# Spouse Education Career Opportunities (SECO) - Giving the Gift of Wellness Webinar Transcript

- [Christina] Thank you, Virginia. And hello, and welcome, everyone to "Giving the Gift of Wellness, Balance Your Wellness Ahead of the Holiday Season." My name is Christina, and I'm a career coach with the Department of Defense Spouse Education and Career Opportunities Program. Also known as SECO. It is an honor and pleasure to introduce Maria as the presenter for today's webinar. And to provide you with more information about the SECO program. The SECO program gives military spouses an opportunity to access support, guidance and information relevant to every stage of their career. Our goal is to help you reach yours and to help you gain confidence, hope, and inspiration that the best is yet to come. This includes the opportunity for military spouses to take advantage of our SECO career coaching services, and SECO coaching packages. Through working virtually one-on-one with a SECO career coach, military spouses receive tailored resources to help identify, clarify, and achieve their goals. In addition to our career coaching services, military spouses are also able to access and register on the MySECO portal by visiting MySECO.militaryonesource.mil. This is a one-stop online career and education toolbox filled with valuable information, resources and interactive features available to military spouses at no cost. We are here to help you succeed during your journey through military life and beyond. Military spouses have access to Military OneSource, including SECO services and the MySECO portal for a full year after the date of their service member separation. I am here as a SECO career coach and Maria is joining us as a health and wellness expert. However, Maria and I are also here as military spouses. And while we each walk unique paths during military life, in many ways we share similar experiences of pride and joy, especially during homecomings, but also trials and tribulations. Many of you may relate that initially becoming a military spouse helps you discover what you are made of, your strengths, skills and toughness. You learn how to multitask and prioritize to make things happen and take action, even when you are exhausted, worried, or waiting on the unknown. I now know resilience is a muscle that military spouses flex often. Military life has also been humbling. More recently it's taught me the importance of asking for and receiving help, which can be hard to do when you're also trying to be resilient and independent all the time. But the truth is we were not meant to carry these unique challenges of military life alone. I wasn't meant to and neither are you. Asking for and receiving help allows you to fill your cup so that you have more to give. As a military spouse and a career coach, I commend you for being here today, and I encourage you to explore SECO and other services through Military OneSource that are available to you and your family. Remember, asking for help is a brave and courageous act. And it means you're refusing to give up and that you're looking for a better life for you and your family. Being witness to Maria's legacy shines a light on another lesson of military spouse life. And that is, that military spouses are each other's greatest support network. Maria understands firsthand the unique challenges of military life and has made it her life's work to be a fierce advocate for the worldwide military spouse community. As doors open in life, Maria is always reaching out to bring other military spouses with her. During today's webinar, she will empower each of us to envision what we want from our health and our life while providing strategies for health and wellness so that we can pursue that vision one step at a time. Having her in our corner gives military spouses everywhere hope for tomorrow and will help each of us stand a little taller today. So please join me in welcoming champion fitness trainer, health and wellness coach, registered dietician and military spouse, Maria. Thank you for being here.

