Foreword

In the Australian Army our competitive advantage will continue to be the quality of our people - our soldiers and officers. Constantly pursuing professional mastery and developing the quality of individuals and teams is fundamental to optimising human capacity and performance, and is vital to current and future success.

This special edition of Smart Soldier calls upon the collective experience and expertise of our specialist health personnel to help examine this important topic of the human dimension and I commend these articles to you. They cover diverse issues and reflect the collective experience and expertise of specialist health personnel working in the operational environment.

I encourage you to challenge your own thinking and behaviour with respect to optimizing your own performance as an Australian soldier. Furthermore, I encourage you to use the ideas, tools and resources in this special edition to build the capability of both yourself and the people in your unit - in barracks, in the field and on operations; now and into future. Good Soldiering!

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The handbook was an initiative of Colonel Laura Sinclair, during her tenure as Commanding Officer of 1st Psychology Unit (1 Psych) from January 2015 to January 2017. Many of the authors were posted to 1 Psych in 2016, and all articles have been reviewed and edited by Professor (Lieutenant Colonel) E James Kehoe and Major Sarah Watson, Operational Performance, 1 Psych Unit. Articles have been edited and adapted for this publication by staff at the Centre for Army Lessons (CAL), which is also responsible for its publication.

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Conditions of release

This publication has been cleared for release to the public by Australian Army Headquarters.
MULTI-TASKER: juggling genius or juggling dumb dumb?

Colonel Laura Sinclair

The biggest cognitive cost of the current technology age.

Modern day productivity? It looks like that super high achiever who always manages to do a number of things at the one time while also texting, facebooking and living the technological highlife in the world of apps. Our brains are busier than ever before. We’re assaulted with facts, pseudo facts, jibber-jabber, and rumour, all posing as information. Trying to figure out what you need to know and what you can ignore is exhausting. At the same time, we are all doing more. What is a travel agent, a salesperson or a secretary? They are human dinosaurs on the verge of extinction because now we do most of their functions ourselves. We are doing the jobs of 10 different people while still trying to keep up with our own lives. Our smartphones have become the modern-day Swiss army knife implement; they include a dictionary, calculator, web browser, email, Nintendo 3DS, appointment calendar, voice recorder, guitar tuner, weather forecaster, GPS, texter, tweeter, Facebook updater, and flashlight. They’re more powerful and do more things than the most advanced computer at IBM corporate headquarters 30 years ago. And we use them all the time, part of a 21st-century mania for cramming everything we do into every single spare moment of downtime. We text while we’re walking across the street, catch up on email while standing in a queue or waiting for an appointment with the MO at the health centre — and while having lunch with friends, we surreptitiously check to see what our other friends are doing — we can’t help ourselves.

Dumb or genius?

So here’s the thing. Although we think we’re doing several things at once, what is often referred to as ‘multitasking’, it is a powerful and diabolical illusion. Neuroscientist world experts on divided attention say that our brains are ‘not wired to multitask well… When people think they’re multitasking, they’re actually just switching from one task to another very rapidly. And every time they do, there’s a cognitive loss in doing so.’ So we’re not actually keeping a lot of balls in the air like an expert juggler; we’re more like a bad amateur plate spinner, frantically switching from one task to another, ignoring the one that is not right in front of us but worried it will come crashing down any minute. Even though we think we’re getting a lot done – a ‘juggling genius’ – ironically, multitasking makes us demonstrably less efficient – ‘juggling dumb-dumb’.

Tip 1: Focus on one task at a time. There are many ways you can do this, so you need to figure out what works best for you by experimenting. However, a good idea to begin with is to make a list of things you need to do, reorder them by priority then get to it. If something pops into your head when you are doing another task, just put it on your list and worry about figuring out where it belongs between tasks. There is nothing as satisfying as crossing out – or deleting – a task from your list.

The stress addiction

Worse still, multitasking has been found to increase the production of the stress hormone cortisol as well as the fight-or-flight hormone adrenaline, which can overstimulate your brain and cause mental fog or scrambled thinking. Multitasking creates a dopamine-addiction feedback loop, effectively rewarding the brain for losing focus and for constantly searching for external stimulation.

To make matters worse, the prefrontal cortex has a novelty bias, meaning that its attention can be easily hijacked by something new – the proverbial shiny objects we use to entice infants, puppies, and kittens. The irony here for those of us who are trying to focus amid competing activities is clear: the very brain region we need to rely on for staying on task is easily distracted. We answer the phone, look up something on the internet, check our email, send an SMS, and each of these things tweaks the novelty-seeking centres of the brain, causing a burst of endogenous opioids2 (no wonder it feels so good!), all to the detriment of staying on task. It is the ultimate empty-caloried brain candy. Instead of reaping the big rewards that come from sustained, focused effort, we instead reap empty rewards from completing a thousand little sugar-coated tasks.

Tip 2: Reflect on your day to see whether this is you! If it is, not only should you read the rest of this article, but also have a look at ways to slow down your brain by reading the article ‘keeping calm and carrying on’ in this edition.

Cognitive performance

Just having the opportunity to multitask is detrimental to cognitive performance. Preliminary research suggests that being in a situation where you are trying to concentrate on a task

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1 Learning, thinking, reasoning, communicating and remembering.

2 Substances produced by the body that provide effects on the central nervous system similar to those of opiate drugs – eg, pain relief, reduced anxiety, and enhanced mood.
but an email is sitting unread in your inbox can reduce your effective IQ.

**Tip 3: Schedule times to check your email inbox.** Stick to it, and let everyone else know that’s what you are doing so you can have better focus on your tasks. They will get used to you not answering straight away.

What’s really important to know is that learning information while multitasking causes the new information to go to the wrong part of the brain. If students study and watch TV at the same time, for example, the information from their schoolwork goes into the striatum, a region specialised for storing new procedures and skills, not facts and ideas. Without the distraction of TV, the information goes into the hippocampus, where it is organised and categorised in a variety of ways, making it easier to retrieve.

Asking the brain to shift attention from one activity to another causes the prefrontal cortex and striatum to burn up oxygenated glucose, the same fuel they need to stay on task. And the kind of rapid, continual shifting we do while attempting multitasking causes the brain to burn through fuel so quickly that we feel exhausted and disoriented after even a short time. We’ve literally depleted the nutrients in our brain. This depletion leads to compromises in both cognitive and physical performance. Among other things, repeated task switching leads to anxiety, which raises levels of the stress hormone cortisol in the brain. This in turn, can lead to aggressive and impulsive behaviour. This explains why we tend to have sugar cravings when under stress. Again, for a solution to this refer to tip 2!

By contrast, staying on task is controlled by the anterior cingulate and the striatum, and once we engage the central executive mode, staying in that state uses less energy than multitasking and actually reduces the brain’s need for glucose.

To make matters worse, attempting to multitask requires constant decision-making: Do I answer this text message or ignore it? How do I respond to this? How do I file this email? Do I continue what I’m working on now or take a break? It turns out that decision-making is also very hard on your neural resources and that little decisions appear to take up as much energy as big ones. One of the first things we lose is impulse control. This rapidly spirals into a depleted state in which, after making lots of insignificant decisions, we can end up making truly bad decisions about something important. Why would anyone want to add to their daily weight of information processing by trying to multitask?

**Tip 4: Try using headphones if you work in an open plan area.** There is a saying that the person who designed open plan work areas certainly never had to work in one. If you work in one, it’s the reason why you get so much done when everyone else has gone home. However, you can shut yourself off so you can focus on your work and not be distracted by others random comments and conversations. Put your headphones on and play some music that helps you focus – you will be amazed what you can get done. You don’t even have to listen to music – just sitting there with your headphones can be a signal that you don’t want to be interrupted.

### Key takeaways

Turn off multi-media devices – put away your phone, shut down your browser, close your email program - while you are doing something that merits your full attention – SIMPLE GENIUS.

- **DID YOU KNOW …**
  If you’re sending an email while also working on something else, a downside is that withdrawing your attention from one task to another creates a split-second in which the brain is in no-man’s land. This is called a post-refractory pause.
  Think about it - over time these pauses add up and can mean your mind wasn’t on the job for a couple of minutes – not having your full attention on task could have dire consequences within a military context – even for a split second let alone minutes …

- **DID YOU KNOW …**
  That if you’re deeply immersed in a task and turn your attention to an email that’s just come in, there are studies that show it can take you up to 15 minutes to get yourself back into that same degree of immersion.

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**References**


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Sleep, caffeine and performance

Is too much caffeine dangerous?

Consuming too much caffeine can leave you feeling restless, jittery, and anxious. It may cause your heart to race, and you can feel nauseous. Consistently consuming high levels of caffeine can also lead to tolerance; if you stop or dramatically reduce your intake, you can experience withdrawal symptoms such as headaches, tiredness, and have difficulty concentrating. In the long term, consistent over-caffeination can also lead to insomnia.

So what is normal? Generally, 400 mg or less of caffeine a day is considered safe for healthy individuals. That is about 3 or 4 cups of coffee or energy drinks, or 8 cups of tea, depending on the strength of the individual drink. However, medication, your weight, age, and sensitivity to caffeine will all influence how much caffeine is right for you. Occasional doubling of this recommended amount during periods of sleep deprivation can be effective in counteracting fatigue.

Can I use caffeine during the day to compensate for a lack of sleep? If so, can I do this regularly?

