

Optimize Your Social Connections to Improve Your Health and Resilience

Transcript: U.S. Army Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness Outreach Webinar

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Presenter:

Alaina Hansom, PhD, the Social Fitness Scientist for Human Performance Resources by CHAMP

- Lytaria Walker: [00:07](#) Welcome to the Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness Outreach webinar for June. At this time, all participants are in listen-only mode. However, you may ask questions at any time by placing them in the Q&A box. There will be several opportunities for questions throughout the webinar, and we should have some time at the very end as well. Please note that CEU credit is not available for today's webinar. The views of DPRR Outreach Webinar presenters are their very own and are not endorsed by the Department of the Army or the Department of Defense. This month our guest is Dr. Alaina Hansom. Alaina Hansom, PhD, is the Social Fitness Scientist for Human Performance Resources by CHAMP (HPRC). In this role, she develops and delivers evidence-based educational materials about aspects of social fitness such as workplace relationships and culture. An expert in interpersonal relationships, family communication, relational health, and military families, she also has a doctorate from Arizona State University and a master's from San Diego University. Dr. Hansom, thank you for joining us this morning. Ma'am, please take it away.
- Alaina Hansom: [01:38](#) Good morning everyone. I am excited to be here with you today. Thank you for signing up. Today I'm going to give you some evidence-based strategies that you can use to optimize your social connections to improve your health and resilience. So as Lytaria said, my name is Alaina Hansom. I am HPRC's (Human Performance Resources by CHAMP) Social Fitness Scientist. CHAMP stands for the Consortium for Health and Military Performance, and we are part of Uniform Services University associated with the Henry M. Jackson Foundation. I know that's a lot for an intro. I do have a flow chart if that's ever helpful for you, for how all of our organization works. Let's get started.

Alaina Hansom: [02:30](#) To begin, everything that I express today are my own opinions and they do not reflect the official policy or position of Uniformed Services University or the Department of Defense. I don't have anything else to disclose. During today's webinar, I'm going to have opportunities for you to participate. You can either scan this QR code here or if you want to go to pollev.com and then enter "social fitness." You don't have to type in your name if you don't want to, but you can once you get to that website. Throughout the webinar, I will prompt you to answer some questions, whether that's true or false, or open-ended questions. If you don't get these instructions right away, don't worry. As the webinar comes along, the directions are on those slides as well. So if you wanted to just get this set up and ready to go, don't answer any questions yet. I will prompt you for when to respond to those.

Alaina Hansom: [03:33](#) During today's webinar, we are going to talk a little bit about Total Force Fitness. I might refer to that as TFF. I will talk about relational health. We're also going to talk about self-disclosure and its health benefits. We'll review how resilience and being a resilient person and showing resilient attributes has some health benefits. And then I'm going to end with recommending those optimization strategies that you can use to create strong social connections that will help your health and your resilience. So to begin, we're going to talk a little bit about Total Force Fitness. Total Force Fitness is a Department of Defense framework for creating healthy human beings and high performing service members. As you can see in this wheel, it's made up of eight distinct but interrelated domains. The idea behind this framework is that service members need internal resources in each of these domains, and they also need external resources. So whether that's coming from DOD or their service or their community, it's important for them to have these internal and external resources to perform at their best.

Alaina Hansom: [04:56](#) The whole idea of this TFF wheel is supported by DOD doctrine and it's a foundational concept that we use here at CHAMP and at HPRC. And if you haven't noticed by now, we're dropping some links into the chat. I've included some HPRC resources throughout this presentation as it relates to different slides. If you're interested in learning more about anything that I talk about today, we'll be dropping those links into the chat periodically. One of the TFF domains, and where my expertise lies specifically, is social fitness. Social fitness is the degree to which you assess, build, and optimize your relationships and your interactions that you have with others. So the connections that you are creating with Family members, friends, your unit, coworkers, teammates, those in your community, and even

your relationships with your pets can help your health and your overall ability to perform and be at your best. If you're interested in gauging where you are in terms of your social fitness, we have HPRC's social fitness self-check, which helps you think about your social fitness from different areas: communication, relationship building, and managing conflict.

