

# PREVENTION IN ACTION

## BUILDING SKILLS TO STRENGTHEN TOTAL FITNESS

### MCCS PROGRAMS OFFER VARIETY OF WAYS TO MEET TOTAL FITNESS GOALS

BY BETTY SNIDER  
HQMC MF DIVISION

[Marine Corps Total Fitness](#), MCTF

for short, is a holistic approach to health and wellness that positively and directly impacts readiness and resilience.

MCTF focuses on four integrated fitness domains—social, spiritual, mental, and physical—and enables Marines, units, and families to strengthen their performance in any environment and recognize what supports—and hinders—their overall wellness and ability to perform.

Marine Corps leaders play an essential role in promoting and supporting the Total Fitness of their Marines. The Marine Corps also offers a variety of programs, many of them via Marine Corps Community Services, that can assist Marines and families in achieving their fitness goals.

The Department of Defense's investment in integrated prevention initiatives such as MCTF makes sense to Navy CAPT Tara Smith, a psychologist and Chief of Force Resiliency for the Marine and Family Programs Division at Headquarters Marine Corps.

"It comes naturally to me as a psychologist because we understand as therapists that you can't just heal one part of the system, you have to heal the entire person," she said. "It's not a deficit model. It's about taking your strengths and capitalizing on them."

"MCTF is 'Hey, we know you're strong, we know you're resilient, but how do we make you even better?'" Smith said. "A lot of us think that because we can suck it up, because we're functioning and successful, that we've got it all figured out. But we can never stop growing, we can never stop learning, we can never stop strengthening our domains."

*This issue of Prevention in Action will highlight a handful of MCCS programs. To explore the full range of resources, visit*

[www.usmc-mccs.org](http://www.usmc-mccs.org).

### WARR Leverages Range of Resources

BY BETTY SNIDER  
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Connect to one, connect to all.

That is the vision for Warrior Athlete Readiness and Resilience (WARR), an initiative to promote Marine Corps Total Fitness by leveraging and integrating resources to ensure Marines and families connect with the services they need for any situation.

Semper Fit, which provides fitness and health education programs focused on warfighter performance, is kicking its mission up a notch with WARR.

The Marine Corps will invest in updating fitness facilities and equipment. Semper Fit will hire more than 300 professionals: certified athletic trainers and strength and conditioning coaches, aquatics coaches, sleep educators, dietitians, mental skills coaches, sports scientists, and resilience specialists.

Many of these professionals will be based at WARR centers, updated fitness centers that include office and meeting space to facilitate group and individual interactions between the civilian staff and Marines. But they won't be confined to the centers.

Brad Brimhall, Semper Fit



LANCE CPL. DANIELA CHICAS TORRES/MARINES.MIL

**U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Janna Plemons, an aviation supply specialist with Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 26, Marine Aircraft Group 26, 2nd Marine Air Wing, executes a deadlift during the 2024 WARR Installation Challenge at the WARR Center on Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune in April.**

branch head in the Marine and Family Programs Division at Headquarters Marine Corps, is pumped about the expansion of human performance programming and the plans for WARR staffers.

"We want them getting around to unit trainings,"

Brimhall said. "We want them to be commonplace. We want them meeting Marines and families where they naturally work, train, play, and congregate."

Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine

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**WARR**

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Palms in California was the first installation to introduce WARR with the opening of the Wilburn Performance Center in 2018.

The Twentynine Palms center is “really set up like a collegiate Division 1 facility,” said Laura Bates, the Semper Fit director. “We can train 150 Marines while individuals still use the facility.”

Marines can access the human performance specialists while also interacting with personnel from [Behavioral Health](#), [Sexual Assault Prevention and Response](#), and [Family Advocacy Program](#) who spend time in the center’s lobby.

Units at Twentynine Palms are often training for deployments, and WARR tailors its training to meet individual units’ needs. The Wilburn Center is within walking distance of a heated outdoor pool, so that makes it easy to incorporate water workouts into the total fitness training.

WARR covers more than just exercise. At the California installation, staff offer cooking classes, including tips for making meals in the barracks. They take Marines on shopping trips to the commissary to teach them how to make healthy food choices.

Every quarter, WARR staff huddle with primary prevention integrators and other [Marine Corps Community Services](#) personnel to discuss trends and issues at the installation.

Installations will customize their WARR programs to meet the needs of their Marines and families.

Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune opened a WARR center in April, and Semper Fit staff said it is already drawing interest from leaders and younger Marines who are intrigued by the integrated functional workouts.

Marines from several units are taking part in a 12-week WARR program that include physical workouts for an hour on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Tuesday and Thursday are recovery days that include 20-minute sessions led by subject matter experts on a variety of topics, including finances, communication, healthy relationships, and sleep.

Jessica Kelderhouse, a resilience and wellness specialist, said they have received positive feedback from Marines following discussions about the importance of sleep.

As the Marines improved their sleep habits and rested more over the 12 weeks, they experienced less soreness and an increase in hydration, Kelderhouse said. Sleep education throughout the WARR program increased awareness of caffeine and its impact on sleep. Less caffeine around bedtime leads to better sleep.

One gunnery sergeant said he shared the sleep pointers with his wife, and the couple has seen positive changes in how they feel.

The Semper Fit staff said they also see Marines connecting with the experts who conduct sessions on the recovery days, and it has been a smoother handoff than just referring Marines to a website or giving them a brochure.

WARR also offers a Marine friendly way to introduce



SEMPER FIT PHOTO

WARR staff at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms teach Marines how to make healthy food choices while shopping at the commissary.

prevention concepts such as mindfulness.

For example, a gunnery sergeant comes in to teach tactical breathing, said Raymond Anderson, director of strength and conditioning.

But unlike trainings where Marines sit in a chair in a classroom, this one starts with sprints on the indoor turf field, followed by the breathing exercise and a turn on the shooting simulator, Anderson said. The training gives Marines a better sense of how they can use tactical breathing in stressful moments.

The Semper Fit staff at Camp Lejeune look forward to seeing WARR grow as the specialist positions are filled and units become more familiar with the resources offered, said Justin Freeman, Semper Fit director. “There is a real spirit of collaboration we’re trying to foster here.”

Col David Ickles, commanding



SEMPER FIT PHOTO

Playing a sport is a great way for Marines and families to build Total Fitness.

officer of the 10th Marine Regiment, has been taking part in the WARR course with his Marines. The regiment pulled Marines from various units who are planning to incorporate the WARR techniques into regular unit training in the future.

He likes what WARR is offering. He said commanders want to build resilience in their Marines, not just for combat but also for the realities of daily life.

“How do we best prepare them to face those challenges?” Ickles said. “Holistic fitness is what we’re hanging our hat on.”

## FOUR LENSES WORKSHOP CAN IMPROVE YOUR FAMILY'S COMMUNICATION

Have you ever talked to your spouse or kids and felt like you were speaking a different language than they were?

Maybe you and your child experience the same event together, but have vastly different ways of viewing it?

As unique individuals with diverse perspectives and talents, it can be challenging at times to develop a common language or understanding when each member of your family looks at life through a unique lens.

If you're a person who likes structure and rules, how might that be complicated by having a spouse who enjoys taking risks or thrives with change? What if your eldest child functions best when



the routine changes, but you can't live without one?

[Marine Corps Family Team](#)

[Building](#) (MCFTB) offers a workshop called Four Lenses to help you navigate the diverse ways we

view the world and function in it – which can and does impact our relationships and overall social fitness. The workshop helps you:

- Increase self-awareness and the impact of your behaviors on relationships.
- Learn effective strategies for building satisfying relationships.
- Learn how to celebrate the strengths of others.
- Learn a new, common language to communicate more effectively in your relationships.

To sign up to take the Four Lenses workshop or to get more information, contact your local MCFTB office.

### CHECK OUT A BASIC STRESS MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP

Join [Marine Corps Family Team Building](#) (MCFTB) for a Basic Stress Management Workshop, where you'll discover scientifically proven strategies to effectively reduce stress in both your professional and personal life, which affects your mental, social, and spiritual fitness.

You will develop tools that will help you learn what stress is and how to manage it by changing your response to it. You will also:

- Learn how to apply helpful techniques to ease the stress within your life.
- Learn how to apply problem-solving methods to take action in high-stress situations.
- Learn how to identify at least two personal symptoms of stress and two strategies for

managing stress.

- Name at least two resources that can address stress.

Managing stress will improve overall wellness.

Contact your local MCFTB to develop an individual action plan for managing stress.