- [Maria] Thanks Christina. Thanks for that great introduction. And I also wanted to thank Christine Wallraff. We had, I had done a little keynote speaking event for her and her group and her husband's group down there at Joint Base San Antonio a couple of months ago. And so she had asked me to ask, see if we could talk about some of these things with a larger audience. And also want to thank Military OneSource for partnering with me today, Lee and Erica and Virginia and Amanda, and then also to Alison who's gonna join me in some of the information today. So, it's really exciting to see people out there in our virtual world who have joined us. Of course, if it was my preference we would all be together in person. Sometimes a subject like this are more interactive when we are in person. But I am grateful for your time and your participation in the presentation today. And I'll look for some responses in the chat box and getting some input from you. As Christina said in my introduction, I am trained as a registered dietician, a fitness trainer and a health coach. And sometimes we become passionate about something because of the challenges we've been through. Being a military spouse for the last 33 years has been exciting and rewarding. It's been amazing in so many ways. And yet at times it's been humbling, frustrating and difficult. But I love being a military spouse, a milSpouse and a milMother. I don't know if that's a term. I know we're using milSpouse. I don't know if we're using milMother yet, but since I'm the mother of three active-duty soldiers and one active-duty son-in-law, I'm gonna maybe coin milMother. So, much of what I'm sharing with you today, I've learned through my career in education, but also a good deal has been learned through my life's experiences. And I know that you'll be able to relate to a lot of what I'm talking about. So let's go ahead and get started with the slides. Giving the Gift of Wellness, is the name of this and Balancing Your Wellness Wheel Ahead of the Holiday Schedule. I hope that you were able to download the wellness wheel which we'll pull up on the next slide. And so if you have a pen and have that and also a writing utensil, that would be helpful. If not, don't worry about it. That was something you could print out later. Just kinda follow along with the slide So on this first slide, you can see someone presenting a gift to someone else. If we were in person, I would attempt to give you a box, maybe similar to this, that was gonna be the gift of good health. And then when you, the receiver would open the box, it would be empty. Why do you think that the box would be empty? Well, the box would be empty because good health is hard to define and capture. Good health is not necessarily objective. Maybe it's more subjective. It's completely individualized. Good health is hard to quantify and it's not universal to everyone. What's good health to me, may not be good health to you, but health does matter. And without good health, you may not be able to achieve the things you wanna achieve or be the person that you want to be. If I were to ask you what some components of good health are, I would probably hear different things. And if you wanna type what you would say a component of good health would be, go ahead and type that into the chat box. If I were to say "What's good health?" Just type in some words that come to mind, if you're able to type in the chat box. I would probably hear you say things like, maybe being at a healthy weight, having good blood pressure. Someone said spiritual fitness. Having maybe appropriate blood sugar and cholesterol levels, restful sleep, getting consistent exercise fitness, right? Oh yeah, okay, I think they said spiritual and fitness, right? So I also might hear things that deal with mental health, such as managing stress, feeling in control. Yep, sleep, having a positive attitude. All of these components, all of these are kind of crossed over into various domains of health. And we are gonna spend some time today exploring all of those different domains. You'll be able to see the different domains on your wellness wheel. And the first one we are going to talk about is the physical wellness. So physical wellness relates to our appearance, our body weight, energy levels, exercise, or physical fitness, good nutrition, sleep, and the absence of chronic disease. It's about taking proper care of our bodies so they can function optimally, to complete our activities of daily living without extreme fatigue or physical stress. The physical dimension of wellness entails personal responsibility and care for minor illnesses. And also knowing when it's time to go see the doctor. And it involves taking responsibility for ourselves to avoid preventable chronic diseases. So how do we know when we are physically well? What does that feel like? Or how can we measure that? If we feel like we are doing well physically and we see some of these aspects here, what does that look like? Or what does that feel like? Being able to do what you want to do in life. Yeah, absolutely. You know, you can look at your weight, are you at a good weight? Do you have good energy? Are you free from chronic diseases? And when we have our bloodwork done, does our lab work look good? So there's different ways that we can measure it. Some that are quantitative, looking at the labs and weight and things like that. And then there's qualitative. What is our quality of life like? When I talk to my clients and patients, I concentrate on five components of physical fitness. They include aerobic capacity. So we take a look at how well somebody's cardiovascular system is functioning. Do they have good aerobic capacity? We look at muscle strength. So how much weight can you lift without hurting yourself? Look at muscle endurance. How long can your muscles endure an activity? So the difference between muscle strength and muscle activity, is how much weight you could lift, versus how long your muscles can endure an activity like maybe a long distance bike or run or something. Another component is flexibility. That kinda goes along with flexibility and agility. And I think the older we get, the more important flexibility and agility are. Although I think that if we're not working on flexibility and agility when we're younger, we're certainly going to have challenges with those as we get older. And then the fifth component to physical wellness is body composition. So how much fat in our body do we have versus muscle? We know that fat, especially visceral fat which is internal to our organs can be a precursor for lots of chronic diseases, including heart disease. So that's an important component of fitness as well. So how do we know when we're out of balance with our physical health, what does that feel like? If we don't have good physical wellness, tell me what that feels like. We're probably gonna feel tired, maybe low energy. Pain, stress, sickness, other physical ailments and really physical wellness looks different to different people. As I said about health in general. Our age, our job requirements our interests, our goals, and our physical limitations all play a part in what our fitness looks like. I know there are people out there, probably some of you are long distance runners or marathoners or triathletes. Well, that's not for me. That's not my definition of being physically fit. I've had some back injuries over the years and have some herniated disks and things. So my physical wellness includes doing a lot of stretching and strengthening exercises for my core so that I can keep my back pain free. I do continue to strive and improve with my physical fitness. And I've been really working on different things. As I said, my core strength. About six months ago, I really couldn't do pushups. I could do the girly ones, but not the regular pushups. But through working on my core strength, I can report that I probably could do about 25 pushups now. So for me, that's really important. And that's really a lot of progress, for someone else that might not be any big deal. But your goals and your progress are gonna look very different from mine. Let's talk a little bit about nutrition, because we know nutrition is another pillar of physical wellness. And if I were to ask you to name some healthy foods, can you go ahead and type some healthy foods into the chat box? What would be some healthy foods in your mind? So I'm seeing a few things pop up like spinach and broccoli. Let's see, some whole wheat products, blackberries. Excellent. So we've got some healthy people out there in our audience who are typing in some really good healthy foods. And I think a lot of what we considered to be blueberries. Yep, a lot of what we consider to be healthy foods, vary from one person to another. So if you think about the fact that maybe somebody would type in milk or yogurt which right, because milk and yogurt have good sources of calcium and protein and vitamin D and magnesium. But somebody who may have a lactose intolerance or a protein intolerance to some of the dairy products, wouldn't put that as a healthy food because it would not help them to feel good. So, you know, that might be something that some of us think would be a healthy food, but is not for everybody. We probably can make some fairly broad assumptions about the things we should eat and shouldn't eat. We probably know we shouldn't eat fast food for all of our meals and probably shouldn't be drinking a two-liter soda every day. And the USDA does publish their broad recommendations every five years and the things that we as Americans need more of and things that we need less of. And so of course you probably can guess the things that most Americans need more of are fiber, fruits and vegetables, and omega-3 fats. And we need less of sugars, saturated fats, salt and processed foods, to name a few. So I know that's quickly going over a few nutrition things. Being a dietician I could spend lifetimes talking to you about nutrition, but we're gonna move on to another component of physical wellness and that's sleep. So I might require eight hours of sleep a day. You might require six. Sleep hygiene is as different for each person as is our physical fitness. But we all know that good sleep habits entail keeping good bedtime routines, turning off our devices, not having that annoying blue light, cooling the temperature in the bedroom and addressing sleep and snoring problems, or sleep apnea and snoring problems and avoiding excessive alcohol. It's also recommended that we try to keep our sleep hours consistent. Like go to bed right around the same time and get up around the same time, most days and nights. And I know that's not always easy, especially with a military lifestyle. So physical fitness, nutrition and sleep all affect our weight. Weight is a key component in physical wellness. And again, we could spend sessions talking about weight and we don't have that time today. But I'll sum it up by saying, focus on fueling and nourishing your body, not necessarily on a certain number on the scale. So what I'd like you to do is think about what we've talked about for the last five to 10 minutes about our physical wellness. If you were to rate yourself on a scale of one to 10, with one being, "Wow, I don't really think that I have very good physical wellness," versus 10 like, "I am crushing it. My sleep is great. My nutrition is great. My physical fitness is great." Well then you're a 10. So go ahead and think about where you would rate yourself and then go back to that pie chart, go back to your wheel and find that piece of pie that says physical wellness and assign yourself a number. You can either write the number in on the physical wellness piece of pie, or you can shade in that amount. So if you assigned yourself a five, you would shade in half of that piece of the pie. So go ahead and do that and just think realistically about where you would rate yourself on your physical wellness. Some key takeaways as we sum up our physical wellness would be as I said earlier, concentrate on nourishing your body. So often we get wrapped up in, "Should I eat this as this? Is this fattening? Does this have too much of this or too much of that." Sometimes that's helpful but sometimes it can make it more confusing. So concentrate on nourishing your body and be mindful of how you're treating your body with food, sleep and activity. Kind of assess where you are, notice how your body responds to eating a certain way or sleeping, having certain sleep habits or physical fitness habits. And remember that sleep is a necessity, not a luxury. I don't know why we've gotten over the years to where we think that sleep is something that we can do without, because we absolutely cannot. We know that that's when our body rests and rejuvenates. By the way the background to this slide with the avocado and the broccoli rabe and the pesto and the poached egg, all of the pictures that are the real pictures on these slides are pictures that I've taken. My son and I went to Africa last year and this was a breakfast that I had gotten somewhere at this nice little cafe in South Africa. So we're gonna transition now to talking to Alison. Alison is gonna tell us a little bit more before we go into financial wellness, about some of the resources that Military OneSource has available as we talk about our physical wellness. So go ahead, Alison.