Alaina Hansom:

[06:37](#)

So as I mentioned, relationships have an important role in your overall health and your ability to perform at your best. So people who have healthy and strong relationships, this has primarily been studied in people who are happily married. It's also been studied in people who are highly affectionate. People who share their fondness and positive regard for others tend to live longer and healthier lives. We can see this idea of relational health across the TFF wheel. In terms of nutritional health, individuals who are in these healthy, happy relationships are less likely to abuse drugs and alcohol. Overall they just eat better. In terms of mental health, individuals with happy relationships are less stressed. They have decreased PTSD symptoms, they're overall happier, have higher self-esteem, higher mood levels, and better concentration. It makes sense that there would be a lot of health benefits in the social fitness domain as it relates to relationships. But people who are in these healthy relationships feel less lonely. They're less aggressive towards others. They feel really secure and comfortable in their relationships. They feel secure and comfortable with emotions. They tend to feel very satisfied with their relationships.

Alaina Hansom:

[08:09](#)

And then in terms of physical fitness, which I think is particularly interesting, our relationships actually impact our bodies and our physical health. Individuals in healthy relationships have lower resting blood pressure, lower resting heart rate, lower blood sugar levels, lower cholesterol levels, they sleep better, and they have stronger immune systems. I think it's really cool to see a really tangible way that our relationships are impacting our health. Here's your first opportunity to participate in today's webinar. So again, if you could go to pollev.com/socialfitness, you can also text in if you want. Send "social fitness" to that message at the top. I'm just curious if there are any other ways that you can think that your relationships impact your health.

Alaina Hansom:

[09:10](#)

We're seeing one come through right now: "lower blood pressure." I think that's really cool that just having that healthy relationship helps you take a breath and feel more relaxed, feel less stressed. "You just feel calmer." You feel really connected. Maybe you feel really happy too. "Happy to feel loved, happy to feel thought of, safe." I like that. "You feel more confident." "It

can help you make more relationships." "Overall happiness." Awesome. "More outgoing." Maybe you're a person who would want a break for a second, but feeling the energy of others and feeling supported by others can help you.

Alaina Hansom: [10:12](#)

Great. So feel free to keep thinking about this as we go through. An important way to build and maintain your relationships so that you can reap the benefits of those healthy relationships is by self-disclosing. Self-disclosure is defined as intentionally sharing truthful information about yourself that the other person doesn't already know. So this information can be very superficial. It could be my favorite color is blue, or my favorite food is burgers or fruit or whatever. But it can also range to be very, very deep, such as sharing your deepest fears, maybe your loftiest dreams. Self-Disclosure doesn't happen all at once. It happens gradually over time. It's a great way to establish a relationship. It's a great way to get to know someone better because it's happening gradually over time.

Alaina Hansom: [11:14](#)

Your levels of self-disclosure too might be different based on the different relationships that you have in your life. So for example, maybe with a teammate you share a wide variety of superficial information. Maybe you talk about work and sports and food, but it might not be very deep. Maybe you're choosing to share your deepest, most vulnerable thoughts with someone who you feel really close to, such as your romantic partner or best friend. Self-Disclosure has also been studied in military couples and what was found here is that military couples are very receptive, and they're very supportive of self-disclosure. There are many benefits and ways that self-disclosure impacts our health. In terms of environmental fitness, individuals who self-disclose by sharing information about themselves that other people don't already know have better attendance at work.

Alaina Hansom: [12:16](#)

In terms of mental health, people who share information about themselves are less stressed, less anxious. They're overall happier, have higher mood levels, and better cognitive functioning. In terms of social fitness, individuals who disclose have less marital distress, they have increased trust, they're more satisfied in their relationships, and they have this ability to perceive social support, so perceive that other people support them. That's especially important if they're self-disclosing something tough that they're going through, maybe a health diagnosis. In terms of physical health and self-disclosure, you'll notice a lot of these similar benefits. So individuals who self-disclose have lower resting blood pressure, lower resting heart rate, lower blood sugar levels, and lower cholesterol. There

have been some studies too that show that individuals who self-disclose have fewer headaches and migraines. Again, they sleep better, they have success in weight loss. And then finally, in terms of medical and dental preventative care or medical fitness, individuals who self-disclose have fewer visits to the health clinic. So again, just sharing information about yourself can have some great benefits on your health.

