

# Commanders' Guide to Resilience

## Part 2

### Promoting Unit Resilience



OBSERVE - LEARN - ADAPT - WIN



**FORCES COMMAND**  
THE FOUNDATION OF OPERATIONAL SUCCESS

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# Commander Forces Command

## Foreword



As part of the evolution of the Army leadership approach, we need to provide a more transparent and supportive work environment. Developing resilience at all levels is integral to this evolution. I have directed that our training and support systems build resilience to improve individual, unit and organisational capacity to prepare for chaos, to withstand shocks and to recover quickly.

Psychological resilience in Army members is critical for minimising the adverse effects of exposure to stressful situations and maximising the effectiveness of Australia's military capability. The aim of building resilience is to optimise health and well-being through developing and sustaining positive mindsets; to enhance self-motivation, self-regulation and assist to lever strengths and build psychological resources.

Part 2 focuses on promoting unit resilience, including building individual resilience. I commend this Guide to you, to assist you in building and maintaining resilience within your unit.

**FA McLachlan**  
MAJGEN  
COMD FORCOMD

## GLOSSARY

### **BattleSMART (Self Management & Resilience Training).**

BattleSMART is the primary vehicle for delivering resilience training in the Build phase. Trainees are provided with an introduction to a range of techniques and skills that will assist them in regulating physiological and emotional arousal, particularly during stressful situations. These techniques and skills are divided into two broad groupings; self-awareness and skill building.

**High Performance Environment (HPE).** A HPE involves the development and maintenance of high performance across a variety of tasks under conditions of extreme stress. A unit can facilitate a capacity for adaptability and potential growth through proactive development of positive psychological resources such as individual and team resilience, and good mental health in service members and their families.

**Kirkpatrick Model of Evaluation.** The Kirkpatrick model of evaluation is a well-known training evaluation tool. It consists of four evaluation levels: Reaction, Learning, Behaviour and Results.

**Leadership Self-Complexity (LSC).** LSC is a superior level of cognitive and emotional capacity. LSC facilitates adaptive decision making. Adaptive decision making includes solving problems creatively, dealing with changing or unpredictable work situations, and handling emergencies or crisis situations.

**Mental Toughness (MT).** MT is the psychological capacity of an individual to deliver high performance on a regular basis

despite varying degrees of situational demands. MT is considered to be an important individual protective factor within the resilience process, however they are separate concepts. MT is a personal attribute whilst resilience is a process that occurs between an individual and their environment over time.

**Organisational Culture.** Organisational culture is based on a way of thinking that permeates the organisation's day-to-day routine decisions and activities. The "right" culture for an organisation is related to values and context rather than a "one size fits all" approach.

**Psychological Capital (PsyCap).** PsyCap is an individual's positive psychological state of development that is characterised by: confidence (self-efficacy), optimism, hope, and resilience.

**Psychological (or mental) Fitness.** Psychological fitness is the integration and optimisation of cognitive, emotional and behavioural abilities and capacities to optimise performance and strengthen resilience.

**Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC).** PSC in a unit is the climate for mental health and psychological safety. A healthy PSC has an appropriate balance between leadership concern for their members' mental health and their performance.

**PULSE (The Profile of Unit Leadership, Satisfaction and Effectiveness).** The PULSE is a survey instrument designed to inform unit commanders on the factors that impact the behaviour and motivation of personnel in their unit. The survey addresses a range of issues related to the human

dimension of military capability including the core elements of leadership, teamwork, job satisfaction, communication and motivation.

**Resilience.** Resilience is the capacity of individuals, teams and organisations to adapt, recover and thrive in situations of risk, challenge, danger, complexity and adversity. Resilience is not a static state – it is a process that is flexible and responsive to training, and involves interaction between an individual, their life experiences and current life context.

**Resilience Program.** A resilience program targets any of the factors that research has shown to improve resilience and healthy responses to stress, and provides a means for helping individuals to incorporate resilience factors into their daily lives.

**Self-Efficacy.** Self-efficacy represents a person's belief that they can successfully organise and carry out a behaviour or course of action. This includes regulating motivation, thought processes, emotions and behaviours, or it may involve changing environmental conditions.

**Self-Awareness.** Self-awareness involves how you relate to and function within your own environment. Emotional and cognitive awareness are two underlying mechanisms that comprise self-awareness. Emotional awareness includes awareness of your own emotions and the emotions of others. Cognitive awareness, or metacognition, is awareness and regulation of your cognitive functioning and the factors that affect it.

**Situational Awareness.** Situational Awareness requires you to be able to maintain a sufficient level of awareness of your own environment.

**Social Resilience.** Social resilience is the capacity to foster, engage in, and sustain positive relationships and to endure and recover from life stressors and social isolation. It emphasises an individual's capacity to work with others to turn adversity into advantage.

**Stress Inoculation.** Stress inoculation is a process used in training aimed at protecting an individual from reacting negatively to real time stress exposure. A critical component of stress inoculation is the requirement for increasingly realistic pre-exposure through training simulation.

**Team Resilience.** Team resilience is based on the dynamic processes of social resilience, and enables a team to develop the capacity to cope, recover and adjust positively to adversity.

**Thriving.** Thriving is the psychological state in which individuals experience both a sense of vitality and a sense of learning. Thriving is associated with positive health, and viewed as an everyday experience where individuals do not merely survive, but adapt and grow through their daily, lived experiences.