Having a good night’s sleep is always the best option, but this may not always be possible due to the nature of our work. Field exercises, operations, and shift work can all take their toll and leave you sleep deprived and tired. In the long term, small to moderate amounts of caffeine are generally safe; however, only use caffeine in higher amounts than normal as a short-term fix for a lack of sleep for 1-3 days at a time. If you use these higher levels of caffeine for longer, it can lead to a cycle of dependence, poor decision-making, and long-term poor sleep.

How does caffeine affect my body?

During annual drug and alcohol awareness training, we are informed that caffeine is a stimulant – a drug that stimulates our nervous system. In some ways, the effects caffeine has on your body are similar to the fight or flight response. Caffeine causes your nervous system to work faster, and increases your heart rate and blood pressure. It can also increase your alertness and metabolism, give you a short-term boost in athletic performance and mood, and improve your cognitive function. In addition, micronutrients found in various sources of caffeine (eg, tea, coffee and cocoa) may, over time, help maintain brain health and cognitive function.
**How can I cut back on my caffeine consumption if I think I am having too much?**

Caffeine content can vary widely, especially amongst canned energy drinks, so check the labels of the drinks you are consuming. Be aware of the caffeine contained in various food sources too; for example, a 100 g block of chocolate contains as much as 70-100 mg of caffeine — approximately 25% of the recommended daily maximum. You can track your consumption using a notebook or your smartphone to record how many caffeinated drinks you consume in a day. If you are predominantly a coffee drinker, try to switch to lower-caffeine content options such as tea some of the time. Reduce your consumption gradually over a number of days. Going ‘cold turkey’ or reducing your consumption too quickly may lead to headaches or irritability.

**Does caffeine improve my performance in military/operational settings?** Extensive research has been conducted in this area. Results suggest caffeine notably improves vigilance, speeds up logical reasoning processes, and reduces the impairment that fatigue can have on military members’ performance. Caffeine also appears to reduce the decline in performance of technical skills such as marksmanship.

Deployments are a time to be particularly conscious of your caffeine consumption, in particular because communal living, excessive noise, shift work, increased stress and boredom may affect the amount and quality of your sleep. You may be tempted to increase your caffeine intake as a result; however, remember that is not an appropriate long-term fix.

To assist with these potential sleep breakers, here are 10 sleep hygiene tips for you to follow.

- Make your sleep area as dark and as quiet as possible. Use a sleep mask and earplugs if necessary.
- Avoid exercising for 2-3 hours before sleeping.
- Reduce the use of bright lights and LED screens for an hour prior to attempting to go to sleep.
- Maintain a good diet and consume enough water to keep you hydrated throughout the day.
- Wear comfortable clothing to bed.
- Where possible, make your sleeping area a comfortable temperature.
- Practice relaxation, stretching or meditation before bed.
- If you find you cannot get to sleep, get up and do something else for 20 minutes before attempting to sleep again.
- Refrain from drinking caffeine for 5-6 hours before bed (eg, if you want to sleep at 2100 h, stop drinking caffeine by 1500 h).
- Approach your local psychology team for more tips or for CDs containing relaxation tracks. You can also find these online or through smart phone apps.

Remember, moderate amounts of caffeine can help you to remain alert and improve your performance during periods of fatigue. Good self-care and sleep hygiene will help you manage your fatigue in the longer term.
Prepare yourself

Bad decisions don’t always have bad outcomes. Sometimes luck plays a part, and a gamble will pay off. On the other hand, some of the best decisions on paper don’t give good results. One way or another, luck can certainly play a part, but deciding to use luck as a planning tool is itself a bad decision. For example, whether the Titanic had struck an iceberg and sunk, or made it safely to port, being unable to account for a worst case scenario would still be classified as a bad decision.

So how can we make better decisions? Well it starts with awareness, and whilst no formula can be used to calculate every decision, the following will provide a good foundation on which to build your own formula.

Tip 1: Evaluate your values. People tend to feel unhappy in situations where their values aren’t being matched. For example, you will feel unhappy if spending time with family is your number one priority, but you are required to work for long hours away from home. Determine what your values are, what is most important to you, before you even need to make a decision. This will allow you to make quick decisions that fit with who you are for decisions that are within your control.

You don’t have to look far to find examples of people who have made bad decisions. Thinking guitar music was on the out, Decca Records passed on the Beatles. Fox Studios gave George Lucas exclusive rights to all Star Wars merchandise, costing themselves billions. NASA knew the Challenger had O-ring issues but sent it into space anyway. The Titanic sailed without enough lifeboats for everyone on-board. Winston Churchill ordered the invasion of Gallipoli, costing the lives of thousands of ANZACs.

Historically speaking, many famous people have made some famously bad decisions, and whilst the stakes may never be that high for most individuals, bad decisions leave us dangerously open to bad consequences. So how can we recognise a bad decision, and how can we make better decisions?
Tip 2: Evaluate your investment. How much does the outcome matter to you? How much effort are you willing to put in to see the outcome met? Most decisions can be viewed as a balance between effort and value. If something is going to be hard work, but the outcome is important to you, you’re more likely to put in the work. In other words, if you know how invested you are, you’ll know how much of yourself to dedicate… and if it’s worth it to you.

Tip 3: Evaluate the situation. What are we really talking about? What is the core problem? Sometimes fixing an issue does nothing to help the situation, and often it’s because we find ourselves focusing on the wrong issue. Take a step back and look at the bigger picture. This may help you to realise that what you thought was the problem was actually just a side effect of something else, and the real issue is something else entirely. For example, feeling you are unhappy at work and deciding to take leave may be a good short term decision. However, knowing you are unhappy at work is not identifying the core issue at play. It’s knowing what is causing your unhappiness at work that needs to be identified. Knowing what the core issue is will allow you to fight the main battle, rather than getting bogged down in skirmishes.

Tip 4: Determine the variables. He who hesitates is lost, but time spent in reconnaissance is seldom wasted. What are the factors? Who are the stakeholders? Take time to ensure you know as many of the variables as possible as this will help you make the best decisions and also enable you to develop a plan B. For example, you’ve decided to take a holiday. Is this just a matter of booking the holiday, or is it more than that? There is leave to be approved, and there are finances to be made available to pay for your trip. Do you need a passport and how much time will you need to allow for this to arrive in time for you to depart on holiday? Any good decision requires identification of the factors at play in order to achieve the desired outcome.

Tip 5: Determine your resources. Do you have the skills, knowledge, and/or attitude to make this decision right now? Is there a subject matter expert or mentor from whom you can get support or advice? A lot of people who have made bad decisions have either overestimated their own abilities or underestimated the ability of others. Look honestly at what resources you have available. This can allow you to not only make the best decision possible but make it at the best time.

Tip 6: Consider the options. At the most basic level, there are always at least two options: to do something or do nothing. Choosing to do nothing can be a viable option – as long as it is understood that if nothing is done then nothing will change. If something needs to be done, then the next step is to determine all the options available and pick the best one.

Tip 7: Consider the consequences. What is the likely fallout of your choice? Think about the long term as well as the short term. Think about the fallout for you as well as those around you. Every choice has consequences, some good and some bad. Knowing what the consequences are, and how they would likely affect you and those around you, should be a consideration in your decision making process.

Tip 8: Make your decisions. The time has come. You have your choices. Now make your decision and see it through!

Tip 9: Reflect on the outcome. How did it go? Reflecting on how things worked out as well as why they worked out is the key to continually developing your decision-making ability. Did you succeed? Why? Did you fail? Why? What can you learn from this moving forward, and how will you make a better decision next time?

Conclusion

Your ability to make good decisions is absolutely developable. In a military context, the ability to make good strategic decisions is critical to your ability to act alone or perform in higher duties when the opportunity presents itself. Training yourself in this area is no different to any other kind of training. Developing your decision-making ability will take time, practice, and work. So is it worth it? Well, that’s for you to decide.
strengthening soldiers’ resilience begins at ARTC\(^1\) and for officers it begins at RMC\(^2\). The development of resilience is embedded throughout subsequent training and each brigade now has its own resilience plan.

To develop resilience, you need to focus on three main areas: physical conditioning, the development of professional competence, and psychological conditioning. Physical fitness and competence in your job have long been a part of military training, but what about psychological conditioning?

**Developing mental toughness**

The fourth core soldier behaviour: Every soldier mentally prepared.

The development of psychological resilience - mental toughness – may seem like part of a recent fad, but in fact, it is equally old; soldiers have long been expected to develop their mental toughness and fortitude. Many of us should remember (with fondness!) the high wire course, bayonet assault course and obstacle course completed during our initial training. These activities are aimed at building confidence and contribute to the development of psychological resilience. Leadership exercises, such as Exercise Kokoda at the Junior Leaders Course, and unit adventurous training have a similar intent.

What is new for Army is formal training which is aimed squarely at fostering psychological resilience. Most notably, BattleSMART\(^3\) has been introduced throughout the Army. Its focus is to equip soldiers with mental tools to enhance their innate resilience, so they can manage the challenges of the arduous, demanding, and unpredictable situations they encounter.

However, you do not just have to rely on field exercises, BattleSMART or adventurous training to develop resilience. If you are ‘committed to continuous learning and self-development’ (the fifth core soldier behaviour), you can take the initiative and further enhance your resilience. In particular, work on your ability to maintain composure and focus under stress with methods such as mindfulness and yoga. Training in both of these is widely available via traditional classes and electronically. Some snipers use yoga as it gives them better control over their breathing and they become more flexible, enabling them to hold sometimes tricky positions for prolonged periods.