- [Alison] Thank you. So as Maria discussed, this can be anything from maintaining a healthy weight fitting in daily activity, eating a well-balanced diet to getting enough sleep. We know that by maintaining a healthy weight and making sure we're getting quality sleep we can significantly decrease our risk of chronic diseases, increase our energy and feel better about ourselves. If you would like assistance with working on your physical health, Military OneSource has a team of certified health and wellness coaches that can help you make positive and lasting changes to your health. Our focus areas for health and wellness coaching are diet and eating habits, weight management, exercise, living well with health conditions such as high blood pressure or diabetes, and also positive stress management and positive life transitions, such as preparing for a new job or preparing for an upcoming PCS. Military OneSource offers you unlimited amount of coaching sessions for up to one year. You will always work with the same coach and you can work with your coach either through video, phone or web based through an online chat. During a coaching session, your coach will have you identify your personal wellness vision of what you hope to accomplish for yourself in the next six months. From there, they will work with you weekly to help you make a plan, focus on results and help you reach your goals. Our health and wellness coaches are there to support you and hold you accountable and provide you with health resources as needed. So if you're looking for accountability and a personal cheerleader to keep you motivated to reach your health goals, our health and wellness coaches can help through Military OneSource. Back to you, Maria.

- [Maria] Thanks, Alison. I want to transition now into talking about the next piece of the pie, which is financial wellness. Now I have to say, I'm not an expert in finances. Here's what I do know. Financial wellness involves the process of learning how to successfully manage financial expenses. That's pretty much a no brainer. And that money plays a critical role in our lives and not having enough of it impacts our health as well as our daily performance. Financial stress can lead to relationship discord, and it's also often a pain point in marriages. Keeping track of expenses, making a budget and sticking to it, are important skills to have in order to be financially responsible and independent. So how do you know if you're out of balance with financial wellness? Well, you probably have incurred unreasonable debt. You don't have savings or a plan for the future or for retirement. You have constant arguments with loved ones about money, and you might fear losing your job if you have one, thinking that you could be left homeless. There's so many resources both in the military and outside agencies that can help you with your finances. Question for you. Do you think that being out of balance in financial health could affect your physical health? Well, I would say yes, 'cause if you're worried about your finances, you might not be sleeping well. And if you aren't sleeping well, you might be too tired to yeah, be stressed. And you could be too tired to get up in the morning to exercise, so your fitness suffers. Also, research shows that when we're tired and when we're stressed, we tend to crave comfort foods. And most of those comfort foods are typically high in sugar and fat. Or, we can numb our financial stressors by overeating, overdrinking or engaging in other destructive behaviors. So if you were to take stock of your financial wellness, again, thinking of that one through 10 scale, go ahead and fill in your financial pie piece with where you would assess yourself to be with your financial wellness. So, a few key takeaways just to reiterate. You can always meet with a financial counselor. Try making a budget and sticking to it. We hear this all the time, but so few people actually take the time to do it. Find a way to save money every day. I always used to tell my kids, even if you only make $10 a day, save 10 cents, do something put a little bit away every day. And of course don't plan on winning the lottery because we all know that people who do win the lottery it seems like it's such a great thing initially, but then most lottery winners end up not happy in the end. And I think our chances are of winning are pretty darn low anyway. Just to kind of set, this slide is a picture of a trip I went on to Vietnam and this was on the Ha Long Bay, some beautiful granite precipices rising out of the Bay. So, this was one of my favorite pictures from my trip to Vietnam. And with that, Alison talk to us a little bit about what Military OneSource offers for financial wellness.

- [Alison] Yeah, absolutely. So we know there is a surprising connection between financial wellness in your overall health. Worries about finance can cause physical symptoms, such as headaches, high blood pressure, sleep loss and anxiety. Like you said Maria, it is important to take a close look at your finances and see if you need some assistance. Create a budget or work with a financial counselor who can help you create a budget. Our certified financial counselors at Military OneSource understand the financial challenges you may face as a result of COVID-19 or other stressors. Our financial counselors can help you with personal finance basics. These counselors can go over your finances and suggest ways to control household costs and they can also teach you about managing your budget and ways to stretch your resources. They can help you with your credit. Financial counselors can provide information on consumer rights and make appropriate referrals to military and civilian resources responsible for resolving credit issues. They can help you develop a debt repayment plan. The financial counselors can help you contact creditors and come up with a plan to pay off your debt. And then lastly, coordinate with emergency financial assistance organizations if needed. Our financial counselors can help you learn more about the service branch emergency financial aid organizations and request financial assistance if necessary. So do know you have year-round access to free financial counselors through Military OneSource.

- [Maria] Excellent, thanks Allison. We're going to transition to talking about intellectual wellness. So an intellectually well person uses creative and stimulating mental activities to open their minds to new concepts, to be able to learn new skills and to seek new challenges. Intellectually well people take advantage of different resources to expand their knowledge through academics, professional career choices, cultural involvement, travel and hobbies. So, what would it feel like to be out of balance intellectually? What does that feel like? So if you felt like you weren't intellectually well, type in a few things of what that would feel like. I would say that not using the best of our skill sets, stifling creativity, not having the right or enough education, maybe just feeling stuck or stagnant and maybe not having any outside interests or if you did have outside interests, not making time to engage in those and yeah. Not feeling creative, and not being energized by those things. Absolutely, thanks for that input. So as you look at the different components of intellectual wellness, how would you assess yourself? Again, go ahead and give yourself that one to 10 rating and write it in or color it in on your pie piece. A few key takeaways to increase your intellectual wellness might be to listen to podcasts. I mean, obviously reading is great, watching documentaries, traveling. Yes, you heard this slide also is from Vietnam that big jackfruit that's growing in the trees there. So traveling, you can learn so much through that. Through formal and informal education. And then also through things like mastermind groups. I've been part of mastermind groups, started them and been part of them, where you just get together with some like-minded people and discuss a subject that you're interested in learning more about or something that's near and dear to your heart. So mastermind groups are a really fun way and informal way to increase your intellectual wellness. And Alison, I'm gonna turn it over to you again.