**Performance Enhancement.** Performance enhancement is the deliberate cultivation of an effective perspective on achievement and the systematic use of effective psychological skills.

# Contents

## PART 2 - PROMOTING UNIT RESILIENCE

INTRODUCTION.....	9
BUILDING INDIVIDUAL RESILIENCE .....	10
RESILIENCE AT THE UNIT LEVEL .....	15
Resilience Factors .....	16
How to Develop Unit Social Resilience .....	17
Team Resilience.....	19
MENTAL HEALTH IN THE UNIT .....	22
UNIT APPROACH TO REINTEGRATION .....	24
THRIVING IN A HIGH-PERFORMANCE ENVIRONMENT .....	27
INTEGRATING RESILIENCE INTO UNIT TRAINING.....	30
Resilience Training Principles.....	30
Types of Training.....	32
Extending the Training Focus.....	40
RECOMMENDED READING .....	42
REFERENCES .....	43



## INTRODUCTION

The military is a high-risk occupation where personnel are selected, trained and prepared to face adverse, morally ambiguous, emotionally challenging and dangerous situations. Individuals need to respond to a range of stressors that are inherent in training and particular roles, including operational service. For such high-risk occupations, resilience is critical in terms of operational effectiveness and psychological adjustment. While many military personnel cope well or even thrive with stressors, there is clear potential for the demands of modern military service to overwhelm the resilience capacity of service members and their families.

There is no existing particular test or professional assessment that would enable a commander to determine which unit members will or will not be resilient in the face of adverse circumstances. Research does however increase our understanding of which factors influence our ability to cope with stressful events, and the associated effects on well-being, so that we can determine how to build individual and organisational resilience resources and capacity.

### Leadership and Resilience

Leaders play a key role in facilitating and sustaining members' adaptability and resilience. Increasing individual resilience requires an integrated approach from both the member and the organisation. It is the responsibility of the individual to develop a repertoire of adaptive behaviours and psychological skills to increase their resilience and performance, however, there is also an organisational imperative to provide the appropriate leadership, training and support. The overall aim for the organisation should be to facilitate a mentally healthy workplace and a resilient unit

culture as a platform for personnel to thrive and achieve optimal performance.

*COMD FORCOMD encourages leaders to develop innovative ways of building their unit's resilience capacity; however, any new and/or continued application of resilience training should be reviewed in the context of the recommendations outlined throughout this guide.*

## What is Resilience?

Individual resilience is associated with resistance to, and recovery from stressful life events<sup>i</sup>. It is generally viewed as a capacity or process that occurs over time – suggesting that it does not come as a stable, unchanging capacity<sup>ii</sup>. How an individual responds to stress can vary considerably from stressor to stressor, and from one context to another.

## BUILDING INDIVIDUAL RESILIENCE

### BattleSMART

During the Build phase, the BattleSMART program provides members with an introduction to a range of techniques and skills that will assist them in regulating physiological and emotional arousal, particularly during stressful situations. These techniques and skills are divided into two broad groupings; self-awareness and skill building.

1. **Self-awareness** is related to individuals' understanding of how they respond to stress, the emotions they experience, and their thought processes.

2. **Skill-building** is associated with the promotion of positive emotions, happiness, confidence, self-esteem, and well-being<sup>iii</sup>.

BattleSMART focuses on teaching resilience skills and building resilience capacity at a general level which is appropriate for initial training. However, once members enter unit environments, the context becomes more important. The unit environment provides opportunities to effectively demonstrate the utility of the resilience concepts taught during BattleSMART. A focus on practical skill application based on BattleSMART can be integrated into daily life as well as key training activities. The outcome is that soldiers are able to see the benefit of their learning which further validates the efficacy of the BattleSMART training. This also increases the likelihood that these skills will be utilised both within and beyond the unit environment.

*Note: 1<sup>st</sup> Psychology Unit can provide adapted versions of BattleSMART to suit differing unit contexts on request.*

## Resilience Building skills and Individual Training

Instructors and junior leaders have an important role in the implementation and reinforcement of resilience building techniques. They can train and integrate an adapted version of these techniques (that don't require a high level of specialisation) in the context of normal military training requirements. **"When junior leaders reinforce prior learning by integrating resilience teaching into training events, the process produces positive results"**<sup>iv</sup>. For example, performance psychology techniques can be tied to specific section training events and rehearsed in situ i.e. on the range, or prior to attempting the confidence course.

The following areas have demonstrated application in the training and unit environment. They can be incorporated into unit training activities at all levels.



**Self-Efficacy.** Self-efficacy represents a person’s belief that they can successfully organise and carry out a behaviour or course of action. This includes regulating motivation, thought processes, emotions and behaviours, or it may involve changing environmental conditions<sup>v</sup>.

There are four main sources that guide development of individual self-efficacy:

1. **Mastery.** Mastery provides the clearest form of evidence the individual has to whether they have what it takes to succeed at something. Success helps build their level of self-efficacy and failure can undermine it. High expectations and standards for achievement are a feature of a high-performance environment, however high standards alone don’t produce good individual outcomes. Learning activities need to be structured and conducted in ways that will ensure they will be mastered and promote a sense of personal capability in all individuals. Individual progress should be closely

monitored with individuals receiving quick corrective feedback when they encounter difficulties until they achieve mastery.