Alaina Hansom: [13:38](#)

So here's your next opportunity to participate. I just want to know if you self-disclose in your close relationships most of the time. So are you intentionally sharing personal information about yourself in your close relationships? I was expecting that the majority would say that they are self-disclosing in their close relationships most of the time. And perhaps the responses here would be different if I didn't say close relationships. Maybe if I said, "I self-disclose to a stranger most of the time," or "I self-disclose to someone I don't know very well but maybe want to get to know better." Some people are just private people, and that's fine, but you don't need to share with everybody. Maybe just one close relationship or just a few close relationships or maybe you turn to your pet or your dog and you are sharing information with them. But overall, the takeaway here is that self-disclosure can positively impact our health.

Alaina Hansom: [14:54](#)

So far we've covered how relationships are good for our health. We've covered how self-disclosure is a way that we build and strengthen those relationships. Relationships are also very helpful when it comes to enhancing resilience and health. So resilience is the ability to persevere, adapt, and grow in dynamic or stressful situations. As humans and especially as service members, you're experiencing a lot of dynamic and stressful situations frequently. So having these strong social connections can help you manage those stressful moments, and it can also increase resilience and improve your health. Individuals who have these strong healthy relationships that help them be resilient in terms of mental health have very similar health benefits, such as less depression, less anxiety, and less distress. Resilient individuals are also more likely to engage in self-care practices. They're more likely to use coping strategies and feel confident.

Alaina Hansom: [16:07](#)

And these close relationships can actually help buffer stress. So they make stressful situations in the future feel a little bit less. In terms of social fitness, individuals who have these healthy relationships are experiencing resilience and feel belongingness. They feel like they belong to something, that they belong to a group. Again, they perceive others are supporting them. They have increased trust, they're more likely to collaborate and

problem solve. In terms of physical fitness, they are less likely to get cardiovascular disease. And then in terms of spiritual fitness, individuals who have these healthy relationships and are showing resilience report greater feelings of vitality.

Alaina Hansom: [16:58](#)

So another opportunity to participate today. What are other ways that resilience affects your health? "It helps to minimize anxiety." That makes a lot of sense too when it comes to resilience. We feel resilient in the face of adversity. We feel resilient in the face of stress. "It helps with empathy." That's awesome. And outlook on light ability to stick to your goals. Great. "Increase gratitude." Love that. "It helps you feel strong for the next event." It makes you feel strong for that next challenge that you're overcoming. You feel like you can tackle anything. "Showing empathy." When it comes to empathy, we feel very strong for people who are also going through something that we've gone through ourselves, so it can help you to really show that you're caring for others. "Setting an example for others." Awesome. "Overall happier."

Alaina Hansom: [18:28](#)

"Healthier coping mechanisms." Great. Thank you all for thinking about how being resilient can impact your health across these total force fitness domains. It's not just in terms of our relationships, it's in terms of our physical health, our spiritual health, and our mental health. So for the rest of today's webinar, I'm going to be going over seven strategies that you can utilize for strong social connections. All of these strategies are evidence-based, so they're based on research that has been peer-reviewed, and they can all help you improve your health and your resilience.

Alaina Hansom: [19:26](#)

Our first strategy here is to self-disclose. We talked about self-disclosure and how that's intentionally sharing information about yourself, but that is a strategy that you can use to help enhance your social relationships. So one thing you can do in terms of self-disclosure, whether you're aiming to build a relationship with someone that you don't know very well or maintaining relationships that you already have is you can try to gradually increase the number of topics that you talk about over time. So for example, if you're only ever talking about work with a teammate, maybe you start to bring in other superficial topics. So maybe you're starting to talk about sports or your family or what your plans are for when you take leave or vacation or what your hobbies are.

Alaina Hansom: [20:26](#)

You can also gradually start to increase the depth of what you talk about in terms of certain topics. For example, if you are on a first date or an early date and you talk about something

superficial, like food, as you're trying to get to know that person a little bit better, maybe you start to talk a little bit more deeply about food. So maybe you talk about special memories that you have associated with food or who do you normally eat this food with and why was that person so important to you? Or just why is food important to you in general? So increasing the number of topics that you talk about or increasing the depth or how much you're willing to self-disclose about each topic are some ways that you can intentionally self-disclose to build and maintain relationships. We dropped a few links into the chat here about self-disclosure. One is some conversation starters specifically for families around the dinner table. If you're wanting to get to know your kids better or have your kids get to know you, there's some conversation starters there, all evidence-based. And then we've also included a relationship check-in article. So these are relationships that you can ask your romantic partner to help develop your relationship further.

