdf)

### *Air Force Blue Book*

A brief guide discussing the Air Force Core Values.

[https://www.doctrine.af.mil/Portals/61/documents/Airman\\_Development/BlueBook.pdf](https://www.doctrine.af.mil/Portals/61/documents/Airman_Development/BlueBook.pdf)

\* \* \*

## References

1. Turner J, Wagner T, Langhals B. Biomechanical and Psychological Predictors of Failure in the Air Force Physical Fitness Test. *Sports (Basel)*. 2022; 10(4):54. doi: 10.3390/sports10040054

- This study measured the physical fitness of over two hundred active duty airmen from a single base's support squadron. The goals of the study were to accurately predict fitness test performance and to highlight risk factors. The data and conclusions were then used for workplace interventions and prevention of injuries, ultimately affecting deployment status and retention rates.

2. Zhao X, Wang J, Shi C. The Influence of Mental Resilience on the Positive Coping Style of Air Force Soldiers: A Moderation-Mediation Model. *Front. Psychol.* 2020; 11:550. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00550

- This resource was used to define resiliency, but it is an interesting study on the ability of a soldier's resilience to predict their coping style, between self-comfort and social support. The authors ultimately suggest a system that incorporates both coping styles for maximum effectiveness.

3. Duckworth, Angela. *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*. Scribner; 2018.

- Written by psychologist Angela Duckworth, this book explores the idea that the tool to success in life is a combination of passion and perseverance, defined as "grit." The concept of grit leading to success is applied to a variety of fields, from education, to sports, to business.

4. Gucciardi DF, Hanton S, Gordon S, Mallett CJ, Temby P. The Concept of Mental Toughness: Tests of Dimensionality, Nomological Network, and Traitness. *Journal of Personality.* 2014; 83(1): 26-44. doi: 10.1111/jopy.12079

- This study sought to define mental toughness in a scientific manner. The authors wanted to provide a foundation for further research into mental toughness, so that findings could be better quantified and applied to a variety of fields. The study specifically looked at mental toughness in the context of the workplace, education, and the military.

5. Cooper KB, Wilson M, Jones MI. An Exploratory Case Study of Mental Toughness Variability and Potential Influencers Over 30 Days. *Sports (Basel)*. 2019; 7(7): 156. doi: 10.3390/sports7070156

- This study analyzed the variability of mental toughness in athletes over a thirty-day training period, and whether such variability was associated with certain precursors. The researchers applied the Mental Toughness Index to a group of elite master runners and also conducted follow-up interviews and questionnaires.

6. Thomas JL, Wilk JE, Riviere LA, McGurk D, Castro CA, Hoge CW. Prevalence of mental health problems and functional impairment among active component and National Guard soldiers three and twelve months following combat in Iraq. *Arch Gen Psychiatry*. 2010; 67(6): 614-23. doi: 10.1001/archgenpsychiatry.2010.54

- This study examines the connections between combat in Iraq and Afghanistan with post-combat mental health issues, seeking to corroborate findings from previous studies. The authors specifically looked at the rates of depression and PTSD in active duty versus National Guard service members, three and twelve months after returning home from combat. They also considered functional impairment, aggressive behavior, and alcohol misuse in relation to the mental issues.

7. Nichter B, Hill M, Norman S, Haller M, Pietrzak RH. Impact of specific combat experiences on suicidal ideation and suicide attempt in U.S. military veterans: Results from the National Health and Resilience in Veterans Study. *J Psychiatr Res.* 2020; 130: 231-39. doi: 10.1016/j.jpsychires.2020.07.041

- This study utilized data from the National Health and Resilience in Veterans Study to identify connections between combat experiences and suicide ideations and suicide attempts in U.S. military veterans. The authors focused on the relationship between suicide ideation/s/attempts and the *severity* of combat experiences versus *specific* combat experiences.

8. Lowe KN, Adams KS, Browne BL, Hinkle KT. Impact of military deployment on family relationships. *Journal of Family Studies.* 2012; 18(1): 17-27. doi: 10.5172/jfs.2012.18.1.17

- This study utilized responses from questionnaires completed by military spouses to gauge the effects of an active duty service member's time away from home (whether for deployments, training, or similar absences). The authors were particularly interested in effects on the relationship between the service member's spouse and their children.