**Mindfulness**

Originating in Indian Buddhism, mindfulness involves focusing on and being in the present moment in a non-judgmental way that leads to a state of acceptance and inner calmness. Mindfulness can be practiced in a number of different ways. You can direct your attention to your body, sensations, feelings or mental images. The practice of mindfulness allows you to directly acknowledge stress-causing emotions and let them wash over you. Thus, stress can be alleviated without wasting energy to avoid or fight the emotions.

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\(^{1}\) Army Recruit Training Centre

\(^{2}\) Royal Military College

\(^{3}\) BattleSMART (Self-Management and Resilience Training) trains people to identify their initial reactions and then test and adjust their responses to stressful situations.
Take-home mindfulness tips:

• Throughout the day, bring awareness to any changes in your bodily sensations, posture, movements and muscle tension.

• At the end of each day, think of three things that you are grateful for.

• When eating a meal, slow down and engage your senses. What bodily sensations are you experiencing? What does it look like? How does it smell? What is the texture like? What flavours can you taste?

• Take a moment to notice how you are feeling, your emotion, and your mood. Just notice your feelings for a moment, accept that they are there, take a breath, and continue on.

• Periodically, take breaks from your computer screen or whatever you are doing throughout the day. Stand up, move around, and take 5 mindful breaths.

Take-home yoga tips

• After a busy, challenging day, use breath control and meditation as part of pre-sleep routine to help quiet your racing mind, assist with getting to sleep and give you a better quality of sleep.

• Before and during assessments on a demanding course, breath control can assist with nerves. Quieting your mind from worrisome thoughts thorough meditation can improve mental agility, attention, learning and memory.

• The gentle nature of yoga can assist you to recover from a strenuous PT session, recover from a more serious injury, and help manage chronic pain.

Further information

For more information and instruction on yoga, Mates4Mates offers free or discounted courses. For mindfulness training, the Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service offers courses throughout the year.
What is mental fitness?

Mental fitness can be thought of as the knowledge we possess, the skills we are competent in performing, and our ability to perform the actions required to obtain the results we want under the prevalent conditions. In short, mental fitness is our capacity to adapt to the demands of an environment or situation whilst learning how to improve our performance. Additionally, mental fitness is considered not only as how well we can perform a single specific task, but also as how effectively we can sustain that level of performance and adapt to new situations when they arise, even if the new situation is something which has not been specifically trained for. This is important for soldiering as the range of demands you have to respond to can change dramatically from moment to moment and can include operational, field, barracks, and civilian or domestic environments.

Tip 1: Mental fitness is about being able to adapt to a range of difficult situations.

When you are mentally fit, you are able to adapt to adversity and new challenges by identifying and developing the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) that are most effective in specific situations. Different environments and situations require different KSA to be applied at different times in order to be optimally effective. What works very well in one situation and environment might not work as well in others. A mentally fit soldier should aim to be able to adapt to all kinds of challenges and conditions, including those which have not been anticipated. These situations can vary from the stress of deployment to no longer being an active...
soldier due to injury. The main goal of mental fitness training is to enable an individual to be able to adapt to all situations, not just anticipated or desired ones.

Tip 2: Everyone has unique ways of handling stressful events. There are many possible ways to handle demanding situations and each individual will have their own ways of responding to challenging demands. Some responses will be more effective than others and what works for one person may not work for another. For example, some people find it easy to see positives in any given situation, whilst others might find it more effective to problem solve every situation. It is important to develop a range of methods for managing situations so that you have options should your usual approach become unavailable or ineffective due to changing conditions or circumstances.

Tip 3: High levels of mental fitness are associated with better overall performances. Soldiers who can identify and adapt quickly to new situations are more likely to recognise and take advantage of opportunities as they arise. A high level of mental fitness is differentiated from average mental fitness by the ability to not only sustain effective performance under challenging conditions, but also to recognise and take advantage of potential opportunities.

### Evaluating mental fitness

Critically examining our responses to situations provides an opportunity to continually improve mental fitness performance and competence. The first step in developing your mental fitness is to measure where you are at. Mental fitness is assessed by levels of competency and mastery as measured against situational demands. It can also be assessed competitively by comparing an individual's mental fitness with the level of others, for example by determining who is faster or more accurate in completing a given task.

Tip 4: Physical fitness can be assessed by measuring aspects of strength, endurance, and flexibility; mental fitness can be measured by assessing our KSA.

- **Knowledge** is learnt information and facts about a particular topic. Knowledge can be assessed simply by asking someone to answer a series of questions.

- **Skill** is the competence to reliably perform a learnt action. Skill can be assessed by observing things like speed, efficiency, accuracy or number of errors whilst someone carries out an action or series of actions.

- **Ability** is the reliable capacity to engage in or sustain a specific behaviour. Ability can be assessed by how well an individual can maintain a level of performance or achieve specific results under various conditions. Ability as it relates to mental fitness might also include aspects such as attention, focus, or tolerance of things like frustration, discomfort, uncertainty or negative emotions.

Tip 5: The key to training mental fitness is critically looking at our response to situations and then assess how we can do things better in the future. Often this involves making the effort to unlearn bad habits and/or actively learn, practise, or train to meet our assessed goals.

Tip 6: By measuring our capability using a series of steps we can develop our goals and track our performance. Following the steps below will assist you to evaluate the effectiveness of your responses to different situations and to identify goals for improvement. You can use these steps, illustrated in figure 1 (page 22), after experiencing a difficult or challenging situation or to obtain a mental fitness baseline.

#### Stage 1: Information review (the ‘what?’)

- **Situation**: What was the situation and who was involved?

- **Goal**: What was the desired outcome or effects (consider both long and short term outcomes)? When facing such demands, how would you ideally like to respond? What kind of example do you want to set for others?

- **Result**: What did you do? What was the outcome?

#### Stage 2: Situation analysis (the ‘so what?’)

- Consider the likely short and long term outcomes of your response.

- Consider the effectiveness of how your responses contributed to meeting your goals and the example you want to set for others.

- Why your responses were effective or ineffective.
Stage 3: Adaption (the ‘now what?’)

- Identify what KSA you need to develop or acquire to optimise future responses to similar events.
- How can you attain or develop these KSA?
- How might you change your responses in the future so that you can better meet your goals?

Mental fitness training

Practising weapon handling or a weapon training test (skills) might improve an individual’s confidence with a weapon; however, it might be more relevant to teach points of aim (knowledge) or practise holding stable firing positions (ability). Clearly identifying the aspects of performance we are aiming to improve allows us to set specific and measurable goals. This enables us to monitor how we are progressing and assess the effectiveness of our training.

Just as physical fitness needs constant training to be maintained, KSA need to be practised and kept current if they are to remain relevant and instinctive under pressure. Not all fitness attributes are effective for all situations. For example, the mental fitness skills required for an operational deployment are completely different to those required in barracks or even in your personal life. Different skills are even required on operations as situations can vary from one day to the next. You need to be able to adjust seamlessly between situations, which require training and practise to become automatic. You will also need to reflect upon the type of soldier you want to be when placed under pressure so that you can set the example for others.

Mental fitness training assists an individual to be able to identify when situations change and what is needed in order to adapt quickly and perform well across a range of demanding situations.

Tip 7: Training for mental fitness requires:
- that different demands often require different responses
- continually evaluating the effectiveness of your responses under different conditions, then adapting and responding quickly when there is scope for improvement
- approaching adversity as an opportunity for personal growth and development
- a willingness to learn, train, and master the KSA required to meet different demands
- an understanding that different types of fitness are required for different situations
- sustained training and effort to develop, maintain and improve your KSA

Tip 8: Sometimes the more we train in one area, the less flexible we are in meeting demands which don’t fit the environment we are training for. This can lead to people avoiding situations in which they are
not comfortable, resulting in activities being missed, related skills declining, or tasks not being completed. Alternatively, they respond to new demands with strategies they have routinely used in other situations, even if those approaches are not a good fit to the current demands which often results in wasted time, resources, and efficiency, and even the potential creation of unnecessary frustration, conflict and disagreement for the individual and others.

**Tip 9:** It can be more helpful to consider how you respond to general experiences of stress, rather than try to prepare for all the possible situations which might arise. For example, learning how to identify your own immediate responses to adversity allows you to develop effective responses to situations regardless of the specifics of the situation. The knowledge and skills taught in BattleSMART are just one example of how internal responses can be trained. Practising attention and memory recall games are another example of training internal response KSA.

*Developing and sustaining high levels of physical and mental fitness requires a significant amount of training.*

**Tip 10:** Aim to take any and every opportunity to improve your performance and ability to adapt to changing challenges and demands. Soldiering is about overcoming adversity whilst outperforming the opposition. The purpose of a mental fitness training program is to identify and develop the KSA which best allow us to adapt and improve our performance, particularly whilst facing adversity. Even if the challenges experienced are not obviously related to operational demands. For example, situations such as slow traffic, boredom or disagreements with others, can provide an opportunity to develop a greater ability to tolerate different forms of frustration. Mental fitness programs can be as simple as reviewing responses to routine daily activities or stressors; or they might follow a more formalised and high intensity training program such as those conducted on exercise or in adventure training, where the aim is specifically to place you under pressure. Soldiers who are adept at tolerating frustration are more likely to think and communicate clearly whilst considering a greater number of solutions to problems under pressure.

**Tip 11:** Your courses and training activities will help you become mentally fit. Every military course we do is a form of mental fitness training and the average soldier will receive a great deal of training across their military career. The majority of this training is specifically designed to develop a more proficient and capable operator who can meet the anticipated demands associated with their role. Developing mental fitness beyond the basic level involves being able to apply flexible and effective responses to changing situations, which might not have been anticipated or specifically trained for. The key is drawing upon our experiences whilst not rigidly relying on a response purely because it worked in past situations.