Alaina Hansom: [21:51](#)

So now here I'd like to know why do you self-disclose? So we've already talked about maintaining relationships and building relationships, but are there any other reasons why you might self-disclose? A lot of times we self-disclose because we want to reduce stress. I know I will sometimes self-disclose just to vent or to get something off my chest. "To not be alone, to feel included, to relieve some pressure, to connect with someone close." So we actually can self-disclose too to learn about other people. A lot of times if we self-disclose first, that can make another person feel comfortable sharing back. You should never pressure someone to self-disclose back to you. That can actually backfire and work oppositely. But us self-disclosing and modeling that for others can make other people feel comfortable as well. "To help work through a problem." "Forgiveness make the other person feel more relaxed." "Just to work it out out loud." Maybe your brain's a jumbled mess, and you're needing to figure it out.

Alaina Hansom: [23:25](#)

Our second evidence-based optimization strategy is to build team cohesion. So team cohesion is defined as the shared bond between teammates, and it drives members to act together, support each other, and sustain their commitment to each other and to the unit as a whole to accomplish team missions. So team cohesion can improve unit performance and it can also improve unit morale. But overall, the takeaway here is that cohesion is all about relationships. It's all about those relationships between teammates. So if you want to increase your team's cohesion, you can intentionally focus on your team's social connections. Cohesion is something that can be built intentionally. One way that you can intentionally focus on

team cohesion is to try team-building activities. I know sometimes people think that they're really cheesy. My husband always calls it "Mando fun" (mandatory fun) when his unit engages in team-building activities.

Alaina Hansom:

[24:55](#)

But there is so much that they actually work. And so CHAMP and HPRC actually created an evidence-based team-building resource guide. So in this guide, we have three activities specifically relating to team cohesion. So there are three activities that we've tied to team cohesion if that's something that you are wanting to focus on specifically. But we also have other areas of teamwork in this guide. For example, if you're wanting to increase your team's trust or if you're wanting to increase your team's psychological safety, we have activities in this resource guide as well. I encourage you to download it, print it, check it out. I also have a presentation on team building and how to use the guide, so that's something that you can request later. At the end of this webinar, I'll explain how you can do that if that's something that's interesting to you.

Alaina Hansom:

[25:59](#)

A third optimization strategy is to turn towards each other. There was a study on newlywed couples, and they followed them throughout their relationship. Six years later, couples who stayed happily married turned towards each other 68% of the time. And couples that got divorced turned towards each other only 33% of the time. So turning towards each other is recognizing your partner's bids for connection. A bid for connection is an attempt from one person to another to ask for attention, affirmation, affection, or some sort of other positive connection to another person. Bids can be very simple. It can be turning to your partner and smiling or winking at them. It can also be something more complex such as asking for help or advice. So some example bids might be, "Let's take a cooking class," or "Let's take the dog on a walk and watch the sunset."

Alaina Hansom:

[27:08](#)

It can also be something like, "Did you see that car drive by with the dog with its head out the window? It was so cute." Or "Can you empty the dishwasher tonight?" "Can you bathe the kids tonight?" "Can you grab me a glass of water while you're up?" "How was your day?" "I'm really tired. Let's cuddle." So as you can see in a lot of these example bids for connection, they are very subtle. And so unless you start to get really good at recognizing these bids for connection or these bids to turn towards each other, you can say something very explicit such as, I'm making a bid for connection right now. So if you're turning to your partner and you're like, "Let's go for a walk," and they won't look up for their phone or they don't maybe

recognize that it's a bid for connection, you can make that very explicit as you're trying to build up this optimization strategy.