There are often elements of military training that produce significant levels of anxiety in individuals e.g. skill acquisition, assessment, undertaking activities that hold an inherent degree of risk, and physically challenging tasks. One of the key performance mastery aids a unit can employ to assist in training performance is modelling. A guide to this approach is outlined below:

1. Experienced staff should model fear provoking activities first to show members how to cope effectively with threats and to negate their worst fears.
2. Break difficult or intimidating tasks down into subtasks of readily mastered steps – subdividing complex skills into subskills produces better learning than trying to teach everything at once. It is much easier to focus attention and learn by concentrating on component skills.
3. At any given step, ask individuals to do what is within their capabilities with some extra effort and persistence.
4. Effective modelling teaches general rules and strategies for dealing with different situations rather than specific responses or scripted routines.
5. Individuals benefit from ongoing corrective modelling specifically focussed on the problematic aspects of their capabilities.

***Individuals don't always pay attention to coping strategies modelled in safe settings, but unsurprisingly they become more attentive in contexts where they are the ones required to cope with actual threats and can see where they are succeeding or faltering.***

2. **Role Modelling (Vicarious Experience).** One of the considerations in selecting service members for promotion to leadership positions is their ability to be a role model for junior ranks. They serve as a positive example, whose attitude and behaviour are emulated by others. Role modelling is considered a training technique as it influences the cognitive processes involved in acquiring, developing and modifying internalised rules regarding appropriate and professional behaviours.

Role modelling helps to develop cognitive strategies that enhance coping resources in the face of adverse events. By openly discussing their own training experiences including a range of emotional reactions, leaders help promote adaptive ways of thinking, feeling and behaving during stressful parts of training. It is beneficial to individuals to hear/witness others overcoming difficulties through persistence and positive coping skills. This helps to build the mindset that setbacks or failures reflect insufficient effort or lack of experience rather than lack of basic ability. This is the mindset that will help sustain individuals' motivation when they're feeling stressed.

3. **Verbal Persuasion.** It is easier for individuals to sustain a sense of self-efficacy particularly when they're struggling, if significant others e.g. unit leadership, express faith in their capabilities rather than doubts. It is important therefore, that leaders frame their feedback to highlight personal capabilities, particularly in the early stages of skill development. Harsh criticism not only creates distance between leaders and their team but also undermines individual self-belief. To ensure progress in building resilience, individuals should be encouraged to measure their successes in terms of self-improvement rather comparison to others.

4. **Physiological and Emotional States.** It is not the intensity of emotional and physical reactions that is important but rather how they are perceived and interpreted by the individual. Everyone (even the high performers), experiences a range of emotions during adverse events. Instructors can promote self-efficacy in individuals by reinforcing this view, and encouraging their members to regularly practice emotional regulation skills so they can manage their emotions effectively and increase their performance.

## RESILIENCE AT THE UNIT LEVEL



Conceptualising resilience at the unit-level shifts the focus of training and measurement to more group-oriented challenges, team functioning and skills to be mastered as a mutually dependent group. Incorporating a group level perspective in resilience also increases the impact on the organisation as training, strategies and policies can be implemented to benefit both the individual member and their unit.

## Resilience Factors

Two of the key factors that contribute to unit resilience are morale and unit cohesion<sup>vi</sup>.

1. **Morale.** Although morale is usually viewed as an individual psychological resource, it may also be influenced by the small group or organisational context. High levels of morale are associated with adaptive motivational states driven by being involved in a meaningful mission that has the potential to succeed. There are four main determinants of morale that can be integrated into training interventions:

- a. **Mission** – there needs to be a clear purpose behind the mission, objectives are viewed as achievable, and members see that incremental success is achieved.
- b. **Leadership** – clarify mission objectives, instil high efficacy and trust, emphasise positive outcomes associated with mission success, and recognise members for superior performance.
- c. **Unit** – the unit has high collective efficacy which facilitates the belief that achieving mission objectives is realistic.
- d. **Individual** – individual differences in morale are a function of personality factors or prior experience that is unrelated to the current mission or unit climate. Optimism, hardiness and self-efficacy are identified as influencing resilience levels.

2. **Group (Unit) Cohesion.** Unit cohesion is an interpersonal construct that captures the strength of social ties within the unit, and the ability for the unit to come together to accomplish mission objectives. Military personnel who are part of a highly cohesive unit



have higher levels of social resources and a shared sense of responsibility for the unit. These resources better prepare them to adapt to operational demands.

A unit with high social cohesion focuses on opportunity rather than problems. Leaders and staff at all levels enable the building of connections and focus on taking advantage of opportunities that address unit requirements and needs, meeting challenges, solving problems, and confronting situations that threaten the integrity of the community and the safety and well-being of its members.



## How to Develop Unit Social Resilience

Social support from leaders has a strong positive impact on members' ability to cope with stressful conditions. Leaders can increase social resilience by:

1. Provide a climate where individuals are comfortable helping each other learn new skills that will improve their performance. Individuals will then be more likely do everything

possible to provide the same amount of support for each other that they would want for themselves.

2. Encourage individuals to develop a large social network. In the military, the stronger the relationships soldiers have with other unit members, the more likely they are to receive social support.

3. Define goals for individuals, describe the means by which individuals can achieve these goals, explaining the standards that individuals will be assessed against, and consistently link rewards to good performance.

4. Promote a sense of safety, calm, self and collective-efficacy, optimism (good things will happen) and connectedness. Note; this does not mean lowering performance standards; it refers to developing a resilient culture.