**Tip 12:** The mental fitness training design is also a leadership tool used to identify specific KSA which can enhance performance under different situational demands. Knowing how to assess situations and clearly identify and define those aspects which will improve performance allows leaders to design targeted training programs to develop those attributes. This is important for not only improving your own responses and performance, but it also is a key step for identifying training needs in others at both individual and team levels. This allows for more specific and targeted training to be developed with clear and measurable training goals.

By assessing and adapting strategies that are a better response to situational demands, we are better able to maintain performance under heightened pressure and help others in our team to maintain or improve their performance.

### Managing and maintaining mental fitness

**Tip 13:** High performance requires the management of both internal and external responses. In order to move from competence to high performance under highly demanding conditions there are two key areas that we need to focus on: our external and internal responses to situations.

- **External responses** are what we do to directly influence the environment.
- **Internal responses** are the strategies we use to govern our internal reactions (e.g. worry, anger, frustration, fear, anxiety etc). These are just as critical as managing the situation itself when it comes to keeping our focus, making appropriate decisions, reducing errors and generally sustaining performance and wellbeing. These strategies are particularly important when we are dealing with situations in which we are less practiced or when the outcomes are highly valued.

An overview of how the two mental fitness areas interact and fit with improving performance is shown at figure 2. The mental fitness dual pathway illustrates that high performance under demanding or important situations requires a balance between the capacity to respond to both environmental and internal influences and demands. Improving performance requires a critical review of what we did and what we can do better, followed by a clearly developed plan and training commitment to build the identified KSA.
**Conclusion**

Mental fitness is the combination of relevant KSA that give us the best fit to our environment. Highly demanding situations require mentally fit individuals to be able to apply task specific KSA to manage the situation whilst managing their own initial and long term reactions to the stress associated with the situation. To be competent soldiers we must train in both physical and mental fitness. Fitness in one area does not always transfer to another as new knowledge needs to be learnt, new skills mastered, and abilities developed and practiced. It requires a desire to continually learn, adapt and improve our responses and subsequent performance in new situations through evaluation and additional training. To be mentally fit requires a lifelong commitment that will see your life improve.

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**Tip 14:** Faulty internal responses to situations can lead to poor performance. Improving external responses are generally very specific to the demands of the situation; however, improving self-monitoring and internal responses can often be applied to a host of unforeseen situations as it is your own reactions that you have trained to identify and respond to. Even simple tasks can become unnecessarily difficult if we are not proficient at managing our internal responses. For example, soldiers trying to pass a shooting test might underperform purely due to test anxiety or perceived extra pressure to obtain a good score. A poor ability to regulate internal responses can affect individual or team performance due to reduced attention, concentration, and patience or increased conflict, frustration, and fatigue.

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**Figure 2.** The mental fitness dual pathway flowchart
The art of small team management and participation...

Sergeant Peter Arnold

Introduction

Since 1996 in my role as a psych examiner I have listened to hundreds, if not thousands, of ADF members who have worked in small teams whilst deployed on operations. Their accounts have varied from ‘this has been the highlight of my career’ through to ‘..and that’s why I’m putting in my discharge!’ These many accounts combined with my own experiences have caused me to reflect on what constitutes being a good team member and a good team leader.

Although I cannot speak to every conceivable situation, there are some basic tenets for successful teams which apply to both leaders and team members. Here I offer tips for team leaders and tips for team members.

Tips for team leaders

Tip 1: Consistently look out for the welfare of your people. You will be rewarded with the respect and willingness of your team to display pride, professionalism, and solid work ethic.

Tip 2: Be calm at all times. ‘Loud raging’ rapidly ensures that your team will elect to keep you in the dark about potential issues rather than risk your ire.

Tip 3: Be willing to acknowledge your weaknesses as well your strengths. You won’t be able to hide them from your team for long anyway.

Tip 4: Tell your team as much as you can, within reason, about their tasks and your role. If you don’t know something, say so.

Tip 5: Give your people space. If they are already working long hours, think carefully before you drop ‘enforced fun’ on them.

Tip 6: Listen to ‘experience’ in your team. You don’t have to do what they say but at least hear out suggestions in the right forum.

Tip 7: Encourage initiative and give credit when due.

Tip 8: Try to avoid the use of ‘I’ when trying to motivate your team; instead use ‘we’.

Tip 9: Stick to the rules you make. If you make or enforce a rule that is unpopular, e.g., wearing of hats in all areas, no singlets at PT, sleeves down at all time, then make sure you and your immediate team stick rigidly to it because as soon as you don’t, rest assured there will be a pair of eyes judging you.

Tip 10: Maintain your sense of humour.

Tips for team members

Tip 1: If a teammate is struggling give them a hand. It may be you that needs it next time.

Tip 2: Monitor your reactions to situations to see whether they are helpful or detrimental to you and your team; and modify accordingly.

Tip 3: Acknowledge your weaknesses and make the effort to correct them, which will be recognised by a reasonable boss and teammates.

Tip 4: Chose the right time and place to ‘voice’ your ideas; sometimes the job needs to be done ASAP without your input.

Tip 5: Accept your place and role in the bigger picture. If you are the lowest ranked in your team, it is probably because you are the least experienced.

Tip 6: If you are in a position to advise an inexperienced leader, be tactful and professional in your approach.

Tip 7: Use your initiative and be proactive. If you can sort an issue within your scope of work, do so. Otherwise, raise it with your boss and offer solutions if warranted.

Tip 8: If the boss has to enforce unpopular rules, don’t bang on about it. Your boss is probably just as annoyed as you are.

Tip 9: Maintain your sense of humour.

Conclusion

This list of tips could be expanded infinitely. Personal character traits, experience, training, and background will dictate how leaders evolve and how effective they become. This is equally true of team members. At the end of the day, a healthy dose of insight and self-reflection will serve both the boss and team member, but only if they have the presence of mind to alter self-defeating and team-defeating behaviour.
Establish realism in training

There are three steps to making sure there is realism in training.

Step 1: Establish exactly what needs to be simulated. For example, you may be conducting a section attack at night against an enemy with superior numbers.

Step 2: Identify both the individual skills required and the level of stress that needs to be simulated. This is often a very complex undertaking that requires you to sequence the building blocks of the skills into a training continuum. For the section attack by night, the level of stress to be simulated would be quite high while the skills required would include weapons handling, tactics, first aid, teamwork, night fighting equipment, command and control and, undoubtedly, many others. The building blocks and training sequence for the weapons-handling component alone could include safety precautions, how the weapon works, stripping, assembling and cleaning the weapon, recognising ammunition types, filling magazines, degrees of weapon readiness, immediate actions and stoppages, theory of group and small arms fire, zeroing the weapon, firing in various positions, aiming off, moving targets and the construction of weapon pits.

Step 3: Control and gradually increase the level of stress over the training continuum in a stepwise fashion. Ideally, you should first teach and practice these different techniques in a fairly relaxed and stress-free environment. Then, once they have been performed and integrated with each other to a high standard, manipulate the level of stress until the skill can be performed adequately under each graduated level of adversity and challenge. This process can be seen in Figure 1.

Is realism always better?

The reason we need realistic training is that if we can realistically simulate a situation, the exposure to that will result in us all being more confident in our ability to handle the real situation when we come across it. That is, we will appraise the real situation positively as opposed to the negative appraisal and self-doubt that can come with unfamiliarity to a situation. However, there can be problems with realistic training.

Problem 1: Too far too fast. If you do not use graduated exposure to stress throughout the training sequence, realistic training could have the opposite effect. That is, members undergoing the training could feel overwhelmed by the simulation and perform poorly then doubt their ability to perform on operations and in garrison.

Problem 2: Similar but not the same. What happens on operations when a soldier encounters a situation similar to, but not the same as one that was simulated during their training? Do they have the ability to flexibly adapt to the new situation, or do they freeze?
Skills required are integrated with each other under increasing levels of stress and fidelity, and across a variety of scenarios, in order to confirm the ability to perform in uncertain and demanding environments.

Training needs are integrated with each other under increasing levels of stress and fidelity to produce each of the skills required. Training needs for each skill need to be learnt in a low fidelity, low stress environment.

Problem 3: Unpredictable events. Finally, it cannot be denied that operational deployments increasingly involve unknown and unpredictable events. While short learning loops will undoubtedly assist, we simply cannot realistically simulate all situations that will be encountered.

With proper planning and preparation, you can pre-empt these problems.

Skills transfer

Tip 1: Practice variability to develop transfer of skills. A key ingredient in training for the unknown and the unpredictable is to practice variability. Once your soldiers have individually learnt the skills and have integrated them in a relatively low stress environment, you need to then expose them to a diverse range of scenarios under increasing levels of stress. Only when an individual can demonstrate the ability to flexibly apply their skills and knowledge to a range of high stress, and potentially unfamiliar, environments, can we assess that someone is likely to have the skills and the ability to be successful in environments where demands increase, like on deployment.

The missing piece

Learning to cope with varying situations is very helpful; however, of great importance are problem solving ability and internal coping strategies.

Tip 2: Teach problem solving and coping strategies. Problem solving and coping strategies are fundamental skills for peak performance in every setting, but rarely are they included in every training sequence. However, we can do this through BattleSMART.

