

Charlie Mike

Continue the Mission at Home for a Healthier Family

Success in the military is built on resilience to continue the mission, or Charlie Mike. This tipsheet guides applying Charlie Mike to our families and home to facilitate success in life. At home, school, work and everywhere in between, we can continue the mission despite setback and adversity, and overcome any challenges we face.

RESILIENCE: The ability to withstand or recover quickly from difficult situations or challenging experiences by utilizing resources within ourselves, our family and our community to adapt and excel in the face of internal and external demands.

When implementing Charlie Mike — unhealthy strategies might be used and can become a detriment to resiliency strategies. Be careful not to allow this to happen.

Unhealthy strategies are steps that accomplish the end goal of remaining on mission, but at the cost of harming or injuring yours or others' mental, physical and emotional health. These strategies may "get you through" adversity, but at a cost.

Examples include:

- Pushing through something without acknowledging or recognizing the toll it takes on you or the people around you
- Minimizing the impact of the experience
- Believing that talking about feelings is a weakness
- Failing to acknowledge reactions, thoughts and feelings toward adversity

Unhealthy messages when addressing family challenges might include:

- "I went through _____, which was way worse than anything you've been through, and I still managed to do all these things."
- "What do you know about struggling?"
- "This won't matter when you're older."

Use of these types of messages with family questions their real experiences, minimizes their feelings and hinders well-being. Replacing these with resilient messages supports a successful Charlie Mike.

BUILDING FAMILY RESILIENCE:

Resiliency is not accidently found; it is intentionally built, and the best place to foster it is in the home. Children and youth are meaningful givers and purpose finders, and having a purpose in life is vital to building lifelong resilience. Being part of the military community, it is easy to find that purpose, but just as important as finding it, parents and caregivers must teach how resilience is practiced in daily life.

Strategies to build family resilience:

- **Share how your children give you meaning and purpose.** This will show them how important they are to the family's mission and the people (caregivers) they need the most. *"I love you. My life is enriched and has meaning with you in it."*
- **Support your children's sense of meaning and purpose.** Allowing children to discover their resilience with you is easier than them having to build it without you. *"You just light up when you play ball (or write poetry or cook or whatever brings them joy). It is great that you have discovered something that brings you joy."*
- **Recognize and acknowledge when you feel tired, irritable, angry, frustrated or even hungry.** Youth can better identify and manage their negative emotions when the adults around them do the same. *"I've had a rough day. I apologize if I sound irritable. Please know it's not personal to you. I need time to regroup and transition to family."*
- **Also acknowledge your children's feelings and experiences.** This validates that they matter. *"It seems from your voice and facial expressions that you may be feeling disappointed. Does that seem correct? It is OK to feel what you feel."*
- **Teach them that setbacks and failures are learning opportunities, not defining characteristics.** Setbacks are a normal part of life. What defines us is not our failures but how we respond to them. *"That didn't work out as we wanted it to. What can we learn from it to be better prepared next time?"*
- **Know your limitations.** It is vital to stretch and push yourself, but recognize when your limitations are maxed out. Do not harm yourself or others in trying to finish the task. *"We committed to doing this, so we'll follow through today. But it seems it would best if we plan on resting tonight, so we don't push ourselves too far and we can recharge."*
- **Allow yourself time to reset and recover.** Ensuring rest is a great way to protect yourself and others, as it allows decision making to be clear and objective. Just as the body needs time to heal and recover, so does the brain. Allowing yourself time to reset and recover can be as small as taking a few moments to collect yourself, walk the dog or stretch, or as big as going on vacation. Getting a regular, full-night's sleep is essential. *"I appreciate being able to walk the dog and listen to music after work. It helps me reset."*
- **Find ways to calm down, when needed.** Anger, sadness and frustration are emotions we all experience. How we respond to these feelings will define what messages we're sending about them. Youth learn strategies to be calm and overcome challenging situations when the adults around them show them how by doing the same. *"I need some space and time to calm down right now. I'm afraid I may say something I later regret if we push this issue immediately."*

Prioritizing your own physical, mental and emotional health enables better family health.

BEING RESILIENT IN THE EVERYDAY STUFF AND IN THE BIG THINGS, TOO:

Being resilient is hard and can be challenging. Implementing resilient strategies may be more complicated when it relates to our mental health, sexual health, emotional well-being or anything that requires vulnerability. Charlie Mike applies to caring for our mental and emotional well-being, too.

Making the home a safe, structured, stable, supportive, prosocial environment is vital for building resiliency and applying Charlie Mike to the home.

Things to consider when addressing the family's mental, sexual and emotional health:

- When a young person experiences mental health challenges, it doesn't mean their parents or caregivers failed or did something wrong. It also doesn't mean the young person is broken or weak.
- Being honest with yourself and others is vital. Vulnerability is often mistakenly seen as weakness, but in reality, vulnerability is a great strength.
- Young people need permission to share and be authentic. But they may be reluctant to share what is going on because they believe they will be adding a burden to an already heavy load carried by their parents.

How to promote a healthy family and implement Charlie Mike:

- **Prioritize quality time spent together.** Find time every day, even if it's just 10 minutes, where your children have your undivided attention and you're doing what they're doing. Choose an activity everyone enjoys, such as playing a board game, talking about a video series, walking around the park, etc. Enjoying each other's company is more important than the specific activity. Dedicating time to them will help build trust and will make it easier for them to approach you when they face challenges.
- **Create an environment of honesty.** Honesty and vulnerability should be encouraged and celebrated. Being honest about struggles is hard, but is also a key to overcoming challenges.
- **Listen.** Listen with urgency and thoughtfulness to things that are important to them, even if the topic may not be important to you. This will make discussing sensitive topics easier, and many times youth benefit from their feelings being validated more than receiving advice.
- **Start the conversation.** [Be willing to start the conversation](#), don't wait! Young people care about conversations regarding mental, physical and sexual health. Tell them you're having this conversation because you care about them. Sometimes these questions can be uncomfortable to ask and answer, but doing so helps show that you care about them, their safety and their decision making.
- **Promote positive coping skills.** Journaling, exercising or creating music are all healthy coping skills, and things you can do together. Find a new activity to do together. Learning and mastering new skills is vital to building resilience and maintaining good mental health.

- **Create a family culture of Charlie Mike.** Come together regularly as a family to establish family and individual missions and support each other to continue despite setbacks or adversity. Make it a goal to regularly ask, *“How is your well-being today?”* the same way we ask, *“How was school today?”* Ensure everyone knows that doing our best requires taking care of our physical, mental, emotional and social health.

Applying resiliency when integrating Charlie Mike to missions at home can build a stronger family.

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