5. Facilitate a sense of personal control and self-efficacy by helping individuals' problem-solve, learn from failure, acquire practical resources, and manage their own stress reactions.

6. Provide opportunities for cognitive reappraisal and restructuring, which can help individuals redefine their beliefs about themselves the world, and the future in more adaptive ways.

**Family Support.** Family support networks have been found to be critical for soldier well-being. Therefore, while efforts to promote social fitness should direct resources toward multiple sources of support, they should place particular emphasis on the promotion of family connections and cohesion. Building ties among families, peer groups, and communities that can offer social support will enhance the levels of well-being among these families facing unique and difficult challenges. This approach should increase group stability, interaction, and positive communication; while decreasing conflict

and social ostracism; and should also provide strategies for coping with unavoidable challenges to social connectivity, particularly geographic distance. Army Chaplains, Defence Community Organisation and Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service are ideally placed to assist COs to develop programs to help integrate families with local social support.

## Team Resilience

Team resilience is an important positive team level capacity that aids in the repair and rebound of teams under stressful situations. Team resilience is defined as “a team’s belief that it can absorb and cope with strain, as well as a team’s capacity to cope, recover and adjust positively to difficulties”<sup>vii</sup>.

Developing team resilience is viewed as a proactive approach to managing stressors and is a part of a team's long-term development rather than a short-term plan to address a crisis<sup>viii</sup>. *It is the combination of strengthening individual and social resilience that produces resilient and high performing teams.* Commanders can achieve this outcome by equipping unit leadership with the skills to foster social and team relationships, model constructive behaviours and provide positive opportunities for learning under adverse circumstances.

## What does a resilient team look like?

- A resilient team thrives in complex environments and is intrinsically motivated to succeed in the face of challenge and adversity.
- A resilient team has effective leadership, is cohesive, and has high collective efficacy.

- Team members take pride from continuously improving each other's abilities and in putting the team before themselves.
- During times of high stress, members are more likely to remain helpful toward other teammates, and to maintain lines of communication rather than withdrawing from their team and focusing inward<sup>ix</sup>.

## How to Develop Team Resilience

The key messages are that the quality of relationships is critical for team resilience, and that learning and team resilience are intertwined. Importantly, teams need to understand the value of the collective experience of adversity. Leaders need to reframe these experiences as learning opportunities to improve resourcefulness and preparedness, and their belief in their ability to face future adverse conditions

There are four key characteristics of resilient teams; group structure, mastery approaches, social capital and collective efficacy. The table on pages 45-46 outlines the approaches that unit leadership can take to assist teams apply and optimise their resilient characteristics as a buffer; specifically, to view stressors as an opportunity for personal development and mastery.

<b>Enhancing Resilience Characteristics</b>	
<b>Group Structure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist the team to collectively develop a shared vision based on core values and a clear sense of purpose.</li> <li>• Use group debriefings and reflections underpinned by team core values to make sense of lessons learnt after experiencing adversity.</li> </ul>
<b>Mastery Approaches</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster attitudes and behaviours that promote an emphasis on team improvement.</li> <li>• Provide positive learning opportunities for teams to employ their skills under experiences of controlled adversity e.g. via simulation training exercises.</li> </ul>
<b>Social Capital</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach the value of high quality relationships within the team.</li> <li>• Model and foster positive relationships.</li> <li>• Facilitate informal interactions and social activities to build a sense of camaraderie among team members.</li> </ul>
<b>Collective Efficacy</b>  (the group level equivalent to individual self-efficacy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop the team's shared belief in its collective ability to perform a task, even under adverse conditions.</li> <li>• Use reflective practices to identify the benefits of adversity and whether there are new strengths to be gained.</li> <li>• Identify ways to optimise the impact of influential leaders in a team to ensure confidence is maintained during setbacks.</li> </ul>

## MENTAL HEALTH IN THE UNIT

Being responsible for members with mental health difficulties is often viewed with anxiety, but it doesn't have to be uncomfortable or demanding. Basic good people management and the use of empathy and common sense by leaders lie at the heart of effective management of mental health in the workplace. Whilst mental ill health is a sensitive and personal issue – *like any health problem* - shying away from the subject can perpetuate fear of stigma and increase feelings of anxiety in the member. The aim is to create honest and open communication that will hopefully lead to a system of support and understanding between a member and their supervisor/unit.

Given the significant influence that a CO has over organisational culture, they have a key role to play in reducing the stigma around the provision of mental health support, and in fact, legitimising help seeking. If individuals are experiencing stress related, adjustment or other mental health issues that are interfering with their ability to function effectively, unit leadership needs to emphasise that getting timely support is a way to promote resilience, rather than a sign that a member is not resilient. In addition, clearly communicating to personnel that encouraging fellow team members to ask for support when they need to, contributes to the resilience of their team.

Mental health difficulties take many forms, and in most cases, they are a combination of challenges that people face at work and outside work. When supporting staff, it is important not to label people by focusing on a diagnosis. Instead, concentrate on how the member's mental health issues impact on their work and relationships.