BattleSMART

BattleSMART (Self-Management and Resilience Training) is a group training package that was developed, and first delivered, at the Army Recruit Training Centre in 2009. It provides a standardised set of coping skills and a practical framework for dealing with sub-optimal reactions to stressors in order to optimise performance. It has also been included in officer training at RMC, in pre-deployment training, and other modules have also been developed (for example Keep Your Mates Safe BattleSMART).

Each BattleSMART module typically takes 2-3 hours to deliver and covers:

a. the likely realities or challenges recipients will face at that time in their career
b. the BattleSMART model (Figure 2)
c. physical, cognitive, behavioural and emotional reactions that may indicate that a person is not coping in an optimal fashion
The BattleSMART model is relatively intuitive. The model shows that in any and every situation we have an initial reaction comprised of physical or physiological reactions, thoughts or cognitions, emotions and behaviours. Sometimes this initial reaction does not lead to our optimal performance, so there is a need to ‘test and adjust’ our reaction; that is, to test whether the reaction is helping us achieve optimal performance and, if required, adjust using the coping techniques we were taught during the training.

Develop a High Performance (HP4) culture

Tip 3: Units need to reinforce BattleSMART. BattleSMART (HP4.1\(^1\)) provides a foundation for individuals and teams to become brilliant at the basics and tap into their peak performance. At the moment, training is presented in a classroom with no subsequent reinforcement or rehearsal of the model and techniques, so benefit from the training is lost if units do not rehearse and reinforce the techniques. Therefore, to tap into peak performance, you must integrate BattleSMART with day-to-day unit activities, including training, exercises and personnel management.

Suggested steps to achieve this are as follows:

Step 1: Conduct BattleSMART familiarisation training. A key first step is to conduct BattleSMART familiarisation. Not only are there likely to be many personnel who have not completed the training, others are likely to have forgotten key components of it given a lack of previous practice or integration. This could be achieved by the following:

- Request delivery of BattleSMART by 1 Psych Unit
- Use the High Res mobile phone app, available on Apple and Android devices. The High Res mobile phone app was developed by DVA (in conjunction with Defence) to mirror the content of BattleSMART. The app includes the ability to assess initial reactions and recommends the appropriate strategies to adjust those reactions. It also includes audio and/or visual content to learn and apply all the coping techniques taught in BattleSMART. Screenshots from the app are at Figure 3.
Step 2: Integrate the content in to every day unit activities. For example, after a section level activity, the section commander could conduct a post-activity reflection where he/she asks subordinates to look at the High Res mobile app and then asks personnel who did well questions like ‘what BattleSMART techniques did you use to overcome the adversity you faced in that activity?’ Personnel who didn’t do as well could be asked questions like ‘what BattleSMART techniques could you have used to have overcome the challenges you faced?’ Asking questions like these in a non-threatening fashion to the section as a whole will encourage introspection, insight and the continued use and exploration of appropriate coping techniques. This will lead to the development of a ‘HP4 culture’ within the team.

Taking it to the next level

The most critical part of our initial reaction which must be optimised to achieve peak performance is our thoughts/cognitions. At times, however, we may be experiencing such a heightened physiological reaction (such as increased breathing rate, heart rate, nausea) that it is nearly impossible to alter the thoughts that we are experiencing without first reducing our physiological reaction.

Tip 4: Use the HP4 tools. Both the physical (or physiological) and cognitive (thoughts) domains are pivotal in attaining optimal performance. Hence, 1 Psych Unit has developed tools and programs under HP4 to further enhance both these domains, and they are outlined in the following paragraphs. Figure 4 shows how you can integrate these tools and programs into the training continuum, and further information is available from 1 Psych Unit.

Conduct mental fitness training (HP4.2). Mental fitness training has been developed to help improve the cognitive domain of initial reactions. Key to this training is developing the flexibility to adapt to a range of difficult situations. Similar to BattleSMART, units are encouraged to incorporate mental fitness training into their everyday training activities so that it becomes part of the culture of the unit.

Biofeedback profiling (HP4.4). Currently being trialled is the use of biofeedback equipment that is capable of providing various physiological measurements. Personnel can be connected to these devices during simulations and are provided feedback on their physiological reactions during times of heightened stress. This equipment clearly shows when members have and have not used BattleSMART techniques. The post-activity information from this equipment provides powerful confirmatory evidence to individuals that they can influence their physiological reactions using BattleSMART techniques.

Getting back to reality

In recent years, the pursuit of reality-based training (RBT) has undoubtedly increased. However, the importance of problem solving and coping techniques – the fundamental skills that are essential for peak performance in every setting – have been somewhat overlooked. As such, any Defence investment in RBT will continue to yield sub-optimal results unless units start to prioritise the incorporation of problem solving and coping techniques into everyday activities to develop a unit ‘HP4 culture’. 1 Psych Unit is able to assist units in their pursuit of this culture through the various programs and equipment currently being developed and trialled under the HP4 program. Figure 4 is a simplified version of how the training continuum could look with these elements included.

At the end of the day, reality is important, but cognitive agility, flexibility and coping strategies are vital.

Figure 4. A simplified generic training continuum showing fidelity levels, skills integration, and development of a HP4 unit culture.

Reference

Many studies have examined the types of practice and feedback that result in improved performance. When it comes to either learning a physical skill or retaining knowledge, successful outcomes are shaped by the type of practice undertaken and the feedback provided to those who are practising. So what are the different types of practice and feedback that we can engage in (for ourselves and those we train), and what is best for performance?

**Massed practice v distributed practice**

Two common types of practice we can utilise for learning are massed practice and distributed practice.

- **Massed practice** is uninterrupted practice time, which you continue until you learn the skill. The benefit of this type of practice is noticeable when you are highly skilled and highly motivated. However, it is important to acknowledge the impact of fatigue during this type of practice as it may lead to errors and subsequent learning errors.

- **Distributed practice** is a series of shorter practices with periods of rest in between. It allows feedback to be given, and mental rehearsal and consolidation to occur between practice sessions. Distributed practice is recommended when you are learning something new if it is complex, physically or mentally demanding, or if the task is considered boring and motivation is low.

**Tip 1: Use the type of practice that best suits the skill to be learnt and the learner.** When planning your own learning or that of others, consider the type of skill that is to be learnt and the motivation of the learner. For highly skilled and motivated, use massed practice. For complex, physically or mentally demanding skills or for those with low motivation, use distributed practice.

*Corporal Mary Heslop*
practice, and the type of feedback you provide. Remember that distributed practice generally results in improved performance for more complex skills while massed practice can be beneficial for discrete skills. Regardless of the type of practice undertaken, feedback is essential to improve performance, and it should be as immediate as possible and focus on the outcome as well as the process. This will allow the learner the opportunity to make adjustments and improve their performance.

### Knowledge of results v knowledge of performance - FEEDBACK

While practising, how can feedback impact your learning? Feedback is vital for learning and improving. It helps to motivate you, reinforce the learning and change your performance. When you receive feedback on your performance, it can be on knowledge of results and knowledge of performance.

- Knowledge of results is feedback about the result or outcome of the performance; in its simplest form ‘was it successful – yes or no?’ For example, could you put the whole car engine back together in working order, or not? When given this type of feedback, you can try to make changes to achieve a different outcome.

- Knowledge of performance is more complex and is based around how well you executed the skill rather than your end result. This type of feedback provides information that will allow you to make changes to the process, which will result in better outcomes next time. For example, whilst you may have failed to put the car engine back together, there might only be one component that you need to re-learn how to reassemble.

**Tip 2: Provide both results and performance feedback.** Next time you provide feedback on another’s performance, think about this: we need both types of feedback to ensure we continue to improve our performance, whether we pass or fail a task. When we only provide knowledge of results, it does not specify the changes that need to be made to achieve a better outcome, unlike knowledge of performance. It is also important to provide feedback in a timely manner, particularly any new learning. Delaying this information will result in both decreased performance and motivation.

Whether you train your subordinates or trainees, the complexity of the task and the end result required will determine whether you use massed or distributed practice, and the type of feedback you provide. Remember that distributed practice generally results in improved performance for more complex skills while massed practice can be beneficial for discrete skills. Regardless of the type of practice undertaken, feedback is essential to improve performance, and it should be as immediate as possible and focus on the outcome as well as the process. This will allow the learner the opportunity to make adjustments and improve their performance.

### References


Mental rehearsal is a process of mentally performing a task to improve performance. By mentally practicing a situation, you become more familiar with the actions required to perform a skill. Mental rehearsal on its own can result in improved performance, but it is even more effective when used in conjunction with physical rehearsal. Increased familiarity with the tasks/skill will increase its effectiveness.

Mental rehearsal is used by professional athletes, musicians, and business people. For example, successful sportsmen, such as soccer star Wayne Rooney and Rugby legend Jonny Wilkinson, have used mental rehearsal to improve their performance. Rooney visualised himself scoring goals and doing well, the night before a game. Wilkinson used the same techniques to create the atmosphere and the feelings he experienced on match day in order to prepare himself to perform under pressure.

Mental rehearsal is also being used within rehabilitation services to enhance recovery when physical movement is impaired. A number of ADF units are now incorporating mental rehearsal into training programs, notably to improve marksmanship skills. This article will explain the benefits of mental rehearsals, and how and when to mentally rehearse so that you can improve your performance and reach your professional and personal goals.

1 Sports visualisation: how to imagine your way to success. Mark Bailey. The Telegraph 22 Jan 2014
**Tip 3: Create realism.** Use realism by creating imagery so accurate you believe you are actually executing the skill. In order to obtain the most realistic imagery possible, you must incorporate definition, action, emotion, detail, and a positive result into your imagery.