Alaina Hansom: [28:04](#)

Bits for connection can also be done virtually. So it can occur by using devices. So whether you're texting someone or reaching out to someone on social media, or when my husband was deployed, we primarily communicated via email. That was a way that we connected with each other. This whole area of research has primarily been studied in terms of married and romantic couples, but you can focus on your connection with other more platonic relationships such as your friends or your teammates. So for example, if a friend texts you and says, "Hey, let's play pickleball tonight," that could be a bid for connection. That could be a time that they're wanting to spend time with you. So on that note, I would love for you to make a bid for connection with someone right now. I'd love for you to text someone or maybe connect on social media to make that intentional bid for connection.

Alaina Hansom: [29:11](#)

It could be something as simple as, "Hey, how are you doing today?" It could be inviting someone to socialize with you maybe this weekend or maybe over the holiday weekend. If it would make you feel more comfortable too. You can always turn it around on me. So you could just say, "Hey, I'm in this webinar right now. This lady's told me to reach out to someone, so I just wanted to say hey," or "Just wanted to say, I'm thinking of you," and if you don't feel comfortable doing it right now, I encourage you that when this webinar is over that you can connect with someone.

Alaina Hansom: [29:56](#)

So while you have your phones out, I would love to know what are some common bids for connection in your relationships? What are ways in your relationships that you say like, "Hey, I'm trying to get attention," or "Hey, I'm trying to connect," or "Hey, I'm trying to spend some quality time with you." "Going on dates." "Asking how their day was." "Going for a walk." "Hey, I'm going to the beach if you want to come with me." Something about a joke. "Physical touch." "If a group chat's not been hopping recently, just putting something in there."

Alaina Hansom: [30:59](#)

In terms of intimacy like holding someone's hand or putting your hand on their shoulder or whatever it may be. Asking if someone has eaten recently is a great way to show that you care about them. Awesome. I'm seeing stuff about relationship check-ins. That's great. That is something that's very much supported by research. "Talking to each other while at the dinner table," "watching each other's favorite movies," "tapping each other on the shoulder," "date nights," "laughing,"

"talking." These are awesome. You can see too here how some of these are very, very subtle. So they are something that maybe over time you've gotten better at recognizing in each other. Some of these are also explicit. "Have you eaten?" or "I'm going on a walk. Do you want to come?" These are all really great examples.

Alaina Hansom:

[32:05](#)

Again, remember this has mostly been done with romantic relationships, but it can be in platonic relationships with friendships and teammates as well. So each time individuals turn towards each other, they're adding funds to the emotional bank account. Essentially turning towards each other is building up like savings in a bank, so this can really cushion when times get tough, such as times of conflict. If you have this abundance of big goodwill that you've built up because you've formed these strong connections with each other, you're more likely to trust each other and really get through those hard times. Sometimes it can be really hard to turn towards each other when that bid for connection is hidden in anger. So for example, something like, "Oh, of course you just sat down on the couch after dinner, after I cooked everything. And like didn't even think about clearing the table." Hidden in that kind of angry undermining statement is the bid for connection: "Please help clean the dinner table tonight."

Alaina Hansom:

[33:18](#)

And so if you're not recognizing that as a bid for connection, it can be really easy to recognize or it can be really easy to respond to negativity with negativity. So it can be so easy to say something like, "Well, I worked really hard today, and I need a break." Or "Well, earlier today I asked you to do this thing and you didn't do that. So why should I do this for you now?" Finding the bid for connection among the anger. So hearing that bid for connection of "Please help clear the dishes tonight" can help buffer an argument. It can also help you win some brownie points in your relationship because you're not fighting anger with anger. If it's really challenging to find the bid for connection within that anger, you can always say something like, "I really want to respond positively to you right now. Can you please just tell me what you need?" So again, it's okay to be more explicit in these bids for connection and turning towards each other as you're learning and developing this skill.

Alaina Hansom:

[34:23](#)

A fourth optimization strategy is to provide social support. Social support comes in a variety of different forms, and it offers benefits to both the giver and the receiver. So for example, social support helps decrease stress for both the giver and the receiver. It can lead to things like greater happiness and feeling less lonely. It can help increase resilience, and it can help

increase your ability to think that you are successful. Social support is really important in terms of those really dynamic and stressful situations. And social support can help increase resilience, as I said. There are different types of social support that you can offer in your relationships. One of them is informational support, so this is providing knowledge, facts, advice, or feedback to another person. Emotional support is showing empathy, caring, and concern for the other person. It could also be showing sympathy if you haven't fully developed your skill of empathy.

