



## Building Resilience: Comprehensive Soldier Fitness

*Sustaining our all-volunteer force is our first imperative. Nowhere is the stress on our force more profound than in the toll it takes on our people. . . . We are aggressively addressing the causes of stress on individuals resulting from the cumulative effects of multiple deployments, and seeking to build resilience in Soldiers, families and civilians.<sup>1</sup>*

### Introduction

America's Army is made up of talented, experienced and well-trained Soldiers and civilians. With their dedication and commitment, the Army is accomplishing the missions the nation has assigned—conducting operations in two theaters—all while transforming and modernizing. More than eight years of combat, however, have stretched Soldiers, their family members and Army civilians.

Soldiers and Army civilians are experiencing multiple deployments. The Army has seen the number of suicides rise each year, and more people are experiencing symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Additionally, Soldiers' family members are going through these experiences too, both while the spouses/parents are deployed and after they return.

The resilience of the force is dependent upon the ability of its people to cope with the cumulative effects of stress, and to better adapt to future demands. To meet these continuing challenges, the Army has redoubled its efforts to build resilience in its Soldiers, family members and civilians by taking steps to embrace social, emotional, spiritual, family and physical fitness. Through its comprehensive health strategy, the Army is maximizing physical and psychological health promotion and prevention to increase readiness and quality of life.



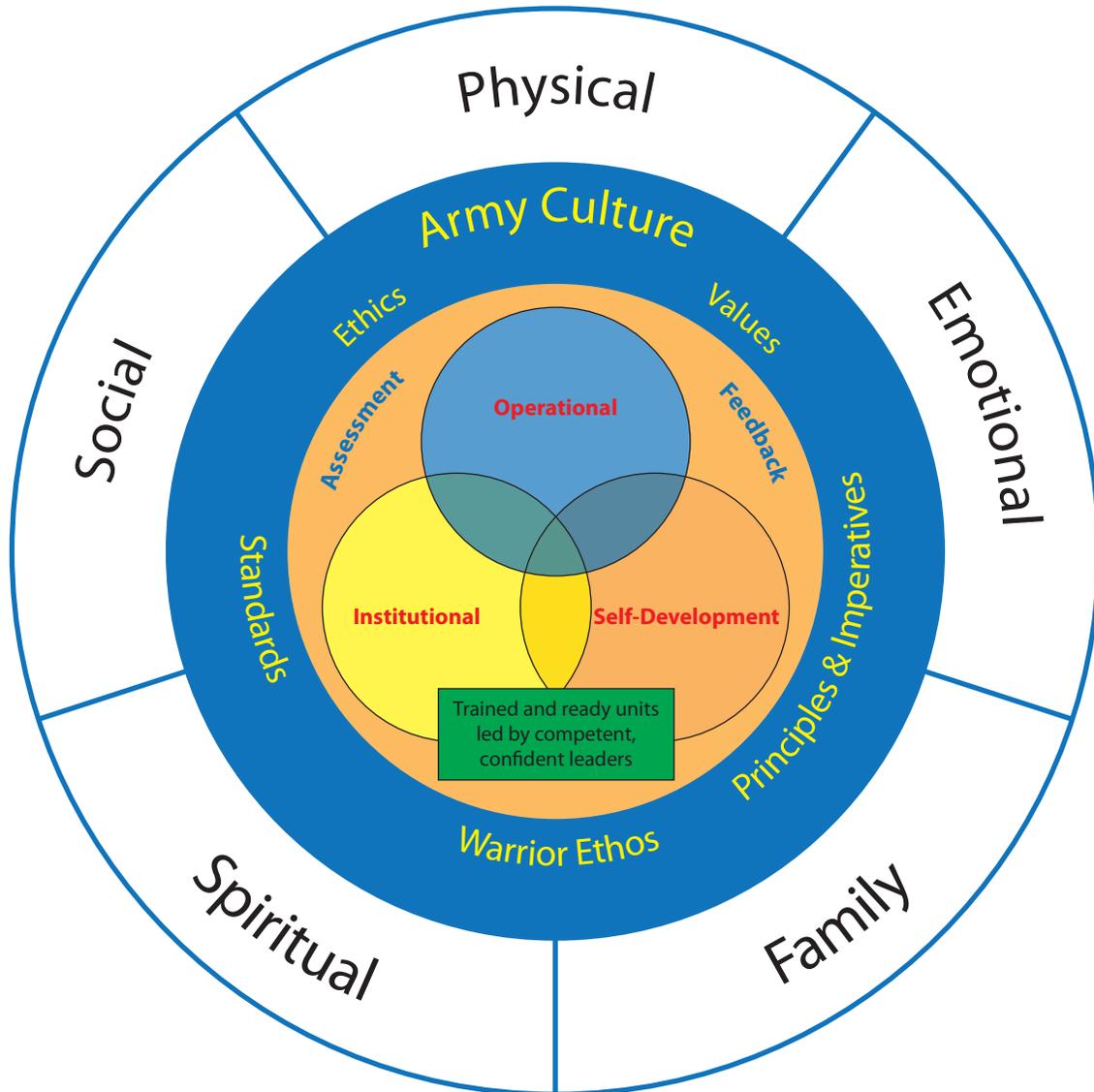
### What Is Comprehensive Soldier Fitness?

