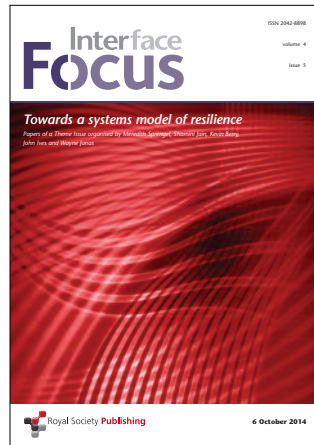


STABILITY THROUGH CHANGE

PREPARED FOR AND TRANSFORMED BY STRESS

The October 2014 issue of the Royal Society's UK-based journal *Interface Focus* summarized findings that arose from Samueli Institute's efforts to explore resilience from a diversity of disciplines and perspectives — a first for the field.ⁱ Samueli Institute's goal was to look beyond the traditionally siloed way of studying resilience and instead look at how the whole system contributes to how individuals and societies respond and recover from traumatic experiences.



MISCONCEPTION OF RESILIENCE

Traditional definitions of resilience include a major misconception, that resilience is a bouncing back or a return to an original state after a stressor or traumatic event.

When examining resilience as a response to adversity, our current understanding needs to expand beyond the concept of “bouncing back,” to instead, a new normal that is characterized by stability through change. Being resilient entails more than the ability to adjust and adapt but also to transform when the internal and external stresses require a new way to effectively proceed forward.

Staying the same is impossible after experiencing the stress of war, the loss of a limb, or enduring a major illness. Although impossible to regain a pre-trauma state, people can be transformed by their experiences, and go on to experience positive, life-affirming lives.

Resilience was first used in the early 1800s to describe the elastic memory of wood and metals. How far can a material be stretched without breaking.



Materials typically have two options upon experiencing stress or strain:



1 | return to normal, or



2 | break

People have a third option:



3 | use the stress to grow

AN EXPANSION OF OUR UNDERSTANDING

As our understanding of resilience expands, we learn that resilience includes the following traits:



EVOLUTION

Resilience thinking can help when confronted with a major disturbance to the system. When adapting to adversity, people, families, businesses and communities can learn coping skills and make creative use of available resources.



CONTEXT BASED

Resilience depends on point of view. For example, after deployment the warrior, spouse, children, unit and community all define differently the successful reintegration into home life.



ENVIRONMENTAL

Resilience is a two-way street: resilience thinking should not fall on our warfighters alone. Society must accommodate those who serve.



PREPAREDNESS

Resilience thinking includes learning from prior experiences, anticipating future needs and actively preparing. Specific personal and community systems' planning can prevent or mitigate some calamity.



TRANSFORMATION

When returning to normal is impossible, we must move forward. People, families, businesses, and communities struggle and grow to adapt in face of adversity and adopt a "new normal."

GROWTH THROUGH STRESS

Merely experiencing stress does not cause growth; however growth comes from the struggle to cope with the disruptions—not from the event itself.

Avoiding trauma can be impossible. People experience bereavement, life-threatening or life-changing illness, serious medical problems of their children, transportation accidents, house fires, sexual assault and sexual abuse, combat, refugee experiences, and being taken hostage.

Psychologists Richard G. Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun describe five areas of growth reported by people who have experienced these and other traumatic events:ⁱⁱ

- Discovery of new opportunities and possibilities that were not present before
- Closer relationships with others, especially others who suffer

- Greater appreciation for life
- Greater sense of personal strength: "If I lived through that, I can face anything"
- Spiritual growth

THE WAY FORWARD: HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Community resources are precious and when people, families, businesses, and organizations use resilience thinking the community and its members can better adapt to stresses and major trauma whether they are anticipated or not.