Alaina Hansom:

[35:32](#)

Esteem, social support, or messages that help the other person feel like they have the skills and ability to do something build up their self-esteem. This could be offering compliments to the other person. It could be offering validation even if you don't agree with what they have to say. Validating them in their emotions can help build up that esteem. Social network support are support messages that enhance the person's sense of belonging or the fact that they aren't alone. Tangible support is support that physically provides goods and services. So this is something that a lot of times people do specifically after a health diagnosis or a death in the family, such as providing rides, dropping off meals, et cetera. I'd like you to vote now on which of these types of social support you feel most comfortable providing. Do you feel most comfortable providing people with information? Is it emotional, such as empathy? Esteem, which is just building them up. Social network support, making them feel like they're not alone. And then tangible support tends to be gifts and services.

Alaina Hansom:

[37:10](#)

We're seeing some movement here. Again, if you haven't yet joined Poll Everywhere, you can just go to pollev.com/socialfitness, and that will help you participate. For a second, esteem/support had the most votes, but it looks now like informational and emotional support are what this group feels most comfortable providing, which is great. All these different types of social support can be useful in different situations. But I think it can be useful to think "What do I feel most comfortable providing to others to help build up these relationships, to help build up resilience, especially in times of stress?"

Alaina Hansom:

[38:02](#)

Our fifth optimization strategy is to spend quality time together. This is a great way to improve your social bonds with others and especially if you include playful elements in this quality time. It can help reduce stress, improve communication, and increase how satisfied you feel in your relationships. It can also help you achieve your other total force fitness goals. So for example, I

have a picture here of paintball. Maybe spending quality time together with your friends is also helping you meet your physical fitness goal in terms of total force fitness. Or maybe spending quality time with each other can help you meet your nutritional fitness goals, or maybe it's your spiritual fitness goals. But spending quality time together doesn't necessarily need to remain siloed for social fitness. That can help you across that TFF wheel. So into the chat, there was a link to a graphic that is focused on boosting bonds around the holidays.

Alaina Hansom: [39:06](#)

And I created that one specifically for around the holidays, like different holiday dates or ways to connect with each other. But these are just ideas that can get you started, and they can be used year-round just to spend quality time with one another. And we've also dropped into the chat a worksheet about creating family traditions. Family traditions are a great way to spend quality time together. It's a great way to promote social bonds. And so we've created a worksheet that can help you think about what types of family traditions you might want to create and how that can apply to military Family specifically.

Alaina Hansom: [39:49](#)

All right, so now what is your favorite way to spend time together? Again, it doesn't need to be just your romantic partner. It can be teammates, it can be your religious community, it could be friends. Maybe it's someone that you want to get to know better. "Going for a walk." My husband and I go for walks all the time with our dog. "Spending time together with food." "Spending time with family, going out." "Camping or glamping." That's fun. "Being silly." "Watching TV." Maybe it's just that you need to relax or just take some time. "Have something to talk about." "Go to a farmer's market."

Alaina Hansom: [40:55](#)

"Spending morning coffee time." "Just talking to someone on the phone." "Going on vacation." "Coaching your son's team." "Getting to interact with everyone." Maybe it's not even just eating a meal, maybe it's the fact that you're preparing it together so you're spending time in the kitchen. "Talking about likes and dislikes." Great. "Playing card games, shopping, going for a walk." I like these examples because it's a mix. It doesn't necessarily need to be a physical fitness activity. It doesn't necessarily need to be walking or running or whatever it may be to work out. Those are all great ways to spend time together, but we can see that we're touching on a wide range of those total force fitness domains by you sharing your favorite way to spend time together. So that is really awesome.

Alaina Hansom: [42:04](#)

This might depend on the relationship. If you are a person who's going on first dates, maybe your favorite way to spend time

with that person isn't going on a walk or playing games. Maybe it is a meal, maybe it's going to the movies or maybe it is something a little bit more exciting. "Dancing, walking dogs, paddleboarding, or listening to music on the lake." Love that. Thank you for sharing.

