

PREVENTION IN ACTION

CONNECTEDNESS

STRENGTHEN PHYSICAL FITNESS AND SOCIAL CONNECTIONS AT SAME TIME

“The power of community to create health is far greater than any physician, clinic or hospital.”

—Physician and author
Mark Hyman

Being a part of something greater, such as the Marine Corps community, impacts the overall health of individuals.

Social connectedness has been recognized in academic literature as an important positive factor in health and well-being.

Marines take part in group fitness sessions such as [High-Intensity Tactical Training \(HITT\)](#), group fitness training, and small group training.

Small and large group training environments provide us with personal connections which become a support system.

Once a connection has been



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made, a community is made; relationships are developed beyond the fitness setting.

We all join groups based on our individual desires. Whether we want to get stronger, faster, or

relieve stress, each person present inspires motivation and increases the energy in the environment, increasing the desire to work harder, get faster, and become stronger.

Take advantage of the programs and resources available, and begin connecting with your fellow Marines and neighbors.

[Recreational swimming](#) helps Marines achieve health and fitness goals or unwind with family and friends. For families, spending quality time together in the pool or at the beach can help bring members closer together

and relieve stress.

[Recreation centers](#) host activities that provide opportunities for social interaction, life-skills development, and cultural awareness.

[Outdoor recreation equipment checkout and rental](#) helps create opportunities for Marines, families, and authorized users to experience the outdoors which can help reduce stress. Patrons

can use the equipment for activities that help them develop life skills and inspire increased social cohesiveness.

[Installation Sports](#) – Installation sports promote physical fitness, competitive spirit, and esprit de corps. Activities allow Marines and other authorized participants of all skill levels to take part in a competitive sport.

Single Marine Program forges social connections

As Marines, we are trained to adapt quickly to changes in our environments.

But for the past 18 months or so, we have faced new challenges: isolation, quarantine, and social distancing.

These changes to social norms have increased the complexity of meeting our normal challenges head-on: moving to a new duty station or transitioning out of the Corps, meeting mission, and maintaining readiness. It's easy to see why some Marines may be

craving more social interactions.

The Marine Corps' [Single Marine Program](#) (SMP) can help you stay connected.

Participating in SMP will help you build a strong network of support and provide you with resources you may not have known were available. You'll find resources to help you talk through and overcome challenges, or simply to relieve stress for a few hours.

In addition to helping you navigate life's challenges, SMP

gives you the opportunity to voice your concerns about quality of life issues to your command. It is also a great forum for expressing ideas on how to create, improve, or expand initiatives focused on single Marines.

SMP has been instrumental in creating positive change across a wide variety of issues affecting single Marines.

SMP also provides an opportunity to give back to the community.

Volunteering with SMP is an awesome way to network with others who are committed to service and positive change.

Although the world is changing, the three pillars of the Single Marine Program—Quality of Life, Community Involvement, and Recreation—remain constant.

If you are interested in participating in SMP, reach out to your unit's SMP representative or visit your local MCCA website to find your SMP coordinator.

Marines will continue to adapt and overcome, no matter the challenge, and the Single Marine Program is here to help.

PREVENTION IN ACTION

with Nita Naschold, M.S.,
Embedded Preventive Behavioral Health Capability Specialist
Combat Logistics Regiment 1, Camp Pendleton



Q Connectedness is a big part of prevention and a protective factor that may reduce the likelihood of many problematic behaviors. How do you build relationships and promote connectedness?

At Combat Logistics Regiment 1, we model connectedness at the highest level of leadership. Back in 2014, the chaplain and I established a resiliency support team, which has set the tone for collaboration and teamwork. We saw the need for more connectedness within the support staff. We all worked toward the same goal, but we hadn't worked together toward those goals. With determination, time investment, and mutual support, we grew into a strong team. We have expanded our core team to include our Military & Family Life Counselors, Operational Stress Control and Readiness teams, Medical Officers, Deployment Readiness Coordinators, and other unit stakeholders. Setting the tone and creating synergy at the command level is so important, not only to model connectedness to the Marines and subordinate command teams, but also for being able to put the puzzle pieces together that each SME brings to the table to truly understand the needs of our Marines and Sailors to increase their real and perceived connectedness.

Q Primary prevention, initiatives that take place before a problematic behavior, require creative, innovative thinking to get Service member buy-in and make change. What innovation do you incorporate in your efforts?

One of my favorite innovations is our monthly Stall Wall News. Information dissemination is a big part of primary prevention, but it is hard to get Marines to read prevention emails when there are many conflicting tasks or when computer access is sporadic (e.g., Marines in the motor pool). Over the years, I have found that the only place Marines will truly read and look at newsletters is in the head, so we placed plastic newsletter holders in all stalls across the regiment. A new edition with primary prevention topics is placed monthly. Colors that catch the eye change every month, and I incorporate funny memes, visuals, and QR codes linked to more information and resources. I also like going into workspaces to meet Marines where they are, both literally and figuratively. We have had a lot of success with setting up resource tables for primary prevention of alcohol misuse. I have set up tables anywhere

from motor pools to warehouses.