**Tip 4: Add definition.** Add definition to your images by making them as vivid as possible; include colour.

**Tip 5: Visualise each action.** Break down the image into small components and visualise those components. For example, when wanting to improve marksmanship skills you could visualise picking up the weapon, eye relief, positioning of your body and so on.

**Tip 6: Include emotion.** Try to include emotional feelings along with your images. Refresh your memory constantly by emphasising specific sensory awareness (e.g. smells, the wind) during training.

**Tip 7: Incorporate detailed senses.** Incorporate as many of your senses as possible into your imagery so the scene is as clear and realistic as real life itself.

**Tip 8: Imagine a positive result.** This is essential as ‘you only achieve what you believe’. Focus on positive thinking and action, for example passing the LF6 shoot and telling yourself you have done well.

**Tip 9: Write a script.** Write an imagery script to help you plan the content and timing of your imagery training. Such scripts should include:

- **The basic picture.** The basic picture or a description of the skill to be imagined, including how the skill is performed and all components of the skill.

- **Additional details.** Add the detailed movement patterns and kinaesthetic feelings

**Tip 10: Refine the script.** Read it to yourself and try to imagine executing the skill. If you do not feel you are completing the skill correctly then modify the script to more accurately reflect feelings, sensations and movement patterns.

**Tip 11: Record the script.** When you are happy with your script, record it and use it during your mental rehearsal.

## How to mentally rehearse

**Tip 12: Relax.** For mental rehearsal to be effective, you need to relax yourself both physically and mentally. This allows you to feel the movement patterns and experience any generated emotions. The use of activities such as progressive muscle relaxation and deep breathing can be used in conjunction with mental rehearsal for optimal outcomes.

**Tip 13: Practice.** Mental rehearsal takes practice to become effective. Start with simple skills and situations to allow you to develop competence. Once you are reasonably skilled you can move onto more complex situations. You should also initially practise when under non-stressful circumstances.

### When to mentally rehearse

**Tip 14: Rehearse before any activity.** You can mentally rehearse almost any activity in which you are required to perform at a high standard. Examples include:

- before games/competitions/shoots/assessment tasks/presentations

- before executing specific skills (e.g. shooting)

- after events as an aid to After Action Reviews (AAR)/debriefing and goal setting

- when feeling nervous or emotional, use mental rehearsal to review skills and abilities and imagine feeling calm and confident

**Tip 15: Rehearse for 20 min.** While mental rehearsal is an effective tool for improving performance, timing and duration are key factors. The number of times you mentally rehearse is less important than the quality and total duration of the practice. However, at least 20 minutes rehearsal is considered appropriate for effective performance.

**Tip 16: Rehearse as close as possible to the event.** Mental rehearsal is most effective when the skill is practised immediately afterwards. There is a reduction in its effectiveness after 21 days. Mentally rehearsing every 1-2 weeks will help maintain and improve performance.

## Conclusion

Mental rehearsal is a useful way to improve performance. It can be used for a variety of purposes, including consolidating complex skills, reducing negative thoughts, getting yourself back on track to perform to your best, improving your concentration and so on. Put as much realism into your rehearsal as possible, and do so for at least 20 minutes every week or two. If you want to improve your performance, start practising mental rehearsal.
How do you reduce uncertainty?

In our daily lives, we often use mental shortcuts to make decisions without having (or having to have) all of the information relating to a situation. These mental shortcuts are called heuristics.

Heuristics can increase the speed of decision-making by helping you sift through a large amount of information in a short timeframe. Thinking shortcuts are used rather than considering the entire list of possibilities for an event. There are many different heuristics, but a few common examples are:

- **Representativeness.** The representativeness heuristic allows you to make a rapid assessment of how likely something is by matching similarities from one situation to a prototype of that situation. For example, if you see an unattended backpack at a train station that appears to have wires travelling from one pocket to another, you may be more likely to suspect this is a dangerous item given your training and experience. A person without this training may conclude, on the other hand, that the wires are likely to be connected to someone’s iPod and that the bag has been forgotten.

- **Availability.** The availability heuristic is used when you attribute greater value to information that comes to mind quickly, rather than tending to facts or teasing out knowledge gaps. For example, if you have had a colleague who, whilst deployed, was involved in a motor vehicle accident and was seriously hurt, you might overestimate the risk of being involved in such an accident whilst you are deployed.

- **Anchoring.** The anchoring heuristic is when you place a high degree of weight on the first information you encounter. For example, if you are told a target is roughly 200 meters away then asked to estimate the distance to the target, you will be more likely to estimate a distance closer to 200 meters (such as 230 meters) than a distance further away (such as 310 meters).

Whilst heuristics can be helpful to simplify the decision making process by reducing the amount of mental processing required, they do not always conform to the appropriate rules of logic or probability. This can then lead to errors in thinking or cognitive biases.

What are cognitive biases?

There are many different types of cognitive biases, which are systematic thinking errors that can be illogical and affect rational decision-making. They occur because your personal experiences can influence your thinking processes, distorting them in such a way that you actually perceive an irrational decision to be rational. However, cognitive biases are not always bad. In the same way heuristics speed up decision-making, cognitive biases can also lead you to make quicker judgments.

One type of cognitive bias which can negatively affect decision-making is the confirmatory bias. This occurs when you look for information to confirm an already held belief, rather than looking for new evidence that may be opposing or contradict your view. A good example being when you have encountered a colleague or friend who only listens to or agrees with those who have a similar opinion to their own.

Confirmatory bias might be particularly apparent when the situation is uncertain or information is unknown, for example during an administrative investigation or when gathering specific intelligence. We can use the example we discussed earlier with the unattended back pack at the train station to further illustrate this point. If you have the
view that the item is dangerous and has been left deliberately, to further confirm this belief you may take notice of people nearby who are walking away quickly, or who otherwise fit a particular stereotype you hold for this kind of behaviour. This may lead you, however, to be inattentive to the child nearby who is looking frantically for a lost bag, or to the mother who momentarily put the bag down whilst she struggled with two toddlers. The last two possible explanations do not prove the bag is not dangerous, but they do provide further information that should be considered to make a balanced and unbiased judgment.

**Biases in judging success of COA**

Problem solving is an important aspect of decision-making. The ability to generate multiple possibilities to resolve a problem will help to improve your estimation of how likely an event might be or whether the solution you have generated is likely to be optimal.

The individual and staff military appreciation processes explicitly require the generation of multiple options. Unfortunately with increased time-pressure, the number of solutions you can generate will likely be reduced. This can increase bias by leading you to estimate that the solutions you do generate are more likely to succeed than they really are.

A particular type of bias that might occur under increased time-pressure is called subadditivity. The subadditivity effect is when the likelihood of a whole set of events occurring is estimated to be less likely than the occurrence of the sum of the parts. This might be particularly important when making decisions that involve risk and uncertainty.

For example, the overall risk of sustaining a potentially life-threatening injury from an adventure training accident might be estimated as less likely to occur (let’s say 10% chance) than the sum of more specific risks like sustaining a complicated fracture from a hard knock (5% chance) or suffering internal haemorrhaging from a fall (15% chance). From this example you can see the sum of the parts (5% and 15%) is greater than the original probability (10%), which would encompass both parts, and in fact more possibilities. By only considering two specific ways in which someone might seriously hurt themselves, it is easy to underestimate the probability that a larger, more encompassing event might happen, or overestimate the probability of more specific risks. Thus it is important to generate multiple possibilities for a problem.

**Tips for avoiding bias**

From the few examples of biases discussed, you may be able to imagine how significantly your judgment and decision-making can be affected without you being aware. Fortunately there are a few tips you can consider in order to reduce the influence of mental shortcuts and bias.

**Tip 1:** Be aware of how your thinking can be influenced. There are too many ways that your decisions and judgments can be biased to remember all the specific details. Having awareness, however, that bias and thinking shortcuts exist plus acknowledging that you can be influenced by these is a good start to reducing potential blind-spots.

**Tip 2:** Challenge your thoughts and beliefs. Engaging a self-reflective and critical approach to challenging your own thoughts and beliefs about a situation can expose faulty thinking.

**Tip 3:** Encourage diversity and new opinions. Encourage diversity within a group by exploring all opinions of group members. Be open to new ideas, experiences and opinions which may limit rigid thinking styles.

**Tip 4:** Use a structured approach to thinking. Use of structured analytical techniques or checklists can ensure all necessary factors are considered in the decision-making process and that mental shortcuts are not likely to be a detriment to your judgments.

**Tip 5:** Generate before deciding. Generating a number of possible solutions to a problem before deciding on a final course of action will help you to reduce the risk of overestimating or underestimating its true probability.

**Tip 6:** Improve self-care to improve clarity of thought. Improved self-care through adequate sleep, food, and work-life balance will help to reduce mental and physical fatigue thus reduce the risk of making thinking errors leading to poor decisions.

**There is much more, but…**

There are many ways that heuristics and biases can influence your decision making. Although this has been a very brief look at the topic, the information and tips should improve your performance by enabling you to make better-informed decisions across a range of challenging situations.
In the field of human performance, definitive quantifiable information is essential to improvement. It allows you to know and understand your body, your motivation and life. It gives you a start point, measures progress and performance and enables you to reach your goals. Data makes your efforts visible, which is a powerful motivator. Additionally, the ability to measure, assess and adapt quickly can enable an edge over your adversary. Being aware of yourself and your performance through the deliberate gathering and analysis of measurable and objective data is known as being the Quantified Self.