Comprehensive Soldier Fitness (CSF)—a holistic fitness program for Soldiers, family members and Army civilians—is designed to enhance performance and build resilience.

Though the Army has equipped and trained its Soldiers for the rigors of combat for 235 years, CSF is taking a deliberate approach to equipping Soldiers with the psychological tools—emotional, social, spiritual and familial strength—to unlock their potential in this era of sustained operations. Based on a proven track record of 30-plus years of scientific study and results, CSF teaches Soldiers, family members and Army civilians resilience, thinking skills and coping strategies based on *how* to think rather than *what* to think.

<sup>1</sup> The Honorable John M. McHugh, Secretary of the Army, and General George W. Casey, Jr., Chief of Staff, Army, Statement Before the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, on the Posture of the United States Army, 23 February 2010, <http://armed-services.senate.gov/statemnt/2010/02%20February/McHugh-Casey%2002-23-10.pdf>.

# Comprehensive Soldier Fitness



Source: Headquarters, Department of the Army

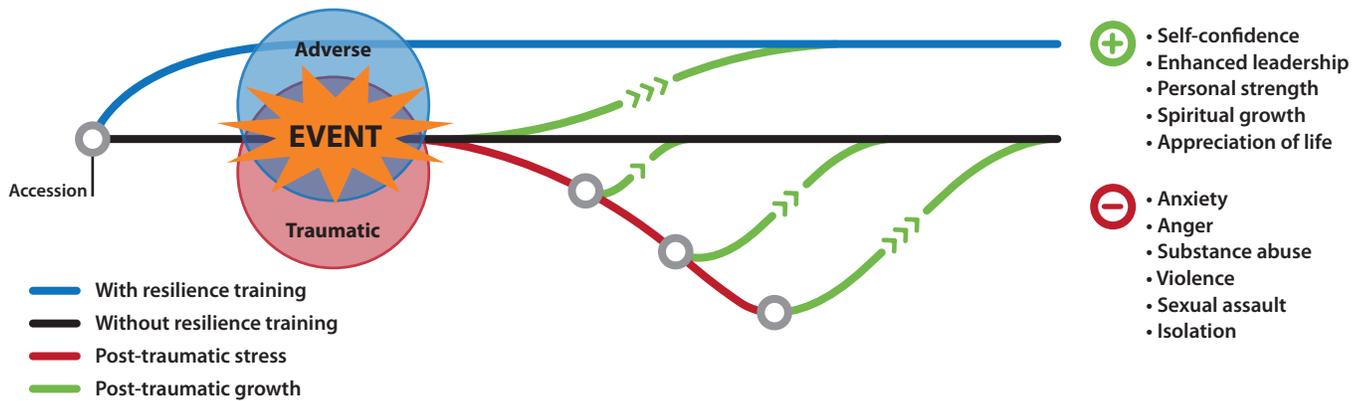
The Army’s plan consists of four program elements: the Global Assessment Tool, Comprehensive Resilience Modules, the Master Resilience Trainer program and Sustainment Resilience Training.

**The first step in the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program is the Global Assessment Tool (GAT).** The GAT provides a participant with a baseline assessment in four of the dimensions of strength—emotional, social, spiritual and family—and provides an opportunity to track self-development and growth in these areas over time. Developed by subject matter experts from U.S. military and civilian universities, the GAT contains a series of 105 questions prepared by scientists and tested and validated by Soldiers. An

individual’s answers to the GAT are not accessible to others, nor are they meant to diagnose; they simply allow Soldiers to identify their own personal strengths and weaknesses. Feedback is immediate and presented in simple bar graphs. Like the rest of the CSF program, the GAT will not be used to deter individuals from career progression or selection for schools, because the information is viewed only by the participant, not by anyone else. The questions are intended not to make a diagnosis of any mental illness or condition but to measure psychological strengths.