Marines are willing to talk one on one or in small groups when conversations are real, when they include discussions, some knowledge, and problem-solving components (and giveaways!), and when we target conversations. It also requires being flexible and ready for last-minute changes. You need good relationships with Marine Corps Community Services programs.

Q The Marine Corps continues to focus on a shift from response to primary prevention—and often requires forward thinking. How do you get leadership buy-in?

Fortunately, my leadership understands the advantages of primary prevention over reactive, “knee-jerk” interventions. To help earn buy-in, I attend meetings at different levels of leadership so that Marines become familiar with the Embedded Preventive Behavioral Health Capability (EPBHC). I like to share success stories, and I provide after-action storyboards and reports to highlight the benefits, learning opportunities, and strengthened protective factors we were able to provide to their Marines. This helps leadership see value in our primary prevention initiatives.

Q What advice do you have for those who want to incorporate more primary prevention efforts in their unit?

I would recommend to start by educating yourself on primary prevention. There is a lot of great [information](#) and resources out there (contact christine.heit@usmc.mil). Reach out to colleagues, other prevention personnel on your installation, and the key personnel in your unit who share your goals of increasing Marines' well-being, and ask what they do that works. Find out best practices for your population of Marines and geographical area, and then create a supportive team around you with a shared vision. Prevention is a team effort that takes time to flourish. Stay motivated and positive, and keep an eye on the ultimate goal—increasing the well-being, resiliency, and readiness of our Marines and Sailors.

Prevention in Action interviews individuals in prevention-related positions within Marine Corps Total Force to show how primary prevention is operationalized across the Marine Corps. Efforts to build skills, promote protective factors, and strengthen resilience are ongoing across the fleet.

Communicate better to connect

Effective communication is more than knowing how to speak with others. You must also learn how to listen to what others are saying and use that to begin having meaningful conversations. Here are a few ways you can communicate more effectively:

- Actively listen. Listen to understand, not just to respond.
- Use body language and other visual signals. We communicate more through our body language than our spoken words. Listen to what the person is saying while also paying attention to what the person is doing.
- Try to see things from their point of view. Empathy and sympathy allow us to connect with those around us.
- If you don't understand something, ask the person to repeat what was said, or ask clarifying questions.
- Practice mirroring. Mirrors neither judge nor give advice. When you practice mirroring, you are stating in your own words the sender's message.

The Marine Corps Family Team Building workshop *Say What* focuses on building solid communication skills with others. For more information, contact your local [Marine Corps Family Team Building Office](#) to sign up for the next class or to find out about other classes.

ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER

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

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

If you give us with your email address, we will use it solely to deliver the newsletter. You may opt out at any time by responding to the sender.

Email hqmcprevention@usmc.mil to suggest topics or ask questions. October's newsletter topic will be readiness, and November's topic will be families.

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

MAKE TIME TO CONNECT WITH YOUR FAMILY

Families who **make time to have fun together** report feeling closer, more satisfied, and more mentally healthy.

Even if the time you have together is limited, family events can make memories that last a lifetime.

Family time also strengthens connections that help withstand separation during deployment or other duty assignments.

Make family time fun

Family fun time comes in many forms, including ordinary “core” activities and get-togethers, such as family dinners and game nights; and special occasions, such as vacations and birthday parties. Although patterns of family time shift as children get older and develop their own social lives, **making time for one another is always important.**

Core family activities are generally low-cost, accessible, regularly occurring, and often home-based.

Core activities are particularly important for the home-front parent to focus on while the other parent is deployed because they create a sense of consistency.

Spend time outside—in the yard, gardening, or **walking around the neighborhood.**

- Play cards or board games.
- Eat **dinner as a family** regularly. Cook together when you can, assigning your children kitchen tasks that are age-appropriate.
- Head to a nearby park, walking trail, or your local **pool.**
- Watch a movie together at home or at a **base theater** and then discuss it afterward.
- Try an art or crafts project, or visit the **library** together.
- **Hold regular family meetings,** encourage the sharing of thoughts and feelings, and keep the lines of communication open.
- Just talk. Play “would you rather?” or ask about favorite (and least favorite) moments of the day/week.
- Build nurturing routines into a child’s day, including storytime and bedtime routines.

Special family activities are new or different experiences for you and your children that teach new skills, encourage trying new things, and present opportunities for family problem-solving.

Many parents find these

types of activities create long-lasting memories and even help prepare their kids with life skills.

- Take a vacation, even if you just visit a nearby city or state.
- Try **camping,** fishing, or hiking.
- Celebrate birthdays, holidays, homecomings, and other events.
- Go to a theme park, concert, or sporting event.
- Find an opportunity to **volunteer** together and give back to your local community.
- Learn together. Baking a new recipe or learning the latest dance trend can be a fun and interactive way to get your children to put down their electronic devices and engage with you in a different capacity.

Family challenges

Anticipate your children’s needs as much as possible and respond appropriately. Young children may not have the words to communicate their feelings, so they express them through their behavior.

When a child is scared, worried, or lonely, find ways to offer reassurance and support. This may include extra cuddle time or one-on-one time.

