

As part of a holistic approach to fitness, the Army recently expanded its Comprehensive Soldier Fitness (CSF) program to include family members.

Strength in Numbers: CSF Program Extended to Families

By Sara Graves

The CSF program uses resiliency training to instruct soldiers and their adult family members how to cope with stressful situations, and how to be successful in their careers and personal lives.

The CSF program utilizes the Global Assessment Tool (GAT), an online survey that soldiers are required to complete by May 31. The survey is designed to provide users with a gauge of how strong they are in four dimensions of strength: family areas, social, emotional, and spiritual. Physical fitness is a fifth dimension of CSF strength.

Based on the confidential results of the survey, an individualized training program is created that leads soldiers and family members through a series of computerized exercises designed to enhance their resilience skills in each area.

In addition to the GAT testing, the CSF program incorporates master resiliency training (MRT).

Soldiers in a MRT course go through 10 days of resiliency training, which is based on 30 years of science developed by the University of Pennsylvania's Positive Psychology Center.

The first half of the course is designed to help the soldiers build their own personal resilience, while the second half teaches the soldiers how to teach resiliency skills to members of their units.

"The intent of this program is to give more and more of our soldiers the

skills they need so when they come out of combat they will have a growth experience," said Army Chief of Staff Gen. George W. Casey Jr. during a November visit to the University of Pennsylvania, where a class of soldiers and civilians were studying to be master resiliency trainers.



Demonstrating a workout using the TRX Suspension Trainer, developed by a Navy SEAL.

"So what I need from all of you is to be trainers, to go back and teach," said Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston to the soldiers during the course.

In December, more than 150 soldiers attended a second 10-day "Train-the-Trainer" course offered in Philadelphia, Penn.

And in early April, a MRT school is scheduled to open at Fort Jackson, S.C. The first class will be a pilot class, which will be taught by University of Pennsylvania faculty and the school's civilian instructors.

The first regular Fort Jackson MRT class will not begin until May 24, to give time for the faculty to adjust the class material based on the results from the pilot class.

Nearly 2,000 soldiers and civilians are expected to attend the Fort Jackson MRT course annually.

"I am a firm believer in the CSF program, said Brig. Gen. Bradley W. May, Fort Jackson commanding general, "because it will teach soldiers, family members and civilians to confront challenges in a positive way so that they will grow from these experiences."

The Kansas National Guard has also implemented its own CSF-related resiliency training program for its soldiers and their family members.

The Kansas National Guard's "Flash Forward - Soldiers and Leaders Guide to Resiliency," program provides a seven-hour, plug-and-play training program designed to train deploying service members on the warning signs of suicide and depression.

The program incorporates the CSF program's five dimensions of overall strength.

"We're trying to take that program and see what fits for us," said Army Maj. Paul Gonzalez of the Kansas Army Guard. "We are a little bit different, we only drill 39 days a year, and we don't have a lot of time that the active component does. So we're trying to build something that works for us when we're building our resiliency training program."

And to continually gauge a soldier's overall fitness through the CSF program, soldiers will be periodically reassessed for their total mental and physical fitness using the GAT survey.

In fact, according to the U.S. Army website, www.army.mil, soldiers are required to take the GAT survey every two years or 120 days following contingency operation deployments. The reserve-component soldiers can take the GAT every two years, and within 180 days following contingency operation deployments.

Army civilians are also eligible to take the GAT survey.

Visit www.army.mil/csf for more information on CSF. To take the GAT survey via the Soldier Fitness Tracker website, visit www.sft.army.mil. AKO log in is required.

Fitness is in the Bag

A compact, stow-in-a-bag fitness tool is quickly gaining in popularity among service members around the world.

The TRX Suspension Trainers feature a long strap made of sturdy, professional-grade, nylon webbing that has two PVC handles attached to the end.

Originally developed by Navy SEAL Randy Hetrick to help his teammates stay in shape while on mission, the strap is secured to an elevated attachment point, such as a door or a tree, and is manipulated in various ways to enable users to use their own body weight to perform hundreds of different exercises.

The compact system weighs less than 2 lbs., stows to the size of a MRE, and is rugged enough to use in the harshest environments.

Bundled in a nylon mesh carrying bag with a 12-week military program DVD and guide, and door anchors (door-type and suspension type), the TRX FORCE KIT can be carried and used almost anywhere.

The TRX trainers began to increase in popularity after select, deployed Special Forces units tested the TRX, said FMWRC spokesman William Bradner.

The unit was so well received that according to Joe Pettoni, the Army's Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command (FMWRC)'s Deployment Program manager, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) ordered an additional 24,000 TRX systems for downrange units of all the services.

"This intensive, full-body workout is immensely popular with both soldiers and commanders," Bradner said.

The FMWRC is presently working with the folks at Fitness Anywhere, Inc. (the company that owns the TRX system) to schedule daylong training sessions for each branch of the military so the deploying service members are familiar with the device when they get downrange. The kick-off meetings began in early March, Pettoni said.

"This intensive, full-body workout is immensely popular with both soldiers and commanders"

—William Bradner, FMWRC spokesman



Tech. Sergeant Aaron Blackwell, 372nd Training Squadron, Detachment 10 weapons instructor, performs an upper body workout at the Domenici Fitness and Sports Center at Holloman AFB, N.M. The fitness center provides state of the art equipment for Airmen to use to stay in shape. U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Anthony Nelson

In addition, military health officials began to recognize the usefulness of the TRX system for returning deployed service members with combat-related injuries.

"The TRX is a powerful tool on several levels for service members recovering from combat injuries," said Alison Ross, director of marketing, Fitness Anywhere, Inc.

She said the TRX could be adapted to any users, including service members with single or bi-lateral amputations, TBI, and other injuries. The TRX can be used by injured members in a clinic or in the privacy of their own homes.

Presently, Ross said the TRX is being used in Walter Reed, Bethesda, Naval Medical Center San Diego and numerous civilian PT clinics to assist in injury rehabilitation.

Furthermore, according to the www.fitnessanywhere.com, five dollars from the purchase of every TRX FORCE Kit sold through the website goes to the Fitness Anywhere Warrior Fund to provide equipment, training and ongoing education to injured service members and athletes.

For service members interested in purchasing a TRX system of their own Fitness Anywhere, Inc. offers a 20 percent military discount to active service members. For more information, visit www.trxforce.com. ●



Staff Sgt. Todd Ingram, Tech. Sgt. Matthew Perry and Capt. Michael Rupp, 3rd Space Experimentation Squadron, perform flutter kicks during physical training at the Schriever AFB Fitness Center in Colorado. U.S. Air Force photo/Scott Prater