<b>Guidelines for Supporting Members with Mental Health Issues</b>	
<b>Embed confidentiality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be prepared to assume responsibility for some confidential and sensitive information.</li> <li>• Reassure members that any private information they share will not be disclosed to their colleagues without their consent.</li> <li>• Discuss with the individual any information they <i>would like</i> to be shared with their team and how - this can be very supportive for some people.</li> </ul>
<b>Encourage people to talk</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is important to have an open dialogue with members when discussing their mental health.</li> <li>• Everyone's experience of mental ill health is different and how you deal with a disclosure should be entirely dependent on the individual.</li> <li>• Explore how the condition affects the member, what the implications are and what support they need.</li> </ul>
<b>Respond flexibly</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental health problems affect people in different ways and at different times in their lives, so be prepared to adapt your support to suit the individual.</li> <li>• Workplace adjustments for mental ill health don't need to be costly nor require huge changes.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Make sure you are aware of the steps to take if you're concerned the member may be having suicidal thoughts and/or feelings</i></b>	

## UNIT APPROACH TO REINTEGRATION

Proactive management of absence is central to the effective management of mental health problems, particularly during the first few weeks of the individual's return to work. It's helpful to work on the assumption that the member wants to return to work, that way the interaction will be more positive.

### Coordinated Return-to-work

Coordination and structured, planned, close communication between the unit, member, Member Support Coordinator (if appropriate), treating health professional and other stakeholders are required to optimise return-to-work and stay-at work outcomes. Commanders need to be familiar with the relevant policies and their roles and responsibilities in this area e.g. ADF Health & Recovery: Commander's Guide (2014).

### Leader Support and Training

One of the most valuable ways in which the unit can provide support for members in their recovery is regular communication from their leadership group. This extends to identifying members who are struggling, facilitating early assistance where required, managing sickness absence and being an active partner in early return to work and rehabilitation.

### Social Support

Units can provide social support through a resilience culture where members don't feel alone in facing fear and trauma. Having effective social support can minimise the experience of



hopelessness while encouraging adaptive and active coping. This increases the likelihood of resilient outcomes versus mental illness.

1. Peers often struggle to know what to say or do for the best. Everyone is different, so ask the returning member how they would prefer their colleagues to behave toward them. Set up a buddy system (in consultation with the member and the “buddy”) so the individual has someone on their level to turn to and check in on them.

2. Encourage staff to include the returning member in social activities. This can be one of the first things that peers stop doing as they assume the individual won’t want to come, or because they feel awkward socialising with them. This can increase the member’s sense of isolation.

## Role Accommodation

To assist individuals in their recovery from mental ill health, consideration should be given to providing more flexibility around work hours, position duties and responsibilities. Clear leadership support for changes to duties can positively impact return-to- work rates for members with mental health conditions.

1. Distinguish carefully between *essential and desirable* requirements for the job to allow for flexibility in making adjustments.

2. Job role adjustments should include a *sensible redistribution or reduction of work demands* on the member and their co-workers.

3. Focus *on what is required to get the job done* (e.g. knowledge or experience), not how it will be done (e.g. method of

delivery), as this gives flexibility for achieving output in different ways.

4. Make it clear which *mental and emotional elements* are required to meet the work schedule attached to the job. An initial transition to a less stressful and slower paced environment may be helpful until the member can accommodate more demands.

5. *Support from peers* is also essential for the success of role adjustments however stigma and team's lack of understanding of the returning member's strengths and limitations can hinder that success. Where a person or team's job will be impacted by the returning member's changed role or work pattern, ensure they are briefed so they understand the reasoning behind the change and are motivated to support and accommodate the changes.

## Member Engagement

Keeping the member actively engaged in the return-to-work process will also improve return-to-work outcomes. Regular face to face check-ins to assess the member's needs and their progress are important return-to-work practices. Return-to-work practices should also be specific, goal-oriented, and maintain a focus on work function, workplace behaviour, and return-to-work outcomes.

## Professional Support

Facilitate access to required specialist appointments and treatment. Ensure the member and relevant peers/supervisors understand that this is an essential part of the return-to-work process (whilst remaining cognisant and respectful of the member's privacy).

## THRIVING IN A HIGH-PERFORMANCE ENVIRONMENT

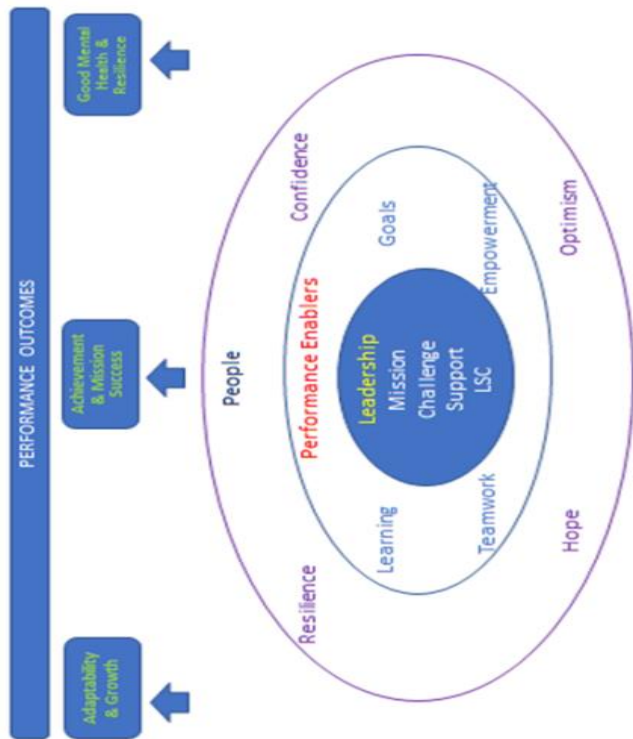
When a unit is operating from a base of good mental health and a resilient culture, then the stage is set to focus on optimising individual and unit performance outcomes. This is achieved through the inculcation of a *High-Performance Environment (HPE)*. A HPE in the military context is characterised by four distinctive features which are outlined in the table below.<sup>x</sup>:

HPE Features	
<b>Goal clarity and focus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members are clear how their role contributes to organisational goals.</li> <li>• They know what they have to do and can get the information they need to do it.</li> <li>• They feel they are “in the picture”.</li> </ul>
<b>Empowerment to act</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members can, within reason, get on and do things without having to wait for permission.</li> <li>• Initiative is rewarded.</li> <li>• Members are not sanctioned for doing things without permission.</li> </ul>
<b>Teamwork and cooperation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members feel that they are not acting alone.</li> <li>• They feel supported by team members, the rest of the unit and the organisation as a whole.</li> </ul>
<b>Innovation and “learning from doing”</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members feel that it is acceptable to question existing practices and to experiment with better ways of doing them.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• They feel “safe” in “having a go” and risking mistakes, as long as those mistakes are used as a means of learning about themselves and the working environment.</li></ul>
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Figure 1 illustrates how a commander can develop a HPE via these performance enablers. These elements work together to increase the PSYCAP of unit members. The resulting outcomes should be a gain in adaptability and growth; achievement and mission success; and good mental health and resilience.

Figure 1 High Performance Environment – Performance Outcomes



Leaders can target the following specific skill areas<sup>xi</sup>:

<b>Skill Areas</b>	
<b>Managing information and task cognitive overload</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage and model ways to effectively manage mental workload by prioritising tasks.</li> <li>• Emphasise the importance of minimising multitasking and task switching as much as possible.</li> </ul>
<b>Foster Healthy Behaviour</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage the preservation and restoration of overall energy and cognitive functioning by providing information and guidance to support healthy sleep and behavioural practices.</li> </ul>
<b>Engage with the Unit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn about member’s strengths.</li> <li>• Maximise and communicate knowledge of how all members’ strengths are used in different jobs and parts of the unit mission,</li> <li>• Encourage members to develop their areas of strength.</li> </ul>
<b>Meaning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help unit members find greater understanding and meaning in difficult experiences as a way to stay connected with others and for a sense of purpose.</li> </ul>



## INTEGRATING RESILIENCE INTO UNIT TRAINING

### Resilience Training Principles

1. [Promote psychological resilience as a form of strength.](#) Incorporate resilience into existing strength training structures. Develop a strengths-based program which incorporates elements such as emotional fitness, developing positive relationships, thriving, and combating stress.
2. [Integrate culturally relevant resilience techniques into dynamic military training environments.](#) Evidence based information should be delivered by credible trainers with relevant technical and operational experience. This ensures that the lessons and training points associated with resilience are more intrinsically applicable and salient to soldiers, the techniques are practised in situ, and the benefits of these techniques are more immediately relevant to operational contexts.
3. [Particular training situations are natural venues for the application of these principles.](#) For instance, many of the more

challenging military courses already involve a graduated exposure to more and more realistic training scenarios. Training scenarios derived from, or combining elements from, actual after-action reports would provide an effective base for resilience training.

4. Psychological principles of stress and coping need to be integrated into these pre-existing training settings. Training staff are then able to observe physiological and psychological responses and how they affect subsequent decision making. In situ debriefing as scenarios unfold will also increase member learning.

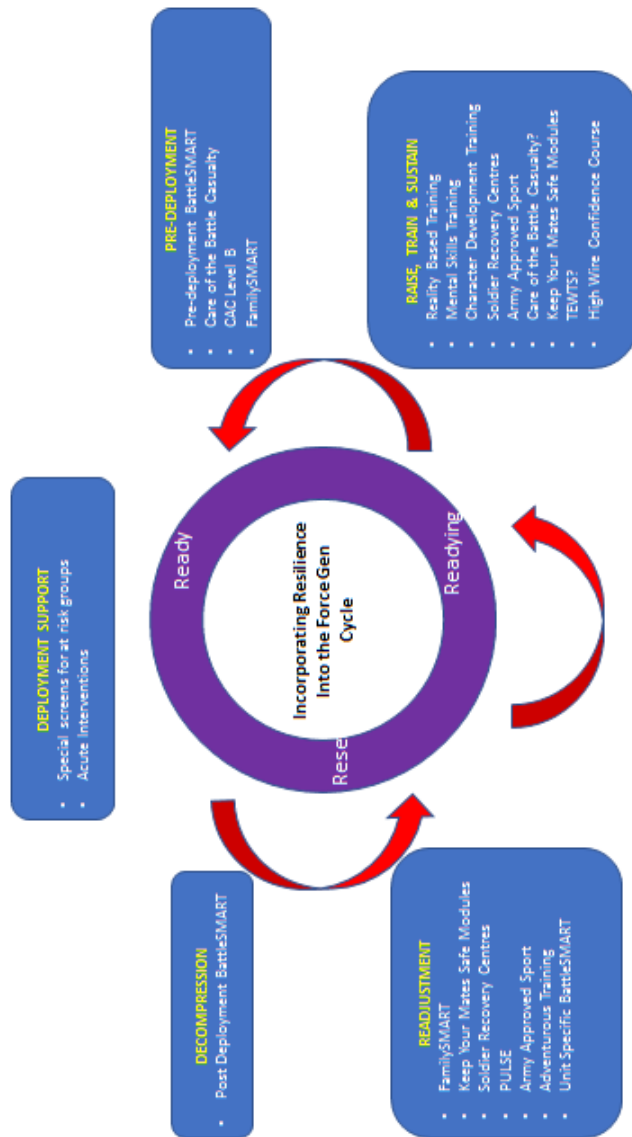
5. A proportion of military trainers/instructors already intuitively adopt these techniques e.g. encouraging trainees to monitor their physiological, cognitive and emotional reactions, as well as by modelling task-focus and control through their own behaviour. These trainers should be considered the “gold standard”.