9. Why mental fitness is important for your overall health. University Medical Center New Orleans LCMC Health. April 6, 2023. Accessed August 9, 2024. <https://www.lcmchealth.org/university-medical-center-new-orleans/blog/2023/april/why-mental-fitness-is-important-for-your-overall/>.

- This article defines mental fitness, emphasizes its importance, and

gives tips for improving mental fitness. It also connects mental fitness to physical activity.

10. Jha AP, Morrison AB, Dainer-Best J, Parker S, Rostrup N, Stanley EA. Minds “At Attention”: Mindfulness Training Curbs Attentional Lapses in Military Cohorts. *PLoS ONE*. 2015; 10(2): e0116889. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0116889

- This study investigated how mindfulness training could affect attention and performance, specifically for military members. The authors specifically explored whether mindfulness training could increase mental resilience for military members during intense pre-deployment training.

11. Campbell, Brett. Spiritual Fitness & Resilience. Lecture presented at: Yellow Ribbon Event; March 3, 2024; Centennial, CO.

- This briefing was part of a military event. The lecture discussed mental and spiritual resiliency, providing audience members with tools for finding inner peace amidst the difficulties of life.

12. Physical Activity and Military Readiness. U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. February 5, 2024. Accessed August 9, 2024. [https://www.cdc.gov/physical-activity/php/military-readiness/?CDC\\_AAref\\_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/resources/physical-activity-military-readiness.html](https://www.cdc.gov/physical-activity/php/military-readiness/?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/resources/physical-activity-military-readiness.html).

- This page contains general information about physical activity for military members. It outlines the benefits of being physically fit and connects those benefits to national security, eligibility for basic training, and the overall physical and mental health of service

members.

13. Why is physical activity so important for health and well-being? American Heart Association. Updated January 14, 2017. Accessed August 9, 2024. <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/fitness/fitness-basics/why-is-physical-activity-so-important-for-health-and-wellbeing>.

- This article from the AHA details the many benefits of an active lifestyle, including mental and physical benefits. It also makes recommendations for how much physical activity adults should be incorporating into their weeks.

14. Physical Activity. World Health Organization. June 26 2024. Accessed August 9, 2024. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/physical-activity>.

- Like the AHA article, this page from the WHO details the benefits of regular physical activity. Notably, it also mentions statistics on the number of people who do not meet the recommended levels of physical activity, as well as global targets for correcting those statistics.

15. Basic Pay - Enlisted. Defense Finance and Accounting Service. January 1, 2024. Updated January 11, 2024. Accessed August 9, 2024. <https://www.dfas.mil/MilitaryMembers/payentitlements/Pay-Tables/Basic-Pay/EM/>.

- This chart shows the pay rates for all enlisted members of the U.S. military, divided by years of service. It is updated annually to reflect the most current rates.

16. Mattock MG, Asch BJ, Hosek J, Boito M. The Relative Cost-Effectiveness of Retaining Versus Accessing Air Force Pilots. *RAND*. 2019. doi: 10.7249/RR2415

- This study compares the costs of retaining current Air Force pilots with the expense of accessing and training brand new pilots. There are specific costs associated with each option, and the authors weigh the benefits and drawbacks of both. This study was performed by RAND Project AIR FORCE per a request from the U.S. Air Force.

17. A Selective History of Knots and Rope. Paracord Planet. February 14, 2019. Accessed August 9, 2024. <https://www.paracordplanet.com/blog/a-selective-history-of-knots-and-rope/>.

- This page is a blog posting on the history of ropes and knots. It dates as far back as 13000 BC, all the way to present day. It gives a brief description of the ways ropes and knots have been used throughout history, for varying purposes.

18. Keech K. What Are Knots? The History and Uses. *The Knots Manual*. Updated November 11, 2023. Accessed August 9, 2024. <https://www.the-knotsmanual.com/knots/#:~:text=Knots%20have%20a%20rich%20history,knots%20long%20before%20we%20did>.

- This source is another blog post on knots. It defines knots, gives examples of their uses and history, and it lists many different kind of knots.

19. Gibson M. *Hacksaw Ridge*. [DVD]. Lionsgate; 2016.

- This movie is based on the true story of Desmond Doss — the first

conscientious objector to be awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions in World War II. He was a combat medic who refused to carry any kind of weapon during both his military training and in his time as a combat medic.