- [Alison] All right, thank you. So it is important we live a stimulating and successful life. Maybe it's by reading, doing puzzles or learning a new skill such as a new language or hobby. Exposing ourselves to new experiences, which can be fun to do of course while living a military life. We have access to travel and meeting new people while learning new experiences often. This dimension of wellness is all about engaging in creative and mentally stimulating activities which can lead to a happier and healthier you. Our Military OneSource website, militaryonesource.mil has some fun resources that can help with mental stimulation. One feature from our digital library that comes to mind is BrainHQ. And BrainHQ can help improve your brain health with clinically proven personalized brain-training exercises. So I do encourage you to check out the militaryonesource.mil website for more fun resources that can help with brain stimulation. I will pass it back to you, Maria.

- [Maria] All right, I'm gonna have to check out that BrainHQ. That's maybe something I haven't yet seen. I love the digital library and Military OneSource. I used your ancestry and I look at different books and different audio books through that, but I didn't see the BrainHQ. So now I gotta... Now you've piqued my curiosity. I'm gonna have to go back and do that.

- [Alison] Yes, check it out.

- [Maria] Yeah, well, thank you. So intellectual wellness segues neatly into vocational wellness. Vocational wellness relates to our job satisfaction, fulfillment of our goals and expanding professional horizons, advancement recognition for our contributions, gaining new perspectives to problem-solve, achieving financial success and sharing of those experiences with our coworkers. Vocational health can be in the form of paid or unpaid work. And the work can be gained through volunteer activities, hobbies, school and community involvement. The vocational or occupational dimension recognizes personal satisfaction and enrichment life through our work. When we are occupationally well, we feel that we're using the best of our unique skills, our talents, our interests and education in a meaningful and rewarding job or career. They say it's better to choose a career which is consistent with our personal values and interests and beliefs, other than selecting one that is unrewarding. I mean, sometimes people will just fall in the footsteps of their parents, or a loved one, thinking that they have to go in a certain career field but then they don't find it as satisfying as maybe the person who they were emulating. There is a difference apparently between jobs and careers. According to the Oregon Labor Market Information System, a job is something that you receive paid for. Jobs are often a means to an end. So let's say like, I think back on the times when I was in high school and in college. And when, of course we were off on summer breaks I would come home and I would get a job just for the sake of having a job so that I could pay for my books and my sorority bills for the next year. It was certainly not something that I wanted to do long-term but it was a lot of jobs are task oriented to meet a goal. And of course my goal was just to make a little bit of money. Whereas the career is a lifetime journey of building and making good use of your skills, your knowledge and experiences. It is the total of all events and relationships in life. It might incorporate your events with family, friends, your education, your work and leisure activities. And like I said, it's built during a lifetime. Career planning is the ability to look ahead and think about where you're going and the steps you need to get there. A career should excite you. It should use the best of your skills and fit with your lifestyle. So how do we know if we are feeling in balance or feeling vocationally well? What does that feel like? You can type some things into the chat box, if anything comes to mind. So when you're vocationally well, how does that feel? Or what is that? What are the thoughts in your head around that? So a lot of times we feel like we're making a contribution. We're valued for our work and we're excited for the workday to begin. We don't keep hitting that snooze alarm and going back to sleep dreading going to work. Yeah, so we actually enjoy our work. We feel that we're using the best of our skills and we're compensated appropriately for what we do. So, you know, obviously the opposite of that would be hating your job, hating your career. And how do you think that would affect your physical health? So, if you were out of balance vocationally, how could that affect your physical health or even some of the other health that we're going to talk about? I'll give you a little personal account of how vocational health can affect health and other ways. So, for the last seven years, I've been employed as a dietician in corporate wellness, and I'm very satisfied with my job. And obviously with COVID things have affected a lot of us vocationally, me included. So the company, I have my own LLC but the company that I was an independent contractor for, several companies, but this one main company was about 95% of my work. Well unfortunately, corporate wellness depends on people coming to work and assessing different parameters of wellness. Well during COVID, nobody was going to work. So the company that I worked for primarily filed for bankruptcy. So there went the majority of my work. And I can honestly say in the very beginning I was like, "Whew, free time." And felt good to kind of unplug and get some other things done around the house that I had been putting on the back burner. But after a while, being a person who loves what I do professionally and loving my career, I could see that it was starting to affect me. And I will never forget you know, my husband being in the Army and having a leadership position, pretty stressful time but also a very engaged time and working around the clock. And I remember one night he came home a couple of months ago and he said, "Hey, hon, how was your day?" And the only thing that came to mind for me was, "Very uneventful." I thought he doesn't want to hear about, you know, that I did the laundry; that I unpacked some boxes in the basement and you know, whatever the things I had accomplished that day. And I thought these are just not even worth sharing with him compared to what he went through today. So I just said, “uneventful”. And it was right then and there that I almost felt like I resented him. I resented the fact that he was doing all these really monumental real-world things in his every day job. And I really didn't feel, I didn't feel valued in the same way. And I remember I said to him I said, "Well, I guess I'm kind of feeling a little insignificant right now." And of course being the loving husband he is, he said, "Well, you're significant to me. And you're significant to the kids." And I said, "I appreciate you saying that. And I do want to be significant." I said, "But that's not all of me." And so I realized that as much as there were things in my life that I was feeling valued for, when I wasn't using the best of my knowledge, skills and talents and something that I'm passionate about, it was starting to affect me not necessarily physically, but I think socially. So I started almost resenting the fact that I had nothing really that I felt excited to talk about compared to all of the things that my husband was experiencing in his day. So you can see how, when we are vocationally unwell, that can affect other things in our life. So go ahead and rate yourself where you would put yourself on that scale of one to 10, with your vocational wellness. And again some key takeaways. When you're assessing a job situation or even your career, ask yourself are you using the best of your skills, knowledge, and experience. Assess your energy levels with your job or career. So some of you typed in, yeah, you enjoy going to work. You're excited, you feel the energy levels. Whereas if you don't feel like you're using the best of your vocational skills, you might feel stressed and engage in overeating or other destructive behaviors. And are you using your creativity or vision to create new opportunities? Also being financially secure enough to be able to make a change to your career or to your job if you don't feel that you're happier not using the best of your skills, sometimes that's hard to do. Sometimes it's easier just to stay for the paycheck than it is to really think about what it would take for us to go in a different direction. So, Alison?