*Note; The intent is not to eliminate the benefits of the expertise of mental-health professionals, but rather to utilise this expertise in a consultative role concerning resilience training content.*

These training methods will only produce maximal benefits if they are included as part of the continuum of strategies to increase operational effectiveness. That is, the principles and practices of mental health and wellbeing need to be maintained. When stress reactions appear, they must be dealt with early as per the PIES (Proximity, Immediacy, Expectancy, Simplicity) principles. Further, **resilience training does not replace the importance of leadership, which is among the strongest mediating factors in preventing mental health issues and increasing operational effectiveness.** As emphasised throughout this guide, unit leaders are among the most important resilience role models for soldiers.



Figure 2. Incorporating Resilience into the Force Gen Cycle (IAW COMD FORCOMD Directive 21-/15 FORCOMD Resilience Plan).



## Types of Training

**Mission Rehearsal Exercises.** The military has historically used realistic rehearsal training to prepare soldiers for stressful operations. This type of training traditionally focused on the over learning of behaviour (use of repetition during drills etc.) as a central tenet, but rarely considered the role of cognitive or emotional factors in learning. However, more contemporary training recognises that these factors are critical to stress adaptation e.g. individuals vary in their learning abilities and emotional robustness. Some may also experience failure more than mastery during training, rendering them more vulnerable to stress and mental health injuries. Therefore, interventions that target cognitions and emotions are employed with the aim of reducing arousal and increasing self-efficacy.

**Stress Exposure Training (SET).** Stress exposure is a foundational element of virtually all military basic training programs—primarily via methods to simulate the combat environment as realistically as possible.<sup>xii</sup> SET is an intensive, multi-stage process designed to improve coping behaviours and expedite adaptation to challenging environments. For example, training that involves experiencing strong stress responses in an in vivo (natural) setting is used to prepare members for operating in high altitudes, desert regions or isolated environments. *The aim of the training is to prevent decrements in cognitive performance or decision making resulting from the pressure and stressors characteristic of extreme environments.* Strong stress reactions such as panic or dissociation are deliberately provoked so that individuals become familiar with them, and understand how long they are expected to last, recognise in what type of situations they may occur, and experience how they diminish over time. They also learn that these types of reactions are normal in certain extreme situations, that they can be managed, and are not a sign of weakness.

*Note; Not all exposure based training is effective; in fact some activities pose clear risks to personnel. A salient example of this is Morgue Visits to better equip soldiers for exposure to and handling dead bodies. There is little evidence to suggest that this type of training works, and in some cases it may have deleterious psychological effects on personnel.*



**Adventurous Training.** Adventurous Training (AT), is defined in LWD 7-6 (Adventurous Training, 2011) as “an activity of a challenging physical and mental nature, designed to develop those higher individual and team qualities, including courage initiative and teamwork, which assist individuals and teams overcoming the fear and stress generated by operations and combat.” Improving psychological conditioning and its transference to the battlefield is one of its primary aims. By design, AT is conducted in a higher risk, but semi-controlled environment that enables members to improve their ability to perform under challenging conditions. Therefore, this type of training is consistent with resilience training principles,

and can assist units in strengthening individual resilience and improving performance under pressure.

**Reality Based Training.** Reality Based Training (RBT) is defined as “any manner of training that utilises tools, techniques or methodologies to approximate in a training setting any situation that might occur in an operational setting.” RBT takes an immersive approach to training where the brain and body may absorb and process the experience as if it were actually occurring. This prepares an individual to respond in the desired manner when facing a real-time combat situation. Recent applications of RBT in FORCOMD have been viewed positively in relation to enhanced combat training. RBT incorporates a focus on psychological and physiological responses to combat, along with in scenario debriefing to achieve mastery and improved self-efficacy. These processes occur within a challenging but controlled training environment; congruent with strengthening individual resilience and enhancing performance.

**Sport and Physical Training.** With the interdependent elements that make up resilience, it is very important that military service members be physically fit. Traditionally, each of these components e.g. physical training, typically has its own specialists and delivery methods, and resides within its own silo. However, units need to take a more integrated and streamlined approach to training for resilience in order to produce optimal performance.



*Sport in itself is not categorised as resilience training – just playing more sport will not necessarily build resilience within individuals and teams.*

However, sport can improve social resilience through the development

of social networks and cohesion. Sport is also an opportunity for members to enhance their understanding of the nature of high performance.

*It is a particularly good chance for individuals and teams to practice mental skills relating to performance in a competitive environment.*

Practicing the application of mental skills during physical training and sport enables these skills to become systematic and habitual, and increases confidence in their efficacy when used during competition.

