

MARINE CORPS TOTAL FITNESS

MCTF IN ACTION

COPING WITH CHALLENGES

Q4 2025

MARINE CORPS TOTAL FITNESS TRANSCENDS TRADITIONAL FITNESS MODELS

Marine Corps Total Fitness (MCTF) is a leadership strategy and lifestyle framework. It is designed to optimize warfighter performance, readiness, lethality, and resilience across four mutually supporting domains: mental, physical, social, and spiritual.

MCTF transcends traditional fitness models by strengthening every Marine, unit, and family throughout their service and beyond, ensuring enduring mission effectiveness.

Crucially, MCTF is designed to be actionable now, with or without external resources, facilities, or directives. Leaders and individual Marines are empowered – and expected – to integrate MCTF principles into their daily lives, decision-making, and workplace immediately and to grow capabilities with time and opportunity.

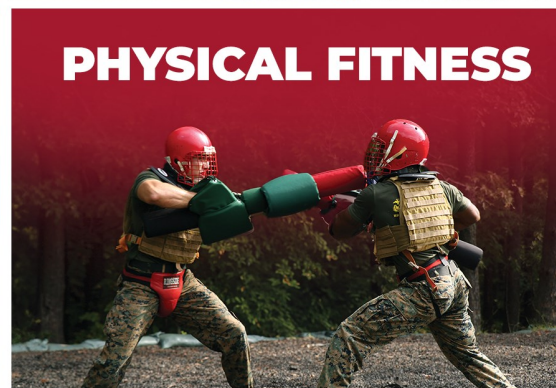
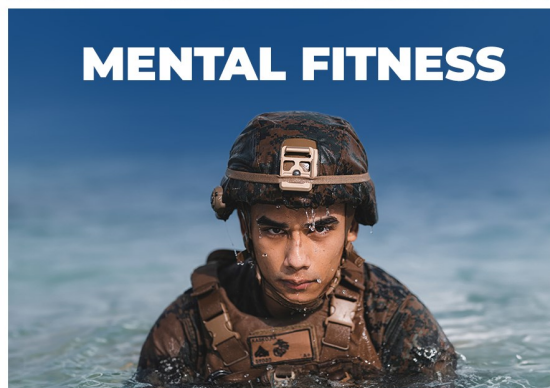
End State

A healthy, resilient, and lethal Marine Corps—composed of Marines, Sailors, and Families—whose total fitness is optimized in every domain, ensuring long-term mission readiness and enhanced quality of life throughout and beyond military service.

Five Core Tenets

Leadership-driven and Accessible: Leadership at every level drives a culture of total fitness. MCTF ensures that Marines, families, and leaders can access resources without stigma.

Integrated and Embedded: MCTF delivers connected, domain-driven programs through cross-



functional teams, integrating efforts at all echelons for seamless support and force-wide impact.

Building Strength and Capability:

MCTF is proactive, focusing on early prevention and skill development to enhance health, resilience, and adaptability before issues arise.

Comprehensive, Evidence-based

Approach: The interconnectedness of mental, physical, social, and spiritual domains is central to maximizing our capabilities as human beings. MCTF initiatives are grounded in current science and best practices and tailored to Marine Corps needs.

Enduring Impact: Total fitness extends beyond service, providing lifelong tools that

strengthen Marines, Sailors, and their families.

Four Domains

Mental Fitness: Engaging in healthy thinking and behaviors, developing strong intellectual and emotional intelligence, and sustaining an adaptive mindset. Focuses on managing stress, optimizing performance under pressure, and maintaining psychological resilience.

Physical Fitness: Achieving and sustaining strength, agility, aerobic capacity, endurance, and mobility are a core competency of all Marines. MCTF aids the warfighter in gaining and maintaining knowledge in injury prevention, rehabilitation, and performance optimization. It equips Marines with the skills and re-

sources needed to sustain readiness throughout their career and maintain their fitness after transitioning to civilian life.

Social Fitness: Building, maintaining, and restoring positive and healthy relationships within teams, families, and communities. Includes respect, kindness, empathy, and the capacity to forgive self and others.

Spiritual Fitness: Engaging with personal meaning and purpose, maintaining hope, making ethical decisions, living by core values, and connecting to something greater than oneself. It encompasses the ability to accept circumstances while recognizing gratitude and hope.

SEMPER SUPPORT PROVIDES VIRTUAL COUNSELING FOR MARINES AND FAMILIES

Marines and families face stress—in life, at work, in training, on deployments. Marine leaders and OSCAR team members provide critical mentorship and support. But sometimes additional support, like counseling, is needed.

The Marine Corps is teaming up with Military OneSource to offer Semper Support, an additional option for non-medical counseling for active-duty and reserve Marines and their families.

Semper Support enhances their readiness, resilience, and total fitness, which are all crucial for mission success.

Semper Support benefits Marines and families who are geographically dispersed and/or those who may experience barriers to in-person counseling services.

Free, Convenient, and Effective

With Semper Support, you and your family get:

- Up to 12 free, confidential counseling sessions per issue.