The concept of the Quantified Self to enhance aspects of our life is not a new idea. For many years people have been tracking their diets, moods, sleep and more through methods such as journaling and diaries. Although this has been proven to effectively enhance aspects of our life, this information is generally a subjective interpretation of our bodies’ signals on a conscious level. With the emergence of new technologies, we are now able to objectively measure and analyse the information our bodies have been sending to provide an advantage and improve performance. This article will explore five pieces of technology that are available now (or will be shortly) that can be used to enhance performance. It will also give an insight as to what quantification can offer you.

Do you know yourself? Do you know your body? Most people would generally answer with ‘of course.’ But do you really? You may be able to offer up some information such as how you are feeling, but are you able to quantify this? Do you know how the way you are feeling impacts your performance?

“If you cannot measure it, you cannot improve it” Sir William Thomson
Tip 1: Use a heart rate monitor to improve your running or training. It provides you with accurate stats and makes your training more efficient. Heart rate monitors (HRM) emerged in the consumer market over 15 years ago. It has been argued that they were the first technology of the new quantified age; they are still heavily used in sport to gain a performance edge. Uses for the HRM include examining heart rate variability, and determining cardiovascular health. New sensor packs from companies such as Equivital are pushing the limits of our understanding and use of HRM by including other measures (i.e., core body temperature and respiratory readings) and data analysis in the same device.

Tip 2: Use movement trackers to provide you with accurate, reliable data that can improve many areas of your life. Movement trackers are a relatively new technology originally brought to the forefront of consumer technology by companies such as Fitbit and Garmin. Although the devices are simple from a technological standpoint, they represent the first time multiple specialised sensors have been used together by consumers. Generally, movement trackers contain accelerometers and pedometers, and more recently HRM, GPS and galvanic skin response sensors (GSR). Due to the size of the device, battery life is often a problem, with devices requiring multiple charges a week. Despite this, their use of cloud analysis of multiple data points has helped improve performance in areas such as general health, weight loss and sleep.

Tip 3: Chronical your day in pictures using life/narrative cameras. Life cameras are an emerging field of quantification. There are a range of devices available including Narrative and Autographer cameras that clip on to your bag or shirt and record either video or still photos of your life. You can then code this information to make use of it. For example, when combined with sensors like HRM, you are able to view your days’ events and determine what makes you stressed, anxious or excited. Due to the nature of coding qualitative data and its reliance on context to derive meaning, life cameras are still difficult to gain useful information from easily, and as such are yet to reach their prime.

Tip 4: Watch out for the emergence of the consumer electroencephalogram (EEG). The consumer (EEG) is another developing area of quantification. EEG reads near surface brain activity by sensing changes in electrical current. Although mostly used in medical and research fields, products for consumers are not far off. When released, the EEG will provide the individual with a large amount of raw data that will need to be analysed externally to help them make sense of it all. Development and access to this data has the potential for the EEG to help individuals modify behaviour and to understand when they are ‘in the zone’ of peak performance.

Tip 5: To really understand yourself at the deepest level, map your genes through a home blood test. Technology has developed at such a rate that tests once only available to professionals are readily available for you to use. One such check includes blood and genome testing which has decreased from $100 million US in the year 2000 to under $1000 for full genome mapping. Through testing, both genetic weaknesses and strengths can be determined and then used to target areas of concern or enhance areas of genetic strength. Although most analysis is currently still conducted in labs, consumer devices have begun to appear on the market targeting areas such as iron, cholesterol, and salvia cortisol.

Future of the Quantified Self

Through reading the hidden messages and data of our bodies, and understanding their meaning, we will be able gain much greater insight into ourselves. As technology progresses, there will be a move to integrated, unobtrusive sensor packs and data centre analysis that will be used by the wearer to enhance their life. There will be a large amount and range of data, and what we utilise this information for is the next question.
Remaining fit, healthy and AIRN compliant requires us to maintain our dental fitness. There are many risks to dental fitness including damage to our teeth through dental decay due to a high sugar diet through to suffering accidents or trauma to the facial and mouth regions. Another risk to dental fitness is caused by tooth structural loss through non-biological means, including attrition (damage caused by teeth grinding), abrasion (damage caused by excess brushing/wear and tear as we age) and erosion (damage caused by exposure to acidic substances).

Although attrition and abrasion can affect our dental health, there has been a worrying rise in dental erosion. This is caused by acidic substances eroding the enamel and tooth structure and may be linked to the rise in popularity of sports drinks. This article outlines for you the risk and consequences to dental health of sports drinks and some of the clinically proven strategies and preventative measures that you can discuss with a dental professional.

- Consumption of sports drinks

Sports drinks were developed by sports scientists for professional athletes undergoing prolonged sessions of physical training; they are designed to provide hydration, replenishment of carbohydrates and electrolytes.

Globally, the sales of sports drinks have soared at a tremendous rate. Between 2006 and 2007 alone, the sales of sports drinks in the United States were up 20% for the entire category, creating a $1.4 billion dollar industry. Gatorade (PepsiCo) formula accounted for 85% of the pre-mixed sports drinks whilst Powerade (Coca-Cola...
Company) accounted for 14% of the market share. These figures are unlikely to fall any time soon with aggressive marketing campaigns targeting our younger generations. In addition, sports drinks have been heavily marketed towards non-athletic members of the population. Their appeal and consumption is now so widespread that it has been accepted as part of everyday consumption.

This is concerning from a health perspective because sports drinks contain a relatively high level of sugar and salt which have contributed to public health problems such as obesity and diabetes. From a dental perspective, sports drinks, carbonated soft drinks and energy drinks are acidic beverages and contribute to dental erosion both in the broader community and also Australian Defence Force (ADF) members. With that in mind, there is also evidence that dental erosion is on the rise in children and adolescents in Australia with a prevalence of approximately 25% in permanent teeth.

Fact: There is little additional benefit for sports drinks over water for individuals who are not competing at prolonged and high intensity activities. Many investigations have suggested that a loss of fluid during exercise will impair physical performance. However, the greatest improvement in performance from sports drinks occurs with intense exercise prolonged over one hour. As far back as 1988, a study showed that when there is a balanced diet, water was just as effective as sports drinks in maintaining hydration levels, and salt/water balances with no difference in the overall physical performance during exercise. In fact, it has been suggested that the wide acceptance that sports drinks are more effective for rehydration is due to a more appealing taste and a successful marketing campaign.

The risk and mechanism of dental erosion

The growing problem of dental erosion may be due to the modern lifestyle, dehydration and the acid contained in our choice of diet. In basic terms, dental erosion is the chronic loss of tooth structure by acid without bacterial involvement. Acids responsible for erosion can originate from internal or external sources. Internal acids are mainly gastric acid coming into contact with teeth. These acids include those produced by chronic vomiting, gastro-oesophageal reflux disease and regurgitation. Dental erosion from external sources can be caused by diet, medication, occupational exposure and lifestyle activities. If you consume sports drink, you are at risk of dental erosion because of the drinks' high acidic content due to the citric acid.

Fact: Sports drinks with citric acids and high sugar content have a high potential to cause dental caries and dental erosion. Laboratory tests have demonstrated that the citric acid dissolves the enamel layer and the structural dentine of your teeth. In general, tooth enamel becomes more soluble and is more likely to dissolve away in an acidic environment with pH of 5.5 or less. Acids are often found in our daily diet with varying degrees of erosion potential. These acids include phosphoric acid, ascorbic acid (vitamin C), malic acid and carbonic acid (found in common soft drinks). However, it is estimated that citric acid has twice the erosive potential, and popular sports drinks currently on the market have higher erosive potentials. The erosive effect is facilitated by a chemical process known as chelation, where the citric acid binds with the calcium in the saliva. This interferes with the saliva’s ability to neutralise the acids and maintains an acidic oral environment for a longer period. On the other hand, food products with a low pH that are high in calcium, such as yoghurt, do not affect the protective role of saliva in the mouth, thus they have a lesser erosive effect on dental health.

Sports drinks and physical activity in the Army

Most ADF members are generally active and healthy and expected to participate in physical activities that may be conducted outdoors in hot, arduous conditions. During prolonged activities, the body can lose a significant amount of fluid through sweating. An athlete can lose as much as 1.5 litres of fluid per hour during endurance and intensive exercise. This fluid loss is also accompanied by a loss of electrolytes, which can affect physical performance, and result in dehydration and the insufficient production of saliva.

Fact: You are particularly at risk of dental erosion if you consume sports drinks when dehydrated. Dehydration results in dry mouths because salivary flow reduces, including the amount of...
salivary proteins secreted. A characteristic of dry mouth (xerostomia) is thicker saliva and a slower clearance rate, all of which results in extending the erosive effects of sports drinks. Without sufficient saliva, the mouth is unable to neutralise acids and wash it down from the mouth into the gastrointestinal tract. All of which is the key protective roles saliva plays in maintaining dental health. In addition to the detrimental effect of dehydration, athletes may be prone to stomach reflux during strenuous and prolonged exercise. Both conditions simultaneously will present additional acid challenge to the oral environment.

**Fact:** The erosive potential of sports drinks is enhanced when operating for a prolonged period in the field where fresh water is not widely available. ADF combat ration packs are designed to provide nutrition and energy for members to perform duties in a field environment where fresh rations are not available. The current generation of Combat Ration Pack 1-Man (CR1M) is a complete 24-hour ration pack that includes a sachet of sports drink powder to reconstitute into one litre of energy sports drink.

**Tip 1:** Rinse your mouth after consuming sports drinks. Considering the information above, it should just be common sense to remember that when consuming these products you are at risk of dental erosion, Make sure you have plenty of water to rinse your mouth.