Embrace your children’s



FAMILY FIRST

FAMILY RESOURCES

Exceptional Family

Member Program (EFMP): Visit your local EFMP office for a list of activities or access to their Lending Library and see what books, toys, or offerings you can borrow.

Check out your **Child and Youth Programs** office for more resources.

New Parent Support Program (NPSP): Whether you

are first-time parents with many questions, parents expanding their family, or parents managing a feisty toddler who demands independence, reach out to your local NPSP for assistance.

Military OneSource: Find age-appropriate content as you continue to develop a healthy relationship with your teens.

individuality. Acceptance is an open-ended concept. Meet your children where they are to allow room for understanding and flexibility.

If a member of your family is deployed, find ways to keep everyone connected.

- Record story time with an absent parent’s voice.
- Share family pictures.
- Choose a book or movie for everyone to read or

watch, and then talk about it together over the **phone or video chat.**

• Make things to send to the deployed Service member. Document your fun time with photos or videos.

—*Human Performance Resources by Consortium for Health and Military Performance (CHAMP) at the Uniformed Services University*

Build social connections while helping others

For those who volunteer, connections happen instantly with both the community and people that you meet while volunteering.

Volunteering brings like-minded, altruistic people together to support their community. Volunteers report feeling less stressed and

having a more positive view of themselves and those around them.

To get involved, contact your installation’s volunteer coordinator.

Volunteering has no limits. It doesn’t matter if you volunteer once a month or once a week, with friends or by yourself.

By volunteering, you will positively impact your mental and physical health and have a

positive impact on your community.

Volunteering can be the first step to an amazing connection to the community and the people that surround you. It’s a way to connect with your community again, or for the first time since the pandemic began. To get started, contact your local **Volunteer Program** office.

CONNECT TO PROTECT BY GIVING OR RECEIVING SUPPORT

Everyone is busy balancing work and home life along with other challenges. It's important to make time to build and maintain connections with friends, family, Marines, co-workers, and your community.

As part of the year-round commitment to preventing suicide among Marines, their families, and the civilian workforce, the Marine Corps observes National Suicide Prevention Month each September.

National Suicide Prevention Month promotes awareness of the complex issue of suicide and emphasizes the resources and support available.

The Suicide Prevention Month theme of "Connectedness" and the slogan, "Connect to Protect: Support Is Within Reach," highlight the important role that connections to fellow Marines, leaders, family, friends, the community, and resources have in preventing suicide.

Remember those affected by suicide, raise awareness, and focus efforts on referring people who need help to available resources, including chaplains and the [Community Counseling Center](#). Use the #BeThere hashtag to support prevention efforts on social media.

What can you do?

First, connect with self. Focus on improving your own health and wellness.

Many of us tend to put others before ourselves and ignore our own needs. Be there for others while also taking care of yourself.

To practice good self-care:

- Participate in spiritual or community activities and groups.
- Make time to exercise or meditate.
- Make healthy food choices; stay hydrated.
- Prioritize your health by scheduling checkups with your primary care physician and



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Marine spouse Holly Vega records a suicide prevention public service announcement recently at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island. Vega was the 2019 Military Spouse of the Year.

your dentist. Make appointments for health screenings.

- Set challenging personal and professional goals and start working to achieve them.
- Seek support from peers, family, or health professionals.
- Limit your time on social media.

Connect with others

Show your support, and be there for your community by strengthening connections:

- Spend time with friends and family members. Keep them in the loop on your life, and let them know you are there for them.
- Volunteer for causes or groups.
- Listen when others in your life want to talk.

Getting help

Take steps every day to make your connections count. If you are concerned about someone you know and need resource information, contact:

- Your [Information, Referral, and Relocation Office](#)
- Your Suicide Prevention Program Officer
- Your unit's chaplain
- Community Counseling Center
- [Military Crisis Line](#): 800-273-8255, press 1
- [Military One Source](#): 800-342-9647

To find out the point of contact for your installation's annual suicide prevention activities, email hqmcspc@usmc.mil.

Connections will help you achieve career goals

MSgt Marc Arrington served for 17 years in the Marine Corps, including multiple tours as a Marine Raider.

He was forced to retire early due to medical reasons, so his transition to civilian life began earlier than he expected.

MSgt Arrington knew that networking was the key to his transition and future success, so he

reached out to the [Marine for Life \(M4L\) Network](#).

GySgt Luke Focer dove into MSgt Arrington's aspirations for future professional opportunities.

Knowing that MSgt Arrington wanted to settle in Wilmington, NC, GySgt Focer recommended broadening his network at the Veteran Business Collective (VBC) monthly meetings to meet local

business leaders.

Former Marine Chayse Roth founded VBC to leverage the business community to create a sense of purpose, belonging, and economic success for veterans.

MSgt Arrington attended and, among many others, he met a local mortgage advisor and VBC leader who provided career advice.

Fast forward a few short months, and he is now a mortgage loan officer at Alpha Mortgage

Corporation, a Marine-operated mortgage firm in Wilmington.

Connect to the M4L Network early in your transition to expand your connections to Marine-friendly employers, career training, and veteran support resources.

Your installation's [Transition Readiness](#) staff can also help you with networking, and you can follow M4L on social media.