- The convenience to access support from anywhere, on your schedule.
- Short-term, solution-focused support to manage life's challenges.
- Improved mission readiness, resilience, and well-being.

If you need longer-term care or specialized services, your counselor will provide appropriate referrals to ensure you get the support you need.

Accessing Semper Support

Contact Semper Support worldwide at 800-342-9647, or visit [Military OneSource](#).

Additional counseling and crisis management can be accessed through [Marine Corps Community Services \(MCCS\) Prevention & Counseling](#).

Prevention Resources to Use and Share

DoW resources and tools: Check out the Department of War's www.prevention.mil. It includes information about resources, tools, research, and policy.

Marine Corps Interactive Suicide Prevention and Mental Fitness

Resource: This online asset provides suicide prevention and skill-building information for all Marines and families.

This is a resource users can come back to as often as they need it. Go to www.usmc-mccs.org/mfitness.

MCCS website: Visit the Marine Corps Community Services website (www.usmc-mccs.org) to find information about programs and resources and read articles that offer skill-building information.

Prevention in Action—Stakeholders Training: This self-guided online training is designed for service members and civilians who engage in prevention activities. In this course, participants learn more about how and why to champion prevention.

Visit www.marinenet.usmc.mil and search Prevention in Action.

Stress Less with Smart Money Habits

Financial uncertainty is one of the top stressors among service members.

The pressure of covering daily expenses, planning for the future, and handling unexpected costs can impact mental health and mission readiness.

Research shows poor financial habits often lead to increased emotional distress, anxiety, and impaired decision-making.

The good news? You don't have to navigate it alone.

Your local Personal Financial

Management Program (PFMP) provides expert guidance and practical tools that help strengthen both financial stability and emotional resilience.

By attending PFMP classes, you'll learn how to:

- Take control of your spending.
- Build savings.
- Reduce financial stress.
- Plan confidently for life's big changes.

Popular classes include:

- Financial Planning for PCS

- Expanding Your Family
- Exploring Your Financial Values and Habits

- Developing a Spending Plan
- Establishing Savings
- Addressing Excessive Debt

Ready to strengthen your financial grit?

Take the first step toward financial confidence and peace of mind.

Register for a class or schedule a one-on-one appointment with your installation's [personal financial manager](#) today.

ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER

The United States Marine Corps' Marine & Family Programs Division publishes MCTF in Action (formerly Prevention in Action) each quarter.

The contents of this newsletter are for informational purposes only and not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment.

To access hot links, right-click on link, copy link, and paste it into a browser window.

Visit <https://www.usmc-mccs.org/news/>

[prevention](#) or scan the QR code to sign up for our mailing list or view past issues.

Your email address will only be used to deliver the newsletter. Unsubscribe at any time by responding to the sender.

To suggest topics or questions, email hqmcprevention@usmc.mil.



CONNECT WITH OTHERS TO BUILD MENTAL TOUGHNESS

Mental toughness is essential for every Marine. It supports mission readiness, strengthens resilience, and helps you stay focused in high-stress situations.

But here's the truth—mental toughness doesn't grow in isolation. It gets stronger through connection.

Stronger Together

A solid support system boosts confidence and lowers stress. Social fitness—your ability to connect with others—helps Marines navigate tough times by providing emotional support, accountability, and perspective. Being around others who've been through similar challenges reminds you that you're never alone.

How to Build Social Fitness**1. Join the Single Marine Program (SMP).**

SMP brings Marines together through group activities, volunteer opportunities, and leadership development. It's a space to



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share your story, celebrate success, and get the support you need.

2. Train with purpose.

Take part in Warrior Athlete Readiness & Resilience (WARR) strength and conditioning classes. You'll build mental and physical strength alongside others working toward a common goal.

3. Volunteer.

Give back and connect with people who share your values. Volunteering builds confidence, reinforces purpose, and strengthens community bonds.

Real Strength Is Asking for Support

Mental toughness isn't about going it alone. It's about knowing when to lean on your

community and when to step up for others. Be open to connection, share your experiences, and listen when others need you.

Find your community. Build your strength. Be tougher together.

Visit your installation's Semper Fit or [SMP](#) office and [volunteer coordinator](#) office to get started.



**DIAL 988, THEN PRESS 1 FOR 24/7 CRISIS SUPPORT.
TEXT 838255.**

**VISIT veteranscrisisline.net/get-help-now/chat
TO CHAT WITH SOMEONE.**

MANAGE STRESS WITHOUT ALCOHOL

Life is full of challenges—from work to finances to relationships and responsibilities. Stress is a natural response, but how we manage it makes all the difference.

It may seem easy to reach for a drink to unwind, but relying on alcohol can impact your strength, focus, and readiness.

Instead, tap into the four domains of Marine Corps Total Fitness—social, spiritual, mental, and physical—to build resilience and stay mission-ready.

Physical Fitness

- Move your body. Regular exercise eases muscle tension and boosts mood. Go for a walk, jog, lift weights, or try yoga—each type of movement offers its own stress-relief benefits.