- [Alison] Yes, thank you, Maria. And thank you for sharing that personal story. I think many of us can relate to that. But like you said, it is important to find meaningful employment. As a milSpouse, you have access to free career counseling through our SECO department which stands for Spouse Education and Career Opportunities. The SECO website has a wealth of information and resources from career explorations, assessments, resume tips and job search assistance. If you would like to speak to one of our certified career coaches, you can call Military OneSource 24/7 to sign up. Our career coaches offer expert career and education guidance, and offer resources, support and ideas to help you use your education, your training and your skillset to find a meaningful employment. Thank you.

- [Maria] Thanks, Alison. And I will say that I have now taken on a new position with an organization that I absolutely love and are now feeling more vocationally well again. But yeah, sometimes when we have a crisis like the pandemic, we think that there's nothing good that comes out of it, but there have been some silver linings. I'm sure we could all share some of those. But let's go on to our social wellness. So first of all, this is the ability to relate and connect with other people at work, at home, in our neighborhoods, and to feel a larger part of society as a whole. Social wellness is about building and maintaining positive relationships that add value to other people's lives, as well as gaining value from the people that we're socializing with. I know we've been socially challenged over the last seven to eight months. And maybe in some ways it has enhanced our social connections with our family members or roommates, or people that we've had to spend a lot more time with. But in other ways, I feel that our social connections may be suffering. We're not able to have a lot of the functions that we typically have had. We haven't really been able to travel. I wonder what it will be like with the upcoming holidays as we're still trying to manage COVID. So I think that this is a really interesting time to talk about our social wellness. Obviously it involves using good communication skills, having those meaningful relationships, respecting oneself and others, and having a good support system of family and friends. Building healthy, nurturing, positive, and supportive relationships, as well as fostering a genuine connection with those around us. So, when we are in balance with our social wellness and feel that we have healthy relationships, we feel valued. We are in sync with others, we share mutual respect and trust and we're able to have meaningful conversations. Sometimes though, we take our social relationships for granted, right? So often it's the people that we love the most that we can start to take for granted, and we don't necessarily invest in that relationship and that connection. True connection really requires effort. And it's not just about how many friends or likes you have on social media. In fact studies show that the more time we spend on our devices including social media, the fewer true connections we have. So as you assess your connections, maybe not in the last couple months during COVID or maybe during that time, you assign yourself a number between one and 10 on the scale. Think about that. How well do you feel like you're doing socially? You can fill in that piece of the pie. Some key takeaways, there has to be give and take. Obviously, in order to have meaningful social relationships we have to be someone who gives value to that relationship. Learning how to have meaningful and crucial conversations, so often it is hard. You think that talking, we do it all day, and every day would be easy. Talking is probably the easy part. It's the listening that is harder. But sometimes having those meaningful and crucial conversations will help to strengthen our social connectedness. Surround yourself with people who bring out the best in you. We all know those people that we can say, who we love being around because we just, I call it pinging off of each other. You have those people who just get you and you get them. So surround yourself with those types of people. And connect with those who have like-minded goals, dreams and aspirations. All of those are really helpful for increasing your social wellness. Alison, what can you tell us about social wellness?

- [Alison] Sure, so this one is all about connection and our ability to establish and maintain positive relationships. And like you said, we need this now more than ever with limitations, with travel, stay at home orders, mandatory quarantines and so on. We still need to be connecting with one another and we may have to be creative with it. So it may have to be virtual connections and that's okay. One service that comes to mind within Military OneSource in regards to enhancing social wellness, is our Building Healthy Relationships coaching. This is an education-based consultation service that is offered over the phone or through video. And the purpose of the service is to help you deepen relationships with family or friends. This consultation offers a variety of tracks that are customized to different relationship dynamics, such as building healthy relationships with your significant other, healthy parent-child connections, and communication refreshers, staying connected while away, while your spouse is deployed and blended families with an emphasis on co-parenting. And when Maria says learn how to have meaningful and crucial conversations, I truly think this is a service that would definitely assist with that. We also have free webinars and articles on the militaryonesource.mil website that discuss communication and relationships. So check out the website at militaryonesource.mil for more information on social wellness.