Defence psychologists can assist members to develop and refine individualised routines to formally integrate psychological training into physical training. This is a similar approach to the concept of the “cognitive battle drill.” Strategies can be developed for the three key phases of a physical or sporting activity; pre-competition, competition and post-competition.



<b>Performance Strategies</b>	
<b>Pre-competition Routine</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A pre-competition routine is a key component of the short-term preparation for a performance.</li> <li>• Enables an individual to regulate emotions, thoughts, and attention immediately prior to and during performance.</li> <li>• Content of the pre-competition routines will vary between individuals so they should be encouraged to develop a preferred routine.</li> <li>• Strategies include game strategy development, self-talk, imagery, observations/planning, emotional control, physical preparation, arousal regulation, and body language.</li> </ul>
<b>Competition Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional control is deemed to be critical for coping with high pressure competition, in particular the control of aggression, fear and anxiety.</li> <li>• Over learning is necessary so that sporting/technical skills can be produced during a competition without conscious processing</li> </ul>
<b>Post-competition Routine</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post-game reflection is a natural and important element of an athlete's routine.</li> <li>• Reflection involves self-evaluation, attributing causation to elements of the performance, experiencing satisfaction, and adapting their performance for the next game</li> </ul>

**Pre-Deployment Training.** The previous training activities focussed on building resilience prior to the lead up to deployment. Strengthening resilience around the deployment cycle may be useful as “just in time” training can be implemented where it is needed the most. Primacy effects of the training are more likely to

hold for the duration of the deployment, and pre-deployment training also provide opportunities to apply and reinforce previously learned resilience skills through practice. The training should be mission specific and contextualised for deployment, building on the tools of morale, cohesion and good leadership.

**Ethics Training.** Despite growing evidence demonstrating a link between stress and ethical behaviours, mental health training (Stress and Coping or Resilience) and ethics training are generally developed and delivered independently of each other. Resilience training needs to rectify this gap by addressing the role of stress and situational factors on moral decision making and behaviours in ways that are meaningful and immediately relevant to unit members. The training should also incorporate practice opportunities that mirror operational stressors.<sup>xiii</sup>

Ethical decision-making training objectives for contemporary military missions should include:

1. Increased moral awareness
2. Exercise moral judgment
3. Increased confidence and mastery.<sup>xiv</sup>

Highly interactive, carefully guided approaches consisting of decision-making games, hot washes, and historical and personal case studies are recommended for “ethical/moral resiliency training.” Scenario-based moral decision-making training can be integrated into selected high-intensity training environments.

Pre- deployment training presents an ideal opportunity to integrate convincing ethical decision-making challenges based on previous operational experience of veterans of recent deployments, into the overall training objectives. This facilitates moral decision-making processes to be employed under close to real-life stress conditions, and also provides in-situ experience in considering moral implications and options, and balancing these in the context of

multiple, potentially competing, operational objectives.<sup>xv</sup> Ensure that the scenarios are morally ambiguous or complex so that members need to confront the absence of “right” answers, and understand that they may not always be able to solve the problem, resolve the dilemma, or “do the right thing”. The inclusion of this type of ambiguity is important as it reflects the reality of operations.<sup>xvi</sup>

The integration of moral decision-making feedback within after-action reviews, feedback from exercise mentors, and discussions among unit members is critical to developing an understanding of ethical decisions under adverse conditions.

**Character Development.** Character development is ideally command led, but with considerable support from other specialists. Some elements of Character development if routinely practiced have the capability to increase individual resilience, these include:

1. Moral and Ethical decision-making skills
2. Reflective Practices
3. Analysing own beliefs and moral orienting systems.

While Character theory is best taught in a classroom based setting, the continual development of Character can and should occur in the workplace. Providing challenging ethical or moral scenarios within training and then analysing or reflecting on the actions taken is one simple way to provide Character development in a real-life manner. More information on how to incorporate Character development into the workplace can be sourced from the COMD CHAP HQ FORCOMD.



## Extending the Training Focus

There are a number of evidence based psychological skills that can be embedded into training programs without undue time and resources required. These are outlined below:

**Reflection.** Reflection is, in its simplest form, thinking about what you do. The critical difference between casual “thinking” and reflection is that reflective practice involves a conscious effort to think about events, to develop insights into how you reacted, and determine how you will respond differently and more effectively in the future when faced with a similar situation. Reflective practice is divided into three components:

1. Pre- activity frontloading
2. During activity reflection
3. After activity review

Reflective practice can be promoted during training by providing members with a set of questions that are relevant, thought provoking and promote behaviour change.

**Mindfulness.** The concept of mindfulness training has also gained significant attention in recent years. Mindfulness is based on the well-documented theory of neuroplasticity, which states that “experience changes the brain.”<sup>xvii</sup> The brain is similar to the rest of the body in that it builds the “muscles” it uses most, sometimes at the expense of other abilities. Mindfulness is a skill which involves “bringing one’s attention to the present experience on a moment-by-moment basis.” Mindfulness exercises engage and improve core mental processes, such as working memory capacity, which lead to a more mentally agile, emotionally regulated, attentive, and situationally aware mode of functioning by soldiers.

## CONCLUSION

Resilience training is most effective when it is evidence based and integrated into extant training. It should both aim to develop functional and practical skills that help personnel to survive in challenging scenarios and achieve mission goals; and to develop the cognitive and emotional skills required to cope with stress and enhance their performance.

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