Alaina Hansom: [42:36](#)

Strategy number six is getting involved in your community. If you view community as a specific place, whether that's your neighborhood or a religious building, or if you feel like your community is an organization, such as the US Army or the military, getting involved in your community can help you feel like you belong, and that can make you feel like you have those strong social connections.

Alaina Hansom: [43:05](#)

One way to get involved in your community is to volunteer. This is a great way to build social bonds, especially if your community is new, such as after a PCS. You can get to know people in the community and volunteer year-round at an animal shelter, blood drive, or youth activity program. Volunteering doesn't necessarily only have to happen around the holidays, for example. Another way to get involved is to join interest groups. For example, many Army MWR programs have things like intramural sports that you can get involved in or you can join. Perhaps you're looking at your community a little bit more broadly, and you're finding people who have your common interests. There are things like hiking groups or motorcycle groups. There are cities that have art walking tours if that's something that you're interested in too. So there's a way to broaden how you view your community and make these strong connections with people who share your similar interests.

Alaina Hansom: [44:23](#)

If you're feeling stressed or maybe need support, you can also join support groups. So support groups can be especially helpful because it's groups of people who have all been there or people who are going through something similar or truly get what you're going through. Receiving that type of empathy and social support can be very, very helpful when it comes to resilience.

Alaina Hansom: [44:50](#)

Our seventh and final optimization strategy is to express gratitude. This is something that a few of you have mentioned already in our poll everywhere questions, so I love that you're already thinking about gratitude. Gratitude is defined as recognizing the good that you received and savoring it, and then showing appreciation for that. You can show appreciation to a specific person for something. Or maybe you're expressing gratitude towards your home for keeping you warm and dry or whatever it may be. Or you can express gratitude to a higher power. Expressing gratitude can help strengthen your

relationships, it can help increase resilience. And then there are other benefits to expressing gratitude as well. Expressing gratitude can help improve sleep, and it can help boost your performance, whether that's individually or a team, and it can help increase happiness.

Alaina Hansom: [45:50](#)

A great way to express gratitude is to get involved in HPC's annual #gotmysix gratitude challenge. And in this challenge every September, we encourage service members to give shoutouts to those who have had their back. So the idea of "got my six" is from World War II fighter pilots. Their six o'clock position was the most vulnerable, so they had to watch each other's backs. This whole campaign is just thanking people who have had your back. Think about expressing gratitude to people who have been there for you, who watch out for you. Throughout the month we post different gratitude challenges. We have things like the gratitude calendar that we encourage service members to fill out. We also encourage units to request our "#GotMySix" kit. And in the kit we have shoutout cards that service members can fill out right on the shoutout card.

Alaina Hansom: [46:51](#)

And then we encourage them to post it in their units, whether that's a hallway or a specific room that a lot of service members hang out in, just so everyone can see who are people thankful for. Just seeing that gratitude can help foster it as well. If you want to get involved in the campaign, I have a QR code that goes to the #GotMySix page. Again, we ramp up this campaign every September. We have new content every September as it relates to gratitude, but gratitude resources are available year-round on HPRConline.org. Another thing in terms of expressing gratitude, if you're interested in helping your family express gratitude, we've also started to create some #GotMySix family toolkits. Last year we focused specifically on nutritional fitness, helping children express gratitude for the foods that nourish their body. And then this year we're taking a spirituality spin on it, helping individuals connect with spirituality and how that impacts gratitude. So how to have spiritual conversations with your kids, for example, about nature or whatever makes them feel like they're part of something that's bigger than themselves. That's content that you can look out for this September. But like I said, gratitude is not just limited to September, it can be done year-round as well.

Alaina Hansom: [48:19](#)

So as I've mentioned HPRC Online, human Performance Resources by CHAMP, is a Department of Defense initiative. And on our website you'll find evidence-based resources that really empower members of the military community to be physically and mentally fit, eat well, fuel their bodies, hydrate properly,

maintain social ties, and stay resilient, all of these different components of Total First Fitness to help health and performance. On our website, we have articles, videos, handouts, worksheets, posters. We post new information every single week on our website, so you can always find something new on there. We have information on sleep and stress, teams and leadership, physical training, performance psychology, nutrition resources, and more. I've included a few social fitness specific things we have on here such as relationship building or performance communication, for example. We also have an Ask the Expert feature on our website. So you can submit your questions to us, and we'll have one of our subject matter experts respond to your question within five to seven business days with an evidence-based response. You can also request a team building presentation through Ask an Expert as well. And then if you wanted to follow us on social media, it's @HPRCOnline.