- [Maria] Thanks, Alison. I love all the new programs and offerings that you guys have for conversations and relationship building. So they're really great. Appreciate Military OneSource doing that. The next one, the spiritual wellness dimension recognizes our search for meaning and our purpose and human existence with the world at large. It includes the development of a deep appreciation for the depth and expansive life and natural forces that exist in the universe. Some people see spiritual wellness in line with religious beliefs and others see spirituality and religiosity separately. Spiritual wellness tells us it's better to live each day in a way that's consistent with our values and beliefs, than to do otherwise and feel untrue to ourselves. And also importantly, these values and beliefs should jive well with the universe. And there's a difference between true belonging and fitting in. According to Dr. Brene Brown, anyone has ever heard her speak or read any of her books, she's really amazing. And she says, "True belonging is the spiritual practice of believing in and belonging to yourself so deeply that you can share your most authentic self with the world and find sacredness in both being part of something and standing alone in the wilderness. True belonging doesn't require you to change who you are, it requires you to be who you are." That's pretty, I think pretty powerful. True belonging doesn't require you to change who you are, It requires you to be who you are. And how does having a spiritual imbalance feel? Sometimes if we're out of balance spiritually we feel like it's me against the world. You're intolerant to people who look, think and live differently. Or you might feel like you have to keep up with the Joneses. Maybe it feels like you're not living consistent with your core values and beliefs. But there are ways that we can increase our spiritual wellness. You might wanna start with doing some personal reflection on your core values. What do you stand for? What are your beliefs? Looking at what brings you inner peace and acceptance of others. Take stock in what you're grateful for and what brings you joy. In the Army resilience programs, we've learned about hunting the good stuff. Engage in activities that help you find centering, diaphragmatic breathing, also called belly breathing, meditation, yoga, Tai Chi. These have all been associated with increasing our spiritual wellness. Have some healthy rituals, volunteer and give some time to other people. It's really interesting that when we volunteer and we give our time to other people and other organizations, we feel like, yes, those organizations and those people are reaping value. But studies have shown that sometimes the intrinsic value that we get as the volunteer is equally as important, if not more important than the people and organizations that we've given our time to. So, as you think about your spiritual wellness go ahead and put your number one through 10 or color in your section and see where you stack up on your spiritual wellness pie chart. A few key takeaways would be, create a personal mission statement and assess your core values. So, a personal mission statement could be similar to you know, just about every company has a mission statement. If you were to do an internet search for a company, you would find what their mission is. And so sometimes as individuals, we can assess our own personal mission statement. I think that I learned about it years and years ago through "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People". That was a Stephen Covey book. And it's really amazing that if you can figure out what you stand for and what your mission statement is, when the going gets tough, it's easy to center ourselves by coming back to our personal mission statement. Live authentically, you know be you. There's nothing wrong with us being individuals and be part of something bigger than yourself. So, if you can volunteer for something or be part of a group where you are not only giving value but you're reaping value, that's a win-win situation. And I like this little giraffe here. He is from a safari that my son and I went on in Botswana. So that was last year. And this little guy was so tall he had to spread his little legs there to get a drink of water. And I just found that picture that we were able to capture really fascinating. Go ahead, Alison, and talk to us about spiritual wellness.

- [Alison] All right, loving those pictures. So what fills your cup? Maybe it's meditation, prayer, silence or regular acts of kindness. These can be key towards achieving a connection with your spiritual self. Military OneSource offers several resources for this topic. We have a guided meditation series on our website, if you're interested in free meditations. And Maria talks about creating a personal mission statement. If you need assistance with identifying your personal mission statement and really goal setting towards achieving that mission statement, our health and wellness coaching services can help. Health and wellness coaching helps you identify your values and beliefs in order to help you reach your personal goals. Back to you, Maria.

- [Maria] Thanks Alison. Now we're gonna talk a little bit about emotional wellness. And so we know that emotional wellness is commonly referred to as our mental wellness. Emotional wellness is being able to identify how you're feeling and why. It's about acknowledging and effectively channeling anger, fear, sadness, stress, hope, love, happiness, frustration. It incorporates an awareness and understanding and acceptance of your emotions and your ability to manage them. And so we military families, we know a lot about challenges and change, right? So interestingly enough, there's a difference between emotions and feelings. Emotions occur in the subcortical regions of the brain, the amygdala, and they create physiological responses in the body; fight or flight instincts. So if we are frightened by something, we can feel physical changes in our body, increased hormones like cortisol or blood sugar goes up. Our heart rate goes up and people can do superhuman things when they are in that fight or flight mode. You've seen on TV where people could pick up a car off of a person, or they run into a burning building to save someone. So emotional reactions are coded in our genes. And while they do vary slightly, they are universally similar across all humans and even to some other species. Emotions, perceived feelings, they are physical and they are instinctual and they can also be measured. Because they're physical, they can measure our emotional response to our blood flow, through our brain activity and our body language. Some say that there are six basic emotions; anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness and surprise. So unlike emotions, feelings originate in a different part of the brain, the neocortical regions, they’re mental associations and reactions to emotions. So they're the next thing that happen after an emotion is triggered. Your emotions and feelings play a powerful role in how you experience and interact with the world. 'Cause they're the driving force behind the behaviors that come after the emotions and the feelings. Having emotional IQ or EQ is vitally important to healthy social and vocational wellness. So we know that IQ is important, but yeah, so is EQ. And I wanna talk about three feelings that are important to our emotional wellness. The first one is love. You know, what can I tell you about love that you don't already know? We know about a mother's love or we know about, you know, saying that we're in love. So love is a noun, but love is also a verb. And so I think that a lot of people don't really remember all the time that in order to feel loved, the noun, you have to love, the verb. When the going gets tough in a relationship, you can choose to love, the verb, and stay in the relationship or to walk away. And sometimes something we loved at one time we fall out of love with, but we can start practicing love, the verb, in order to fall back in love. And so sometimes we fall out of love with something that was really good. Like maybe we loved going to yoga, but all of a sudden they changed instructors or something changed. And you're like, "Eh, I don't love that anymore. I'm not gonna go." But you knew in the end that going to yoga was good for you. So how do you fall back in love with something that you knew was really good? What about a relationship? I'm not a relationship expert but what I do know after being married for 33 years is you have to love, the verb, to be loved. And love can also be a bad thing. Be careful what you fall in love with. Is loving ice cream, or gambling or some other detrimental behavior a good thing? Is it gonna have a good outcome? Probably not. So be careful what you associate the word love with. Love is complicated. Another word that we can associate with emotions is stress. And I've seen that typed into the chat box. Yeah, stress can impact so many things in our life. But what exactly is stress? If I were to pass that gift box around to you, that we found on the first slide and we were gonna put stress in that box, would we be able to do it? Could I send you a box of stress? No, I couldn't because it's subjective. It's just like good health. It's different to everybody. To deal with stress, you have to identify the underlying emotion. Stress can be good though. Like you stress, you stress is considered good stress. A little bit of stress, knowing that we have to do some public speaking, or take a test, might be good. It might encourage us or motivate us to actually prepare for that. But distress is chronic stress and that stress is detrimental to our health. So when we talked about that fight or flight instinct with the raising of the hormones and the cortisol, if that goes on all the time, just due to unmitigated stress that is gonna wreak havoc on our mind and body. So go ahead and type in the chat box. How does it feel when you're stressed? What are some words that you can associate with stress? How do you feel when you're stressed? Fatigue? Yep, can make us really tired. Anxious. Sometimes overwhelmed. Right, so stress really is a negative feeling and what causes stress? I mean, tension, yes. Difficult to focus, very good. What causes us to have all these emotions? Why are we stressed? I think sometimes we're stressed because we think we need to be stressed. Fear of the unknown sometimes can cause us stress. Maybe being overwhelmed, having too many things on our plate that we're trying to juggle at one time, maybe it's anxiety about an upcoming event. So, there's so many things that can cause us to have stress. Do we have to have stress? Is stress a given? Stress can cause us to procrastinate or we can be stressed if we are procrastinators. But I would argue that we don't have to have stress. You think about why we're stressed about something and why my stress is different than your stress. We inadvertently choose stress with our interpretations of triggering events. So if we go to an example of the upcoming holidays, maybe in December. Let's take COVID out of the picture. But a typical holiday would be making cookies, preparing meals, buying gifts, visiting relatives, and all the other things that go along with the holiday season. Which should be a really happy thing. But sometimes we get stressed by that. So how do we deal with stress? Or why did I say I didn't think that we really had to have stress? Stress all depends on our spot processes. So to me, dealing with stress is a two-pronged process. And the first prong is wording stress, changing your thought processes. So instead of saying, "I don't know what to buy anybody for the holidays. I don't have time to cook. I don't have enough money to buy these presents." Set up roadblocks and start thinking of things differently. And so if you can identify exactly what you're stressed about, I'm stressed about buying presents. Okay, why are you stressed about buying presents? A, I don't know what to get people. B, I don't have enough money. So now you need to come up with a plan. So once you can identify your stressors, maybe you can start making a budget. Maybe you can say to people, "Hey, this year let's just pick names and everybody buy for one person." Or maybe you can say, "How about if we just make a donation to a charity this year?" So I think that if we can identify exactly what our stressors are, we can A, set up roadblocks to change, what if you thought about those things differently? What if the emotions that you feel can be changed? And then once you've identified them, you can put a plan into place to do something about them. But when our stressors are just general, I'm just stressed generally, you can't really make a plan to change them. So many of my clients will say they're stressed about their job. And I'll say, “Well, what exactly about your job is stressful?" And they'll say, "Well, you know, it's work, I'm stressed." No, I don't know. Is that you have too many tasks for the amount of time you're given? Are you not compensated for the amount of tasks that you're doing? Do you have toxic coworkers? Do you feel unsupported by your superiors? I mean, if you can start identifying exactly what your stressors are, then you can start taking action to improve some of those aspects. But there are gonna be times when stress creeps into our life. And so the second prong is having tools in our toolbox. Everybody's tools are gonna be different. Maybe some people deal with their stress by going for a run. Maybe some people listen to calming music. Maybe others take a nice bubble bath. Whatever your tools are, it's important for all of us to have tools against our stressors. So again, I would recommend you identify your stressors, write them down, and then brainstorm ideas on how to deal with them. The last feeling emotion that I'm going to talk about is empathy. Empathy is a tricky one. We all kind of know what it is, but I don't think all of us are exactly clear on what the difference is between empathy and sympathy. So we're gonna watch two short videos. And so if you could go ahead and play the first one on empathy, that would be great.