- Prioritize sleep. Stick to a

sleep schedule and avoid caffeine or alcohol before bed. A full night's rest is one of the best ways to recharge and manage stress.

Mental Fitness

- Breathe deeply. When stress hits, pause and take slow, deep breaths. Deep breathing calms your nervous system and helps reduce symptoms like a racing heart or upset stomach.

- Take a mental break. Listen to your favorite song or podcast to reset your mind and improve focus, even for just a few minutes.

Spiritual Fitness

- Practice gratitude. Write down one or two things you're thankful for each day. It can shift your mindset and help reduce stress.

- Be mindful. Try this grounding technique. Focus on:

⇒ Five things you can see.

⇒ Four things you can touch.

⇒ Three things you hear.

⇒ Two things you smell.

⇒ One thing you taste.

This exercise brings you into the present and encourages calm.

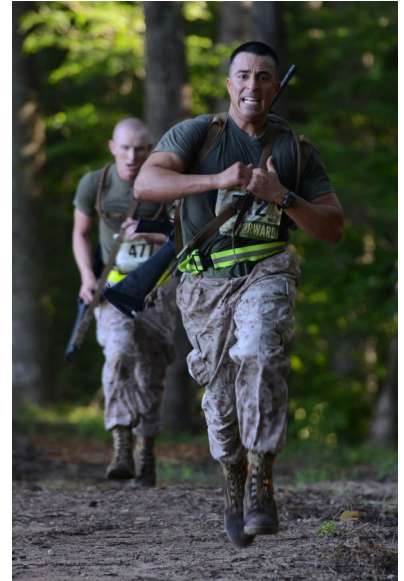
Social Fitness

- Connect with others. Reach out to fellow Marines, friends, mentors, or family. Talking to someone can lighten your load.

- Show kindness. Small acts of kindness—like checking in on a teammate—can lift your spirits and help you refocus.

Know When to Reach Out

If you're feeling overwhelmed or leaning on alcohol too often to cope, help is available. Don't wait—reach out.



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Visit your local [Substance Assessment and Counseling Center](#) for confidential support and tools to get back on track.

PULL BACK THE MASK OF DEPRESSION AND SEEK HELP

Alright, Marines, let's keep it real. Marines hold it down. They show up on time. They tell people they're "just tired" or "stressed." Maybe that's partly true, but it's probably not the whole story, and they might not even realize it.

Forget the image of someone stuck in bed all day. Depression can wear a mask. It can look a lot different than expected. It's anger. It's feeling numb. It's feeling disconnected. It's that empty feeling that can't be explained and doesn't get shared.

That's what masked depression looks like.

What is Masked Depression?

It's hiding behind "everything's fine." It's not always sadness. It's the guy cracking jokes to avoid serious talks. It's the overachiever running on fumes. It's the friend who's all smiles online but ghosts you in real life.

The mask makes it hard for others to see the hurt—and even harder to admit it. It starts with recognizing the signs:

- Always tired, even after getting sleep.
- Just going through the motions, feeling nothing.
- Getting pissed off or overwhelmed easily.
- Pulling away from friends, family, and things once enjoyed.

- Smiling with the mouth but not the eyes.

Sound familiar? It's more common than many realize.

Breaking the Silence

Pain loses its grip when we name it. It doesn't have to be announced to the world, but support matters. Here's how to start:

- Ditch the pressure to "look fine." It's OK not to have it all together.
- Be honest. Write in a journal, go for a

walk, or just say "I'm not okay" out loud.

- Start with one person. A friend, a family member—someone who sees the real person behind the mask.

- Seek help without shame. Facing pain is weakness leaving the mind.

No matter the story, every Marine deserves more than just getting by. Everyone deserves peace, support, and a life that feels whole.

Help is always available:

- [Military Crisis Line](#): Call 988, then press 1 or text 838255 24/7 for crisis support.

- [Community Counseling Program](#): Talk to a licensed, non-medical counselor.

- [Military OneSource and Semper Support](#): Reach out for virtual counseling.

Don't let it stay bottled up inside. Reach out. It's the right thing to do.

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PAUSE BEFORE YOU REACT



REFLECT BEFORE REACTING

Take a moment. Pause before you respond—clarity > impulse.



MEDITATE AND LIVE IN THE NOW

Even 2-5 minutes a day helps center your thoughts.



TAKE A TACTICAL PAUSE

Step back. Breathe. Reset your mindset.



INVEST IN YOUR INNER PEACE

Prioritize what keeps you grounded. Mental fitness matters.



BREATHE AND CLEAR YOUR MIND

Inhale 4, hold 4, exhale 4. Repeat. Feel the shift.



FIND YOUR CALM

Recalibrate. Then execute with confidence.

SPIRITUAL FITNESS = MISSION READINESS. TAKE A MINUTE...RECENTER. REFOCUS. RESET.

Chaplains are an available resource to help guide you through life's challenges and establish goals toward strengthening your spiritual readiness.



For more resources and information, The **Community Counseling Program** and **Operational Stress Control and Readiness Teams** also can provide support.