



Spiritual Fitness

TASK: Define and discuss Spiritual Fitness and its benefits on Soldiers and their units.

CONDITIONS: Given an open forum of Discussion and Question based discuss how Spiritual Fitness can benefit Soldiers.

STANDARDS: Understanding the meaning of Spiritual Fitness and how spirituality can help you feel connected and build resilience at the same time.

REFERENCE(S): AR 600-20, FM 1-05, ATP 1-05.03 and
<http://www.realwarriors.net/active/treatment/spirituality.php>



Spiritual Fitness

What is Spiritual Fitness?

- Spirituality can help you feel connected to something bigger than yourself and build resilience at the same time. Your spirituality can involve whatever beliefs and values give you a sense of purpose. For many, it may be a relationship with God and certain religious practices. For others, spirituality plays out in non-religious ways, such as through a focus on family or nature. However you express it, spirituality can promote healthy connections with others, healthy lifestyle choices and the strength to endure hard times. Whether expressed through prayer, meditation, or in other ways, being spiritually “fit” is important to building resilience.



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What are the benefits of Spiritual Fitness?

- At the heart of it, spirituality can help people find meaning in life. During difficult times at all stages of military experience, spirituality can help you cope with difficult situations and traumatic events.
- Help warriors cope with multiple deployments, combat stress or injury.
- Protect warriors from experiencing “moral injuries,” which can occur from either participating in or witnessing certain acts during war that may conflict with deeply held moral beliefs and expectations.
- Encourage a supportive environment and foster unit cohesion, as many spiritual practices promote tolerance of other worldviews and diverse populations.



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Spiritual Fitness Tips:

1. Look to your Leader or Chaplain (If you are experiencing stress, look to your leaders and chaplains for guidance).
2. Connect with Others (Social ties can strengthen your spirituality).
3. Practice mindfulness (It can help warriors strengthen attention and situational awareness skills because it is about focusing on the present moment, which helps promote objective decision making based on the situation -- not based on habit, fear or emotions).
4. Do mind-body exercises (Try mind-body exercises such as tai chi or mental imagery, which is using positive images to bring about a desired physical response, such as decreasing pain or stress).
5. Take spirituality with you (Keep in mind that certain practices can go anywhere with you. Even during combat, you can practice mindfulness or recite religious prayers to yourself).
6. Be good to others (Caring about the safety and needs of others is a common value shared among those engaged in military service).
7. Embrace your belief in a higher power



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What Leaders can do:

1. Take a cultural competency training to help you understand diverse beliefs. This will help you understand how your unit members make individual ethical choices.
2. Work with Chaplains to help your unit members deal with moral dilemmas and traumatic events.
3. Provide balanced support for warriors of all faiths.
4. Try to help your service members understand that traumatic events may not be something we can completely understand.
5. Be supportive of warriors who report having had stressful or traumatic experiences that can be difficult to understand. For example, some warriors may have dealt with a near-death experience. While there is a lot yet to learn about these events, it is important to support warriors who need to talk with someone about it.
6. Give individual service members and the whole unit opportunities to express their spirituality.