Once an individual completes the GAT, he/she will be able to immediately begin online training. **This online training consists of self-development modules**

# The Value of Resilience Training



Source: Headquarters, Department of the Army

called **Comprehensive Resilience Modules**, which provide participants with the tools to allow them to improve upon their component GAT scores.

All Soldiers are required to complete the GAT and the appropriate Comprehensive Resilience Modules. The GAT and follow-on modules specifically tailored for Army family members and civilians are available to them online. Both the GAT and the Comprehensive Resilience Modules are part of a program structured to provide immediate assessment and long-term stress management for the entire force before, rather than after, traumatic events. This pre-traumatic resilience training is geared to boost self-confidence, enhance leadership, grow emotional strength, provide room for spiritual growth and increase appreciation of life. Resilience training will help an individual realize more optimistic and realistic choices to balance out negative thought processes. In addition, the heightened self-sufficiency will improve the efficiency of post-traumatic psychological treatment.



The CSF Master Resilience Training Course trains Soldiers in critical thinking that aims to increase one's optimism, self-awareness and mental agility. In November 2009, the Army graduated 180 Soldiers from its first full-scale course. In 2010, 1,500 Soldiers will become certified Master Resilience Trainers, with the goal of having at least one Master Resilience Trainer per battalion by the end of 2010. During the 10-day course, participants learn real-time resilience, assertive communication and problem-solving, as well as how to identify strengths in themselves and others. Classes are taught in different learning environments, such as large groups, breakouts and role-play, that help participants learn how to apply their knowledge to train others. These Soldiers return to their units to instill resilience in their subordinates. In this way, the Army plans to target junior enlisted members quickly and set an Army-wide psychological standard without interrupting already-packed training schedules.

As with the GAT and Comprehensive Resilience Modules, the Master Resilience Trainer course component of CSF also will be made available to family members and Army civilians. Several family members recently participated in a family-focused pilot course, while Army civilians are participating in the course alongside Soldiers.

## The Way Ahead

Components of the CSF program are mandatory for all Soldiers, including those in the Army National Guard and Army Reserve, and will be available to any family member or Army civilian who wishes



to participate. The program is not a single event; self-assessments will be offered continually. These tools will allow participants to cope with adversity in combat, at home, at work and beyond. The director of CSF has compared the resilience-building program to marathon training, where post-injury costs are kept to a minimum due to preventative care and training prior to setbacks.<sup>2</sup> Priority of effort will be directed toward junior enlisted members, who not only constitute the bulk of the Army but also suffer the highest rates of PTSD, financial hurdles, indiscipline and divorce.

**Individual Soldiers will follow up initial training by attending progressive, sequential training at all U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command schools.** Units will train in accordance with their deployment cycle. The Army anticipates training all Soldiers, Army civilians and family members to increase the confidence to lead, the courage to stand up for beliefs and the compassion to help others—in short, to maximize personal potential by dealing with adversity.

Initial feedback gathered in December 2009 has been overwhelmingly positive. With strong evidence backing the usefulness of CSF for the foreseeable future, Army senior leadership believes it

will have a powerful positive effect on the force. The CSF program represents the Army's investment in the readiness of the force and the quality of life of Soldiers, family members and Army civilians, to provide them with the critical skills they need to take care of themselves, their families and their teammates.

Concurrently, the Army will collect the first batch of scores and will remove personal information to obtain an Army-wide survey of holistic fitness. Developers also will continue to monitor the continuing feedback and continue to modify the GAT as needed to fulfill the Army's needs.

## Conclusion

CSF uses a balanced, multi-faceted approach and a life-long learning model that includes individual assessment, tailored virtual training, classroom training at all levels of Army education and embedded resilience experts to provide Soldiers, family members and Army civilians the critical skills they need to face any and all of life's challenges. **CSF—a true prevention model aimed at the entire force—seeks to effectively and efficiently ensure that the quality of life of those who serve the nation is commensurate with the quality of their service.**



***Comprehensive Soldier Fitness—a holistic fitness program for Soldiers, family members and Army civilians—is designed to build resilience.***

<sup>2</sup> BG Rhonda Cornum, USA, CNN.com interview with Campbell Brown, 12 November 2009, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0911/12/ec.01.html> (transcript), <http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/bestoftv/2009/11/13/cb.rewire.troops.cnn?iref=allsearch> (video).