Working alone and collaboratively people, families and community leaders can set priorities and agendas to make beneficial changes build wellness, wellbeing and prosperity in good times, and prepare for, respond to and recover from bad times. Healthy resilient communities might:

- Align existing personal, family and community resilience, fitness, and wellbeing related goals across organizational boundaries;
- Seek convergences of purpose, and in common, recognize existing assets;
- Share key principles about personal and community resilience, anchored by positive behaviors, attitudes and habits;
- Establish practical and locally meaningful resilience, wellbeing, and readiness measures/metrics; and
- Encourage community members and leaders to discover what works and do more of it.

DON'T JUST SURVIVE - PREPARE, ADAPT AND THRIVE!

TAKE CARE OF YOUR BODY
Eat well, sleep, stay hydrated, use nutritional substances appropriately.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR MIND
Learn to manage stress. Exercise good decision making.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR SPIRIT
Find meaning outside of yourself. This can be by volunteering, or establishing relationships with a spiritual or faith-based community.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE READY AND RESILIENT? A HOLISTIC APPROACH

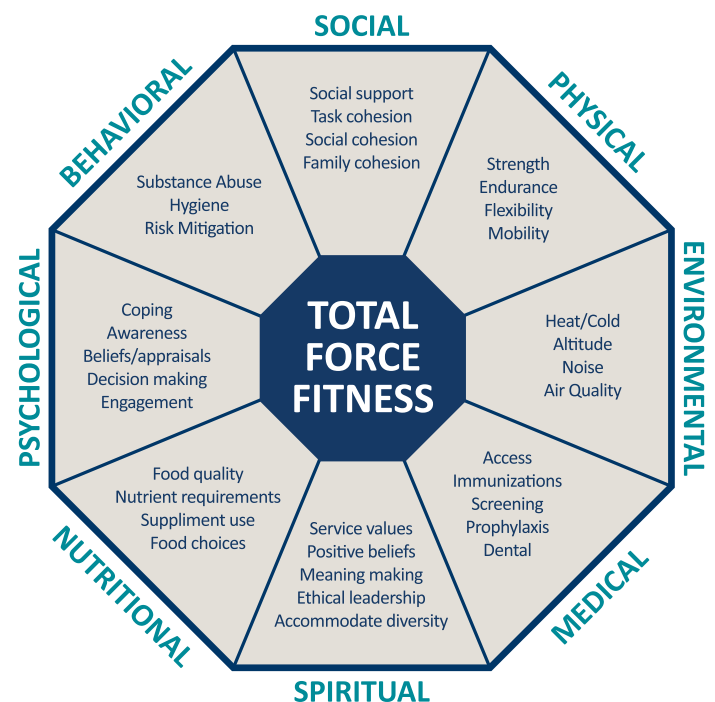
A Service member's readiness for war includes more than a physical fitness test and battle training. Ensuring optimal performance, resilience and recovery requires a more holistic approach.

In 2009 then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen began an effort to create a framework that encompassed all branches of the service and incorporated the well-being of Service member families affected by deployments and the resulting consequences. In November 2009, Adm. Mullen tasked the Consortium for Human and Military Performance at the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences in Bethesda, Md. to host a workshop of leading health specialists. Samueli Institute coordinated the event and contributed significantly to the establishment of comprehensive fitness principles that were subsequently outlined in a special issue of Military Medicine.

"Total Force Fitness is more than a physical fitness; it is the sum total of the many facets of individuals, their families, and the organization in which they serve. It is a state of being." Adm. Mullen, from the introduction to the special issue.ⁱⁱⁱ

Because resilience and readiness is based on so many domains, studying resilience from a single domain is insufficient because it separates the

person from their environment. Samueli Institute advocated for a cross-discipline approach, which allows for a complete understanding of resilience of a whole person within his or her environment.



ⁱ Sprengel, M., Jain, S., Berry, K., Ives, J., & Jonas, W. Towards a Systems Model of Resilience. *InterfaceFocus*. 2014. 4(5).

ⁱⁱ <http://www.pbs.org/thisemotionallife/topic/resilience/what-resilience>

ⁱⁱⁱ *Military Medicine: Total Force Fitness for the 21st Century* 2010 Vol. 175, No. 8.

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