### SINGLE MARINE PROGRAM BUILDS SOCIAL FITNESS

The [Single Marine Program](#) (SMP) aims to boost the morale of single and unaccompanied Marines and strengthen their Total Fitness by expanding their social network.

Marine Corps Total Fitness identifies quality of life as an essential component of mission success. SMP builds Total Fitness by helping Marines manage issues that affect their quality of life.

Gen. Eric Smith, 39th Commandant of the Marine Corps, emphasized the importance of improving Marines' quality of life.

"Taking care of Marines is a warfighting function," Smith said. "Otherwise, they cannot focus on the mission at hand. Barracks, chow halls, and gyms are key to retaining Marines, and investments in quality-of-life initiatives are truly warfighting needs."

With SMP, Marines advocate for their needs via executive councils where all quality-of-life issues are reported and addressed with the installation sergeant major's oversight.

Reach out to your SMP coordinator today and discover how to get involved.

### ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER

The United States Marine Corps' Marine & Family Programs Division publishes Prevention in Action each quarter.

The contents of this newsletter are for informational purposes only and not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment.

Visit <https://www.usmc-mccs.org/news/prevention> or scan the QR code to sign up for our mailing list or view past issues.



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To suggest topics or questions, email [hqmcprevention@usmc.mil](mailto:hqmcprevention@usmc.mil).

To access hot links, right-click on link, copy link, and paste it into a browser window.

**PREVENTION  
RESOURCES**

**CDC Violence Prevention:** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention established the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC) as the lead federal organization for violence prevention in 1992.

The Division of Violence Prevention within NCIPC focuses on preventing violence and its consequences so that all people, families, and communities are safe, healthy, and free from violence.

For information and tools, including the Connecting the Dots, visit [www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention).

**DoD resources and tools:** Check out the Department of Defense’s integrated primary prevention website at [www.prevention.mil](http://www.prevention.mil). It includes information about resources, tools, research, and policy.

**Marine Corps Interactive Suicide Prevention and Mental Fitness Resource:** This online resource provides suicide prevention and mental fitness skill-building information for all Marines and their families.

This is a resource users can come back to as often as they need it. Scan the QR code and click on the Prevention Skills You Can Use button, or go to [www.usmc-mccs.org/mfitness](http://www.usmc-mccs.org/mfitness).



PREVENTION SKILLS YOU CAN USE

**MARINE CORPS  
TOTAL FITNESS**  
THE FOUR DOMAINS OF FITNESS



MCTF strengthens Marines and families across four domains – social, spiritual, mental, and physical. It improves their overall well-being and readiness by promoting skill-building that helps them perform at their best and navigate their military journey successfully.



**SOCIAL FITNESS**

Forming healthy positive relationships with your peers, leaders, friends, family members, and community. Includes being kind, respectful, and being able to forgive self and others.



**SPIRITUAL FITNESS**

Finding inner strength that comes from a higher purpose. While grit and determination are important, discovering an even greater strength by looking beyond oneself to a higher, more lasting source of meaning and purpose.



**MENTAL FITNESS**

Engaging in healthy thinking and behaviors builds strong intellectual and emotional habits. Included are mindset, attitudes, and practices to help manage various stressors and reach optimal performance.



**PHYSICAL FITNESS**

Building a well-rounded fitness program by possessing the knowledge, skills, mindset, and tools to perform well, prevent injuries, and recover.



**MCTF**  
MARINE CORPS TOTAL FITNESS

To learn more about MCTF, visit: [www.usmc-mccs.org/news/why-marine-corps-total-fitness](http://www.usmc-mccs.org/news/why-marine-corps-total-fitness), or connect with your local Semper Fit team.

**MCCS**  
MARINE CORPS COMMUNITY SERVICES

**MCCS website:** Visit the Marine Corps Community Services website ([www.usmc-mccs.org](http://www.usmc-mccs.org)) to find information about programs and resources and read articles that offer skill-building information.

**OSCAR/COSC:** The Operational Stress Control and Response

(OSCAR) teams and Combat and Operational Stress Control (COSC) representatives promote prevention and help-seeking behavior in their units.

**Prevention in Action— Stakeholders Training:** Visit [www.marinenet.usmc.mil](http://www.marinenet.usmc.mil) and search Prevention in Action. This

self-guided online training is designed for Marines, attached Sailors, and civilians who engage in prevention activities. In this course, participants learn more about how and why to champion prevention activities within their sphere of influence.