20. McLeod S. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Simply Psychology. Updated January 24, 2024. Accessed August 9, 2024. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>.

- This psychology page discusses Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and discusses each tier of the famous triangle. Psychologist Abraham Maslow determined psychological needs (food, water, shelter, etc.) to be the most basic and necessary for human survival. These needs are followed by the need for safety, belonging/love, esteem, and self-actualization.

21. Rodgers B. 15 Tarp Shelter Designs For Simple Camping Comfort. Walden Labs. March 14, 2016. Accessed August 9, 2024. <https://waldenlabs.com/make-tarp-shelter-15-designs/>.

- This blog post contains a collection of basic shelters that can be constructed using a tarp and paracord. It has steps for constructing each shelter, as well as some helpful tips to consider when setting up your shelter.

22. Fire Facts. Northwest Fire Science Consortium. Accessed August 9, 2024. [https://www.nwfirescience.org/sites/default/files/publications/FIREFACTS\\_Triangles.pdf](https://www.nwfirescience.org/sites/default/files/publications/FIREFACTS_Triangles.pdf).

- This pdf file explains the fire triangle — a visual representation of the three components necessary for a fire to start. All fires require

heat, oxygen, and a fuel source.

23. Newman A, Armonda A, Braun B. Evaluation of Two Training Programs Designed to Enhance Performance on the Army Combat Fitness Test Among ROTC Cadets. *Mil. Med.* 2022; 00:1-7. doi: 10.1093/milmed/usac015

- This study evaluated two different training programs for Army ROTC cadets, considering their limited time and equipment, to determine which style of plan resulted in the best fitness test scores. Fitness test results were compared for both a standard military training plan and a High-Intensity Functional Training program.

24. Kraemer WJ, Mazzetti SA, Nindl BC, et al. Effect of weight-based training on women's strength/power and occupational performances. *Med Sci Sports Exerc.* 2001; 33(6): 1011-25. doi: 10.1097/00005768-200106000-00022

- This study, performed by the Laboratory/Center for Sports Medicine of Pennsylvania State University, placed a selection of women into either an upper-body resistance training group or an aerobic training group. Various measures of health and strength were collected and compared against a control group of untrained men. The study found that specified strength training over a period of half a year improved the overall physical performance of the women.

25. Harman E, Frykman P, Palmer C, Lammi E, Reynolds K. Effects of a Specifically Designed Physical Conditioning Program on the Load Carriage and Lifting Performance of Female Soldiers. Technical Report T98-1. *United States Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine*; 1997. Accessed August 9, 2024. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA3>

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- This study aimed to test the effectiveness of a twenty-four-week program designed to improve the load-carriage and lifting abilities of female soldiers. A group of male soldiers participated in the testing as well, for comparison purposes. It was determined that the training program was actually more effective than Basic Training at preparing women for more physically demanding work. It was noted that this may be because the training program in question was three times longer than Basic Training, and that it involved an emphasis on weightlifting that is not present in Army Basic Training. While specifically aimed towards female soldiers, the training program would likely be highly effective for all soldiers to increase ability and efficiency.

26. McNamara P. Chassis Overhaul: 5 Keys to Strength Training with Pat McNamara. Athlon Outdoors. June 19, 2018. Accessed August 9, 2024. <https://athlonoutdoors.com/article/strength-training-pat-mcnamara/>

- This article was written by Pat McNamara, a combat veteran and a strong advocate for the importance of functional strength training. He has built an entire company that creates training plans based on movements that utilize our entire range of muscles. His “Combat Strength Training” model prioritizes longevity and self-preservation. This article presents straightforward tips for finding success within strength training.

27. Leslie KLM, Comfort P. The Effect of Grip Width and Hand Orientation on Muscle Activity During Pull-ups and the Lat Pull-down. *Strength & Conditioning Journal*. 2013; 35(1): 75-8. doi: 10.1519/SSC.ob013e3182821

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- This article analyzed previous studies to determine the optimal hand orientation when performing pull-ups and lat pull-downs. The authors acknowledged the vast amount of research on this topic and determined that the optimal grip depends on which muscles one wishes to exercise the most. Having your palms facing away from you during a pull-up will primarily exercise your back and shoulders, while an orientation with your palms facing towards you targets your chest and upper arms.

