

MCTF IN ACTION

MAINTAINING READINESS AND TOTAL FITNESS

PROPER FUELING HELPS BOOST READINESS AND MANAGE STRESS

Stress affects more than your mental state—it places real physical demands on your body.

Proper fueling helps maintain steady energy, sharper focus, and overall readiness, especially during high-pressure training or operational environments.

Keep Energy Steady

Stress can cause fluctuations in blood sugar, leading to fatigue and irritability. Slow-digesting carbohydrates—such as oats, brown rice, and sweet potatoes—support more consistent energy levels and help prevent the crashes that often follow sugary snacks.

Prioritize Protein

Protein-rich foods, including chicken, turkey, fish, beans, and Greek yogurt, support neurotransmitters involved in mood and concentration. They also aid in muscle repair following intense or stressful physical activity.

Hydrate with Intention

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Dehydration can intensify stress-related symptoms, elevate cortisol, and impair focus and physical performance.

elevate cortisol, and impair focus and physical performance. Water should remain the primary beverage, with electrolytes added during heavy training or heat exposure. Limiting caffeine can also reduce anxiety and protect your sleep quality.

Fight Inflammation

Stress often triggers inflammation. Foods such as berries, leafy greens, salmon, walnuts, and olive oil contain nutrients that

help counter this response while supporting immune health.

Keep Fueling Simple

Demanding schedules do not always allow time for full meals. Portable, shelf-stable options—like trail mix, nut butter packets, or tuna pouches—make it easier to stay fueled when conditions are challenging.

Fueling during stressful periods is less about perfection and more about

consistency. Choosing nutrient-dense foods and staying hydrated enhances the body's ability to perform, recover, and remain resilient when stress levels rise.

Stay mission-ready, connect with a [Warrior Athlete Readiness and Resilience \(WARR\)/Semper Fit](#) nutrition specialist for personalized guidance.

STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING AIDS TOTAL FITNESS

Strength and conditioning (S&C) isn't just about lifting weights—it's the driving force behind sports performance and a critical component of readiness.

Beyond the Physical

Improving your physical performance doesn't just strengthen your body; it positively affects every domain of Marine Corps Total Fitness.

Mental Fitness: Training boosts cognitive performance and resiliency. Each workout helps your body deliver oxygen more efficiently to the brain, sharpening focus and strengthening mental toughness.

S&C training is designed to be challenging. You will face adversity throughout the process. As you train and get stronger, your

mindset evolves.

Workouts that once felt difficult become more manageable, not only because your body has adapted to the stress of training but because your mental toughness has grown with every completed session.

Social Fitness: In group sessions, Marines support and motivate one another. Even when training individually, athletes stay connected with their S&C coaches to communicate goals, refine techniques, and make adjustments to ensure the program remains effective.

Spiritual Fitness: Setting meaningful goals and persevering through highs and lows reinforces belief in your "why"—whether it's achieving a healthier body



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composition or preparing for combat with purpose and commitment.

Facing Adversity, Growing Resilience

Adversity is inevitable throughout the training journey, but staying committed to an S&C program brings you closer to your goals. In doing so, you become physically stronger, mentally tougher, and more resilient across all areas of Total Fitness.

Ready to get started?

Connect with your local S&C coach through your installation's [Warrior Athlete Readiness and Resilience \(WARR\)-Semper Fit](#) team to begin building a personalized training plan that supports your fitness goals. Coaches are ready to help you train smarter, perform better, and become a stronger, more resilient Marine.

Prevention Resources to Use and Share

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

Marine Corps Interactive Suicide Prevention and Mental Fitness Resource: This online asset provides prevention and skill-building information for Marines and families. Visit www.usmc-mccs.org/mfitness.

Prevention in Action—

Stakeholders Training: This self-guided online training is designed for service members and civilians who engage in prevention activities. Visit www.marinet.usmc.mil and search Prevention in Action.

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

ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER

The United States Marine Corps' Marine & Family Programs Division publishes MCTF in Action quarterly.

The contents are for information 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.

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



MENTAL ARMOR: HOW A CALM MIND BUILDS A STRONGER HEART

Your cardiovascular health is a critical component of your readiness.

You already know that nutrition and PT are key, but there's another powerful weapon in your arsenal that is often overlooked: mindfulness.

The Mind–Heart Connection

The demands of a military career can lead to chronic stress, which takes a physical toll. Constant pressure can increase blood pressure, heighten inflammation, and contribute to heart disease over time.

Mindfulness—the practice of being fully present and aware—is a powerful countermeasure.

Practicing mindfulness may help:

- Lower stress hormones such as cortisol.
- Reduce blood pressure.
- Improve heart rate variability (a sign of a healthy heart).
- Strengthen your overall mental resilience.

One of the most significant operational benefits of mindfulness is better sleep.



PIXABAY

Quality sleep supports heart function, assists the body in recovery, and helps regulate blood pressure.

By calming the mind before bed, you create the conditions for deep, restorative rest that prepares you for the next day's mission.

Tactical Mindfulness Drills

Incorporate these simple drills into your nightly routine to decompress and prepare for quality sleep.

1. Body Scan Relaxation

Spend five to 10 minutes scanning your body from head to toe, gently noticing areas of tension. This helps release stress and prepares

the body for rest.

2. “Physiological Sigh” Breathing

Take one deep inhale through your nose, followed by a second shorter inhale. Then exhale slowly through your mouth. This technique helps calm the nervous system.

3. End-of-Day Debrief

Write down or mentally note three things you are thankful for or that went well. This simple reflection can reduce stress and shift your mindset before sleep.

Small Adjustments, Meaningful Impact

Mindfulness isn't about

emptying your mind or achieving perfection. It's about building small, consistent habits that give you an edge.

Over time, these simple practices will help you manage stress, sleep better, and protect your heart, ensuring you stay in the fight for the long haul.

For tools, classes, and guidance on mindfulness and sleep, contact your local [Warrior Athlete Readiness and Resilience \(WARR\)-Semper Fit](#) team.

FINANCIAL READINESS IS MISSION READINESS

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Your financial well-being impacts every area of your life—on and off duty. Being mission ready means being money ready, too.

IMPACT ON TOTAL FITNESS

SOCIAL FITNESS

Strengthen relationships within your unit and community.

FINANCIAL STRATEGY:

- Budget for meaningful social time and family events.
- Live within your means and plan ahead.

SPIRITUAL FITNESS

Stay connected to your purpose and core values.

FINANCIAL STRATEGY:

- Make financial decisions that align with your values.
- Budget for long-term goals.

MENTAL FITNESS

Boost emotional resilience, focus, and lifelong learning.

FINANCIAL STRATEGY:

- Reduce stress through smart money management.
- Invest in financial literacy and continuing education.
- Save for emergencies.

PHYSICAL FITNESS

Maintain strength, endurance, and combat readiness.

FINANCIAL STRATEGY:

- Budget for preventive health care, PT gear, and recovery services.

SMART MONEY HABITS

- Budget with purpose: Track spending, prioritize needs over wants.
- Save first: Automate savings, aim for 10–15 percent of your income. Take full advantage of the Thrift Savings Plan.
- Use available resources: Seek advice from Personal Financial Managers and Certified Financial Counselors
- Avoid pitfalls: Steer clear of high-interest loans, impulse spending, and easy credit mistakes.

SUPPORT SYSTEMS TO HELP YOU WIN

Personal Financial Management Program

Semper Support

Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)

Blended Retirement System (BRS)

Tuition Assistance

Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society



Need Support?
Connect with a Personal Financial Manager at your local installation for tools, classes, and one-on-one guidance.