

# Enhancing Resilience

## The Mind Matters



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# Content

- Resilience.
- Potential benefits.
- Current evidence.
- Delivery.

# Resilience

- Resilience is the ability to maintain healthy functioning of capacities which are at risk of degradation over periods of intensive and persistent demands, or the ability to bounce back from adversity after such periods.
- Cognitive resilience is the ability to maintain or regain cognitive capacities at risk of degradation, depletion, or failure in the face of situational challenges experienced over protracted time periods.

# NATO Technical Report

- Successful military service requires service members to be able to perform under extreme stress and to effectively engage in behaviours that enable them to manage that stress.
- There is much that militaries can do to prepare their service members, building mental health resilience through training is one.

# Potential Benefits

- Promote optimum and sustainable performance, both in the individual and organisation.
- Promoting positive mental health and protect against the impact of stressors.

# Delivery

- NATO recommendations; 4 essential, 5 desirable skills.
- Acceptance and Control.
- Goal setting.
- Self talk.
- Tactical breathing.
- Mental rehearsal
- Building optimism
- Grounding
- Sleep management
- Progressive muscular relaxation

# UKAF Delivery

- Mindfulness.
- A mental mode characterized by attention to present moment experience without judgment, elaboration, or emotional reactivity.

# Mindfulness: Evidence

- Eight US Marine infantry platoons (n=281) were randomly selected to receive either mindfulness training (n=147) or training-as-usual (n=134).
- Eight weeks of Mindfulness-Based Mind Fitness Training (MMFT) was undertaken consisting of 20 hours of classroom instruction plus daily homework exercises.
- Marines who received MMFT had a greater ability to recover from stressful experiences as evidenced by a range of physical markers of successful recovery (Johnson et al 2014)

# Mindfulness: Evidence

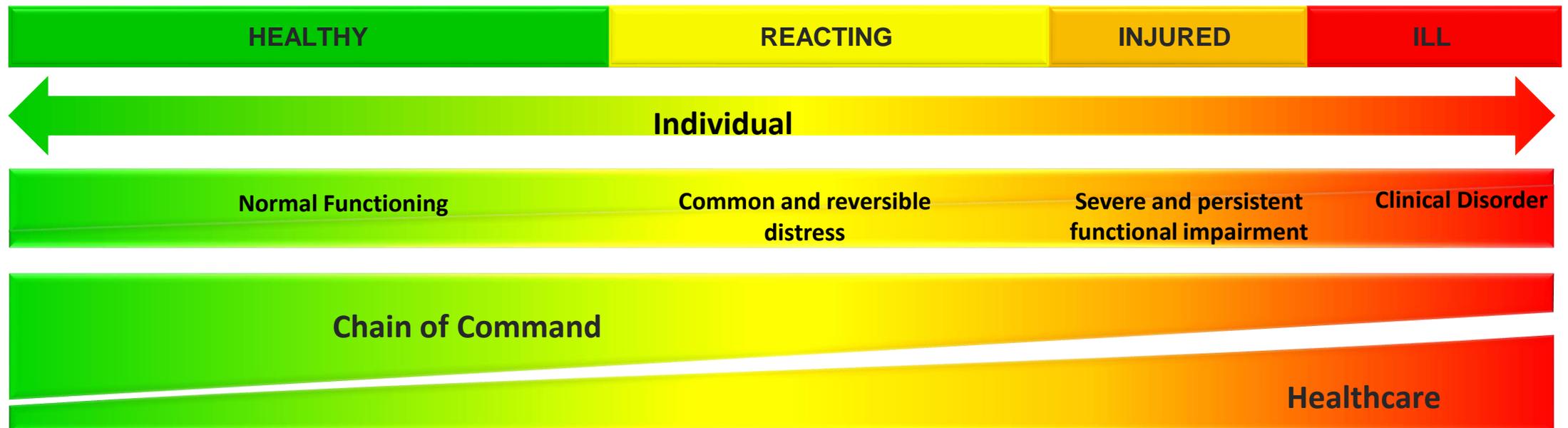
- Two military cohorts (n=48) provided study data during an investigation the impact of mindfulness training (MT) on working memory capacity (WMC), emotional regulation and affective experience. One group received an eight-week Mindfulness Based Mind Fitness course.
- Whilst the control group showed deterioration in WMC throughout the high stress pre-deployment interval, those provided with mindfulness training and who reported higher practice time showed an increase in WMC, lower levels of negative affect and higher levels of positive affect

# Mindfulness: Evidence

- Promote comfort with uncertainty and chaos.
- Ability to compartmentalise, focussing on the present and disregarding distractions.
- Protect against reduced working memory capacity.
- Protect against rumination and emotional disturbance.
- Higher levels of self-compassion.
- Reduced performance anxiety.
- Enhance cognitive performance in Special Forces.

# Delivery

- Optimising Performance through Stress Management and Resilience Training
- Based on Mental Health Continuum Model



# OPSMART

A series of interventions delivered at specific points through the service persons career.

- Mental Resilience Training.
- Army Mental Health Awareness Training.
- Integrated into Fitness Programmes.

# Mental Resilience Training

Mindfulness based psychological skills training.

- Goal setting.
- Dealing with negative thoughts.
- Positive thinking skills.
- Emotion regulation.
- Anxiety regulation.
- Pain tolerance.
- Positive imagery.
- Mental rehearsal.

# Army Mental Health Awareness Training

- Skills to improve and maintain mental fitness.
- Understand and recognise the causes, symptoms and coping strategies available.
- Improve mental health literacy.
- Peer support and signposting.

# Physical Training

- MRT skills incorporated into warm up
- Mindfulness skills incorporate into warm down.

# In Development

- Army Leadership and Development Programme
- Officer Training
- Pre-employment training
- High risk groups

# Evaluation

- Attitude
- Skill attainment
- Mental health fitness
- Training satisfaction
- Unit climate and leadership

# Conclusion

- Not simply about developing the skills required to cope with and get through a challenging career.
- Skills which allow the individual to use the military experience to reach their potential.