28. Foot Marches. Headquarters, Department of the Army. April 13, 2022; 1-1. ATP 3-21.18. Accessed August 9, 2024. <https://irp.fas.org/doddir/army/atp3-21-18.pdf>.

- This field guide was published by the Department of the Army. It outlines all details of foot marches, including different types, planning considerations, instructions for executing a march, and applicable soldier loads.

29. Knapik J, Bahrke MS, Staab J, Reynolds K. Frequency of Loaded Road March Training and Performance on a Loaded Road March. Technical Report T13-90. *United States Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine*; 1990. Accessed August 9, 2024. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235046592\\_Frequency\\_of\\_Loaded\\_Road\\_March\\_Training\\_and\\_Performance\\_on\\_a\\_Loaded\\_Road\\_March](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235046592_Frequency_of_Loaded_Road_March_Training_and_Performance_on_a_Loaded_Road_March).

- This study focused on military ruck marches and explored how different frequencies of ruck marches affected overall speed and performance of soldiers on a twelve-mile march. It also measured the performance of soldiers on marksmanship and grenade throwing

following each ruck march. It was found that two to four ruck marches per month returned optimum results, with the exception of decreased performance on the marksmanship and grenade tests. A key component of the training in this study was that it involved progressively increasing the distances and weights of each test component, in addition to the monthly ruck marches.

30. Moffatt F. Chapter 1: The individual physical health benefits of swimming: a literature review. In: *The health & wellbeing benefits of swimming*. Swim England; 2017: 8-24. Accessed August 9, 2024. [https://www.aquaticsgb.com/media/documents/1\\_The\\_Health\\_and\\_Wellbeing\\_Benefits\\_of\\_Swimming\\_June\\_2017.pdf#page=9](https://www.aquaticsgb.com/media/documents/1_The_Health_and_Wellbeing_Benefits_of_Swimming_June_2017.pdf#page=9).

- This report, commissioned by the Swimming and Health Commission on behalf of Swim England, explores the individual, societal, economic, and national benefits of swimming.

31. Knechtle B, Waskiewicz Z, Sousa CV, Hill L, Nikolaidis PT. Cold Water Swimming – Benefits and Risks: A Narrative Review. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health*. 2020; 17(23): 8984. doi: 10.3390/ijerph17238984

- This review analyzes the history and benefits of swimming in extremely cold water. It specifically looks at the history of ice swimming as sport and for competition. It highlights the positive impacts of this activity on the cardiovascular and endocrine system, the psyche, the immune system, and the respiratory system. However, it does take time to mention the possible risks associated with swimming in freezing temperatures as well.

32. A Profession of Arms: Our Core Values. U.S. Air Force. May 16, 2022: 3. Accessed August 9, 2024. <https://www.doctrine.af.mil/Portals/61/doc>

uments/Airman\_Development/BlueBook.pdf.

- Also known as the “Blue Book,” this publication outlines the core values members of the U.S. Air Force adhere to. It includes a description of the Air Force Core Values, the oaths of enlistment and office, the Airman Code of Conduct, and the Airman’s Creed. This simple book can be used to remind airmen of their beliefs, and it should be referenced often.

33. The Enlisted Force Structure. U.S. Air Force. May 16, 2022. Accessed August 9, 2024. [https://www.doctrine.af.mil/Portals/61/documents/Airman\\_Development/BrownBook.pdf](https://www.doctrine.af.mil/Portals/61/documents/Airman_Development/BrownBook.pdf).

- Also known as the “Brown Book,” this publication defines the enlisted force structure of the U.S. Air Force. It details expectations and standards for each enlisted rank, and it can be used to measure performance. It also explores the what, why, and how of the enlisted force.

## About the Author



SSgt Caitlyn Imfeld enlisted in the Colorado Air National Guard in 2020 amidst a break in her university studies. As an Aerospace Ground Equipment maintainer, she had the opportunity to join a Best Warrior Team that ultimately led to the creation of this reference guide. She has also discovered a passion for challenging endeavors, which has led to her completion of a mathematics degree, two triathlons, and an Army Best Warrior Competition. In her free time she can be found running or weight lifting, reading a good book, or trying her hand at a new craft project.

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*<https://flickr.com/photos/conationalguard/54094065270/in/album-72177720321488060>.*

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