### Detecting and managing dental erosion

Dental erosion can be managed by early detection and education, and by modifying your behaviours and choice of drinks. Timely diagnosis of dental erosion requires early detection of clinical features, signs and symptoms and a sound understanding of the causes. If damage is detected, the first line strategy is to identify the cause(s) of dental erosion then change what you do to prevent further deterioration.

**Tip 2:** Seek medical treatment if you show signs of dental erosion such as:

- Your teeth may be sensitive to cold or hot foods and drinks.
- Your teeth may be hypersensitive if the dentine is exposed (enamel is worn), or the dentine itself may be worn exposing the pulp at the core of your tooth and resulting in pain.
- You may have toothache due to exposed dental nerve tissue.
- Your teeth may appear broken down or ‘worn’ looking and/or the aesthetics (look) of your teeth may be compromised.
- The structural integrity of your tooth may be compromised.

### Prevention

Prevention is always better than cure, so if you are to consume sport drinks and understand the inherent risks, there are some simple guidelines you can follow to maintain overall dental health.

**Tip 3:** Know the risks and consult a dental professional to make an informed decision. Education is a key tenet to a successful management strategy. When you have your next dental examination, discuss your activity levels and general diet with your dentist. To help with this, consider keeping a seven-day diet diary for subsequent consultation appointments. As well as a full dental history, this information can be used to as a starting point to an oral hygiene counselling and preventative program. Success of any management program will depend upon you listening to the professional advice, accepting responsibility for any modification, treatment or management plans, regular reviews and time.

**Tip 4:** The manner in which sports drinks are consumed can alter the effect of dental erosion. Sipping sports drinks from a reservoir (such as Camelback) in small quantities presents a risk of developing dental erosion as it increases the frequency and time your teeth are exposured to the acid. One study suggested that when acidic drinks are delivered to the back of the mouth via a straw, there is less contact of the drink with the teeth. Another study also found gulping drinks rapidly rather than sipping in smaller quantities resulted in much smaller exposure to the damaging acidity of the drink. Clearing the drink from the mouth allows the pH level to return to normal sooner. It is important to note that these studies are subjected to vast variations, but they are worth considering when assessing beverage choices.

**Tip 5:** Read the label. Check the presence and percentage of citric or phosphoric acid in your chosen drink to aid your decision process. If in doubt, consult your dental professional.

**Tip 6:** Adopt a prevention and support program. As a part of prevention and support for patients with dental erosion, Defence dentists may incorporate the WATCH strategy as outlined in Health Directive 424, annex C. Consider the advice below when examining your dietary habits. Remember to discuss these issues or any changes to your diet with a health professional before making any decisions.
The future: modified sports drinks

Research has been conducted to investigate the protective effect of adding calcium, phosphate and milk products to sports drinks. Although only at the laboratory phase, the results look promising. Some brands have managed to reduce the acidic properties of their drinks, so be on the lookout for drinks with a higher pH level and higher calcium level. Discuss what you find with your dentist as they will be across the associated clinical research and know how to advise you accordingly.

Conclusion

The consumption of sports drinks to provide energy and rehydration may be beneficial for athletes and ADF members participating in prolonged and intense physical activities. At present, sports drinks cannot be proven as the sole cause of dental erosion. However, their destructive role in dissolving your tooth’s enamel cannot be discounted. Sports drinks and their appeal to a wider population have resulted in increased consumption, and this consumption is fast becoming a significant dental problem in our population. Fortunately, conservative strategies are available to all members of the ADF and general public to minimise the potentially destructive effects of dental erosion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consideration</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Advice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Do you drink enough water?</td>
<td>Drink 1.5 litre of pure water a day. 2 litres two hours before a game or 1 litre before a game.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acids</td>
<td>Do you drink excess soft or sports drinks containing ascorbic, citric or phosphoric acid?</td>
<td>Avoid acidic drinks when dehydrated in sports, work or when drugs shut off salivary protection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taste</td>
<td>Do you eat enough fresh fruit daily?</td>
<td>Eat a piece of fruit with breakfast to stimulate saliva flow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calcium</td>
<td>Are you getting enough calcium in your diet?</td>
<td>Milk, cheese and yoghurt contain calcium which protects teeth against acids.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Do you have a healthy lifestyle and diet?</td>
<td>Healthy lifestyles can be dehydrating. Excess alcohol is also dehydrating and causes gastric acid reflux. Some drugs (such as those given for asthma, depression, and hypertension) shut off saliva.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you have any health problems?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Tip 7: Follow practical tips to maintain dental health. The information below will provide you with practical tips to follow to ensure that you maintain good overall dental hygiene.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tip</th>
<th>Reason</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finish meals with dairy products</td>
<td>This promotes remineralisation or hardening of tooth enamel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chew gum after a meal</td>
<td>Stimulates salivary flow to counter dietary acids. May also reduce oesophageal acid exposure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modify how you drink sports drinks</td>
<td>Swallow sports drinks rapidly. Avoid sipping or swishing around the mouth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid abrasion after acidic exposure</td>
<td>Avoid tooth brushing for 30 minutes (up to 1 hour) after consumption of sports drinks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modify the pH of acid attack</td>
<td>Consume drinks with added calcium to reduce erosion caused by acid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide protection from acids</td>
<td>Consult your dental professional to find out the best toothpaste or other treatments to use to provide protection from acidic erosion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In today’s operational environments, hostages and other captives may be released by the enemy at random, isolated locations. Consequently, Australian soldiers on patrol or at checkpoints may suddenly find themselves confronted with the challenge of assisting released captives in their first hours of freedom. Before they can be evacuated to rear areas, there is often little medical assistance and no immediate mental health care available for these released captives. This article will briefly describe the diverse reactions that released captives may have and the practical steps that you can take to help them.
Reactions to captivity and release

Having their lives threatened, and experiencing harsh living conditions and uncertainty about release, subjects captives to a high degree of stress. In turn, release from captivity can be an overwhelming experience with a sudden shift from isolation and fear to one of freedom and possible sensory overload. Released captives can display a large range of reactions. Some people may walk away from these incidents with no identifiable negative effects, but many others can experience short-term and long-term adverse reactions. These reactions are to be considered normal reactions to an extraordinary event. Among others, these reactions include:

- Disrupted thought patterns includes impaired memory, difficulties in concentration, disorientation, intrusive memories, denial of what has occurred and hyper-vigilance.
- Adverse emotionality may involve shock, numbness, depression, fear, anxiety, anger and hopelessness. Moreover, the released captives may feel pronounced shame for being captured in the first place, and/or guilt for having survived when others died or were injured. Paradoxically, released captives can display the Stockholm Syndrome in which they identify and have apparent sympathy for their captors.
- Adverse behaviours can appear immediately or over time. These behaviours can include constant irritability, disinterest, withdrawal from social contact – even family and friends, and avoidance of people, situations or objects which remind the released captives of the event. If survivors have been in captivity for an extended time, they may also suffer ‘learned helplessness’ in which they give up attempting to help themselves, believing nothing they can do will be effective.
- Adverse medical conditions may be apparent. Pre-existing physical conditions, such as asthma and diabetes, are likely to have become worse during captivity. Captivity itself, even without overt physical abuse, may generate new medical issues due to a lack of nutrition, warmth, exercise, fresh air and sleep – and the effects of stress. Survivors may show a high heart rate, rapid breathing, nervous shakes, an inability to remain still and difficulties in sleeping.

An ‘actions-on’ framework for assisting the newly-released captive

In the face of the diverse reactions that a new-released captive may show, there are simple, practical steps that soldiers can take to assist the newly-released captive in a worthwhile way.

Tip 1: Provide bodily requirements. Survivors’ first needs are basic. As far as practicable, provide water, food, shelter, clothing, and medical attention. Without isolating the former captives, provide protection.

Tip 2: Encourage connectedness. After a period of friendly social contact, survivors may wish to establish positive social connections. As far as practicable, answer their questions and provide information about the incident, what has happened to others and what is happening in the rest of the world. Ensure the individual is quickly connected with positive and unconditional social support, consistent with their cultural practices. Conversely, avoid isolating them or appearing to reject them. Even if nothing is said, having somebody sitting with them is worthwhile.

Tip 3: Boost their sense of control. Help restore the released captive’s sense of structure, control and predictability. Facilitate opportunities for the individual to meet their own needs, to make choices about support they receive, and to make choices about when and how long any operational and mental health debriefing session will last. Never speak about the person as if they were invisible and cannot understand what is being said.

Tip 4: Promote a sense of calmness and safety. In helping the survivors to make choices and gain control, appoint a ‘gate-keeper’ to help survivors manage the potentially overwhelming attention of peers and media. Ensure the survivors are afforded periods of respite away from such demands.

Tip 5: Build rapport and trust. Listen and allow the individual to freely discuss their concerns or recollections. If possible, guide the discussion towards any positive feelings and problem solving rather than amplifying any negative discussion pertaining to the captors. This process can be confronting for you, so monitor and regulate your own display of emotions to avoid conveying them to the survivors, particularly given their likely state of hyper arousal.

Tip 6: Promote hope. If asked, emphasise that most people cope well and recover. Emphasise the resilience of human beings in the wake of trauma. Reassure the individual that their reactions are normal. Do not describe the individual as ‘ill.’

Summary

Take time to understand and remember the potential reactions you may encounter with released captives. Take care of their basic needs, including food, shelter and safety. Show them respect, listen and make sure you regulate your own emotions to give them the best chance of recovery. Yours will be the face they remember.