- [Woman] So, what is empathy and why is it very different than sympathy? Empathy fuels connection. Sympathy drives disconnection. Empathy, very interesting. Theresa Wiseman is a nursing scholar who studied professions, very diverse professions, where empathy is relevant and came up with four qualities of empathy. Perspective taking, the ability to take the perspective of another person or recognize their perspective as their truth. Staying out of judgment, not easy when you enjoy it as much as most of us do. Recognizing emotion in other people and then communicating that. Empathy is feeling with people. And to me, I always think of empathy as this kind of sacred space when someone's kind of in a deep hole and they shout out from the bottom and they say, "I'm stuck, It's dark, I'm overwhelmed." And then we look and we say, "Hey." We climb down, "I know it was like down here and you're not alone." Sympathy is, "Ooh, it's bad uh huh? No, you want sandwich?" Empathy is a choice and it's a vulnerable choice because in order to connect with you, I have to connect with something in myself that knows that feeling. Rarely, if ever, does an empathic response begin with, at least. I had a yeah, and we do it all the time. Because you know what? Someone just shared something with us that's incredibly painful and we're trying to silver lining it. I don't think that's a verb, but I'm using it as one. We're trying to put the silver lining around it. So, "I had a miscarriage." "At least, you know you can get pregnant." "I think my marriage is falling apart." "At least you have a marriage." "John's getting kicked out of school." "At least Sarah is an A student." But one of the things we do sometimes in the face of very difficult conversations is we try to make things better. If I share something with you that's very difficult, I'd rather you say, "I don't even know what to say right now, I'm just so glad you told me." Because the truth is rarely can a response make something better; what makes something better is connection.

- [Maria] So, when someone's in pain, we're afraid to say, "Yes, this hurts. Yes, this is a big deal, this stings." We think our job is to make things better so we minimize the pain through comparative stories or trying to cheer someone up. But our real job is to connect. Empathy is not connecting to the experience, it's connecting to the emotions that underpin the experience. Not about fixing or giving advice, which we all tend to do. It's about being with someone in their darkness and not to race to turn on the lights so that we feel better. A really great example of this is a video clip I think we're gonna try to play here from the kids' movie "Inside Out". Sorry, I don't know how my slide got messed up a little bit there, but here we go with that one.

- The stuffed animal “My rocket! Wait, Riley and I were still using that rocket. It still has swag power left.” ♪ Who's your friend who likes to play ♪ No! No, no you can't take my rocket to the Riley and I are going to the moon. Riley can't be done with me.”

- “Hey, it's gonna be okay. We can fix this. We just need to get back to headquarters. Which way to the train station?”

- “I had a whole trip planned for us.”

- “Hey, who is ticklish? Here comes the tickle monster. Hey, Bing Bong, look at this. Oh, here's a fun game. You point to the train station and we all go there. Won't that be fun? Come on, let's go to the train station.”

- “I'm sorry they took your rocket. They took something that you loved. It's gone, forever.”

- “Sadness, don't make him feel worse.”

-“ Sorry.”

- “It's all we had left with Riley.”

- “I bet you and Riley had great adventures.”

- “Oh, they were wonderful. Once we flew back in time, we had breakfast twice that day.”

