



# CONNECTION IN FOCUS

Resilience, Risk Reduction and Suicide Prevention in Focus

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## Relationships and Resilience

It is no surprise that relationships can affect our self-confidence, sense of hope and personal control. All these traits can lead us to be able to overcome adversity more quickly. Learning to build and foster meaningful relationships can help us improve our resiliency and in turn strengthen those around us. Relationships with friends, family, unit members, leaders, or even your relationship with a higher power can affect how we see ourselves and how we cope with trauma or just the everyday struggles of life. Relationships that do not demean one's sense of self, are non-judgemental, or non-punitive can support us in our greatest times of need and keep us healthy. Staying in unhealthy relationships that degrade these traits can be detrimental to our mental, physical and spiritual health. Learning self-awareness and being able to remove ourselves from unhealthy relationships, while growing a community of supportive relationships can help to build a more resilient society.

## How does Substance Abuse Affect Relationships?

Risky drug use can create challenges for relationships. Being trustworthy and reliable for those in your unit, family and friends is part of your duty. People who use illicit or prohibited drugs like marijuana or misuses prescription drugs may make others feel like they don't have their backs. Substance abuse might also cause tension between helping the abuser or doing what's best for the mission. It is difficult to stay unified when one person's choices affect the unit.

The people you choose to surround yourself with often add meaning to your life. When someone abuses substances, that decision can negatively affect their loved ones in various ways. If the individual doesn't tell their family or friends about their risky drug use, even those closest to them might not notice the warning signs. This doesn't mean they don't care.

Studies show that support from relationships can protect some people from risky drug use and may be a large factor in recovery. Talk to your family and close friends who play a positive and important role in your life. You can also speak to your chaplain or use the Peer-to-Peer Network to talk about improving your relationships. Or if you're concerned about someone else's risky drug use, find out how to support them. This conversation may seem like a huge task but speaking up and leaning on your support system will make it easier.

<https://www.toomuchtolose.org/what-could-i-lose/relationships/>

## Stress Mindset

Many of us turn to alcohol or drugs to help us cope with daily life stresses. While alcohol, in moderation, may help us to decompress and relieve some stress, alcohol and drug misuse can actually cause more stress and hurt us physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Stress in and of itself can have benefits. These may include: fewer depressive episodes and health issues, increased energy, satisfaction with your life, productivity at work, confidence, and the ability to find meaning in difficult setbacks.

According to Dr. Kelly McGonigal's research, your stress mindset determines the type of physiological stress response your body has. The different types of physiological stress responses has a unique set of biological profiles and distinct benefits. You can reap the benefits of stress by learning how to change your mindset with a few simple exercises. **Pause to reflect** on a recent stressful experience you've had, and then consider if stress helped you (1) **rise to the challenge** (2) **connect with others**, or (3) **learn and grow** once the experience had passed. Learn to notice your stress in the moment and embrace it. Don't waste energy trying to ignore stress or decrease the stress in your life when we often have little control over the things in our environment that trigger stress. Consider how the things that cause us stress can often hold the most meaning. If you removed everything in your life that causes stress, would you also be removing the most meaningful?

<https://www.armyresilience.army.mil/ard/R2/Stress-Mindset.html>

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