Alaina Hansom: [49:55](#) I don't think this QR code is working. But if you do have any feedback on this presentation, feel free to email me. My email address is there, or we just have our general HPRC email address as well. And thank you for having me today.

Lytaria Walker: [50:15](#) Thank you so much, Dr. Hansom, for the presentation. We will now take a few questions from the audience. If you would like to ask a question, please type your question in the Q&A box, and we will read them aloud. There will be a short delay before the first question is announced, please make sure you're typing your question in the Q&A box and not the chat box. It's easier to follow the questions from the Q&A box. Thank you. Looks like our first question is here from Mr. Cory Van Sloten: "Why doesn't each branch of the armed forces use TFF instead of their own fitness models?"

Alaina Hansom: [50:55](#) I do not have a good answer for that. There are different branches of the armed services that have, like the Army has H2F and different branches have things like resilience coordinators or looking at health from different domains. I do not have an answer for why each branch doesn't use TFF across the board. I think it's because TFF is like Department of Defense instruction but not necessarily a requirement.

Lytaria Walker: [51:35](#) Got it. Thank you, Doctor.

Alaina Hansom: [51:36](#) I know that's not necessarily a helpful answer. That's something that you could always write in to Ask the Expert, and we can dig into it a little bit more. But we just take Total Force Fitness

because we are not focused on one specific branch of HPRC and CHAMP.

Lytaria Walker: [51:52](#) Sure. Someone is asking about the copy of the slides. We will email the slides to all registered participants this afternoon. The next question from Ms. Cynthia Austin: "Do you have any recommendations for how to implement some of these ideas into the military population?"

Alaina Hansom: [52:19](#) In terms of these seven evidence-based recommendations, they're all things that can happen through conversations. It could be having an empathetic conversation and making resources and referrals. So maybe referring to HPRC or CHAMP. That was one way. Another way is to utilize different Family readiness groups. In the past we've had units request our information to be created into posters or handouts or different pamphlets, and they've been distributed on base specifically to the Family readiness groups. You can ask us to do more presentations like this so we can deliver presentations and deliver information for free as well. So if your unit wants something specific, reach out to our team. We're happy to print off posters or other content or just make that referral to HPRC: "Hey, I saw this awesome article. This might be helpful. Or check out their Ask the Expert feature."

Lytaria Walker: [53:44](#) Thank you Dr. Hansen. If you have questions, please type them in the Q&A box at this time. I do see a question in the chat box regarding CEU credits. There's no CEU credit available for today's webinar. Okay, I see a question here: "Are there resources for minority populations that may not have the opportunities other service members may have?"

Alaina Hansom: [54:13](#) Yes. So on our website we have started digging in a little bit more into resources for diverse populations and underrepresented populations. So we do have some articles on our website that will link to other DOD specific resources as they relate to that. A lot of times too, we try to make our resources as accessible to everyone as possible. So, we're not necessarily only, for example, focusing on high performing teams or individuals who are already being very successful. So our resources are meant for just the average service member. I hope that helped answer the question as well.

Lytaria Walker: [55:13](#) Thank you, Dr. Hanson. There's a comment in the Q&A box from Stacy Gordon. She shared a link there for the military child wellbeing toolkit.

Alaina Hansom: [55:25](#) Thank you. I will be sure to look at that.

Lytaria Walker:

[55:32](#)

I believe we have time for about one or two more questions. If there are no more questions, we will conclude this morning's webinar. I do want to extend a gracious thank you to Dr. Alaina Hansen for joining us today. Thank you listeners for joining today's webinar as well. Once the webinar concludes, you will be prompted to complete a survey. We appreciate your feedback as this helps us to improve upon future webinars. If you'd like to receive invitations for DPRR webinars and receive the latest news and information from the Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness, please go to DPRR's website at armyresilience.army.mil and sign up for notifications there. Thank you again for joining us today and have a wonderful rest of your day. Bye now.