- “Sadness.”

- “That sounds amazing. I bet Riley liked it.”

- “Oh, she did. We were best friends.”

- “Yeah, it's sad.”

- “I'm okay now. Come on, the train station is this way.”

- “How did you do that?”

- “He was sad so I listened to what”-

- “Hey, there's the train.”

- “We made it! We're finally gonna get home. No, this facts and opinions look so similar.”

- “Don't worry about it, happens all the time.”

- [Maria] So what I love about this clip from "Inside Out" is it shows where Bing Bong was really upset about losing his rocket. It was such a good memory for him of his friend Riley. And what happened, Joy tried to make things feel better by distracting him, right? And that didn't work. But sadness on the other hand came up and just sat in the muck with him, validated his feelings, saying this is hard. She was your friend. You had some great memories with her. And so which one was more effective? Hard, it's hard to sit in the muck with someone, it's hard to feel with them, which is what empathy is. But it's so much more engaging and more connected when we can engage with someone in that way versus having sympathy or feeling for them. So, feeling with them, truly listening empathically is hard. If someone we love has tried to share something with us and we weren't able to listen to them or be empathic with them, it doesn't hurt to ask them for a do-over. "Can we try this again? I wasn't here for you the way I needed to be but let's try this again." So, remembering try not to use "Well, at least." or, "When I had that experience." Or, "I know how you feel." So when you think about how well you do emotionally, taking some of these three things we've talked about and other feelings and emotions, and go ahead and rate yourself on a scale of one to 10 and fill that in on your pie. And the key takeaways. One of my favorite quotes, which has an anonymous author. "Watch your thoughts, they become words. Watch your words, they become actions. Watch your actions, they become habits. Watch your habits, they become your character. Watch your character, it becomes your destiny." So Alison, can you go ahead and give us a little bit of information about Military OneSource's emotional wellness offering?

- [Alison] Yes. So emotional wellness is about the ability to understand ourselves and cope with life's challenges while keeping a positive attitude. And, you know, military life requires strength, resilience and resourcefulness. And just about everyone, service members and family members alike could use a little support from time to time to stay emotionally healthy and at your best. Military OneSource offers confidential, non-medical counseling. You have access to help when you need it. Our counseling services are offered in person through video, through phone, or web based online. Counseling is confidential, free and available to you and your family. We offer counseling for individuals, families and couples. You can receive 12 sessions per year per issue, and to get signed up, you can either call our +1 800 number, at +1 800-342-9647. Or chat in through a live secure chat on our website. All of our calls and chats are answered by a live person who are ready to help you. Thank you.

- [Maria] Thanks Alison, that's great information. I appreciate that. So, hopefully by now you've got your pie charts, your wellness wheel completely filled in with your shadings or your numbers. And so even though we've discussed these seven dimensions of wellness individually, and put them in separate pieces on the pie, we know that they all bleed over into one another. So, what I would encourage you to do I always like to have a takeaway from any of my sessions that I give, is looking at your wellness wheel. Is there something that you think you'd like to make a change? Maybe a small change, may be a bigger change. What section of that pie do you feel like maybe you could start focusing on? And if you did wanna make a change, how do you do that? Change is hard. We have to have a vision for how you would be if you were at your best health and wellness in these aspects. Once you can see that person clearly in your mind, you can start putting a plan into place. It's good to put your wellness vision in a present-tense statement, and then to set some long-range and short-range goals. So, if maybe there's something that you want to change in your physical wellness. Maybe it's you want to make an improvement in your sleep. So your vision might be, "I have great energy throughout the day, knowing that I'm sleeping well at night." And whatever else those components would be for you individually. A long-range goal might be, "I am sleeping seven hours a night by the start of the new year." And then the short-range goal might be, "I am turning off all my devices by 10 o'clock at night." Or, "I am taking a bubble bath in order to bring my stress levels down." Whatever would be appropriate for you but it's really powerful to create your wellness vision along with your personal mission statement and then identify some long-range and short-range goals. And I know that the Military OneSource counselors can help you with all of that. They're very experienced and have some great coaching skills to help everybody with that. So I encourage you to continue to develop your wellness vision. See if you can incorporate all seven dimensions of wellness into your plan and then work on your long range and short range goals. And I encourage you to take one action step today. Very often with my clients I will say, "What's one thing you can start doing or one thing you can stop doing today to move you along on your journey towards better wellness?" And I know that when you have good health you'll continue to become a more effective, inspiring and authentic individual. And I encourage you to give yourself and those around you, the gift of good health. And I'm gonna turn it over to you, Alison, for the closing.

- [Alison] Thank you Maria. That was wonderful. So do you know Military OneSource is here to help you balance your wellness wheel? We are your 24/7 connection to information, answers and support; to help you reach your goals, overcome challenges and thrive. As a member of our military family, you are eligible to use Military OneSource anytime, anywhere. We are here to offer one-on-one support to help you navigate any challenge military life may bring your way. Visit us on the web at militarysource.mil or by calling +1 800-342-9647. Our consultants answer the phone 24/7 and are ready to assist you. Thank you.

- [Maria] Thanks Alison, I appreciate that. I appreciate everybody who's joined us today. I do think we have a couple minutes for questions. Is that right? If anybody had any questions they could type them in the chat box. Is that right? Virginia, is that what-

- [Virginia] Yes, that is correct.

- [Maria] We have couple of minutes still, okay? So, I'll just wait a few seconds to see if we have any questions. But also, if you do have questions you can reach out to Military OneSource. They also obviously have my information and are able to get in touch with me. I just hope that even if you didn't get a whole lot of information that you didn't already know from this presentation, I always feel like if there's one thing that each person can take away, even if it gave you motivation to change maybe one small aspect of our wellness, even if it's in just one area of the pie, it will help you to grow and also influence those other areas of wellness. Because like I said before, when we're out of balance in one area of our wellness it almost certainly affects another part of our wellness. So, my hope for you is that you will give yourself the gift of good health and by giving yourself the gift of good health, I know that it helps the people around us, they can emulate us, they can imitate us, but also that we are there for them and can set a great example for them. So my hope for you for this upcoming holiday season is that you will give yourself the gift of good health, because I can't give that to you. So thank you so much everybody. Thanks for joining us today.