



**HONESTY**



**OPTIMISM**



**PROFESSIONALISM**



**EMPATHY**

## Total Force Fitness through HOPE: Applying Warrior Principles to Healthcare

HIGHLIGHT

*The Consortium for Health and Military Performance (CHAMP) is a Center of Excellence at the Department of Defense’s Uniformed Services University. CHAMP uses the “Total Force Fitness” approach and “HOPE” framework to optimize the performance of military service members and their loved ones. Dr. Gloria Park (Director of Performance Psychology) and Dr. Gabe Paoletti (Mental Fitness Scientist) have worked to apply these principles to healthcare workers on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic.*

The Consortium for Health and Military Performance (CHAMP) is a Center of Excellence at the Uniformed Services University. CHAMP’s focus is research and education to optimize the performance of military service members and their loved ones through Total Force Fitness, a comprehensive, holistic approach to thinking of health, performance, and wellness across the interconnected domains of physical fitness, mental fitness, social fitness, and nutrition. This program incorporates the Human Performance Optimization model with the goal of developing evidence-based strategies to maximize optimal performance, “test approaches for safely enhancing performance of mission essential functions in operational settings, and develop an education and training agenda for transferring this knowledge to medical and operational communities” ([Uniformed Services University, 2020](#)).

In the early stages of COVID-19, CHAMP realized an opportunity to take the performance optimization research we’ve translated into educational resources for service members, and to apply that to healthcare providers, leaders, and support staff who found themselves on the frontlines of fighting a pandemic. We organized our approach through the HOPE framework: **Honesty**, **Optimism**, **Professionalism**, and **Empathy** which was developed by CHAMP’s Medical Director, Dr. Fran O’Connor. Here, we discuss those four components and how healthcare workers can incorporate them into their daily lives. We have also had the pleasure of delivering this information via a panel presentation through the [National Center for Disaster Medicine and Public Health](#) and in a keynote address at the Preparedness Summit hosted by the National Association for County and City Health Officials.

### HONESTY

- HOPE begins with honesty and being willing to acknowledge the collective grief, anxiety, anger, and fatigue we have all experienced during this pandemic. We have all lost something important because of this pandemic, whether it is someone we know and care about or an important goal we had set for ourselves at the start of this year. Public health officials and medical professionals are exhausted as they work to safeguard the safety and health of all of us.



- Honesty means recognizing all of this, and not denying that these struggles exist. Still, it is a human tendency to hold onto and focus on the negative. Our brains have historically been wired to attend to threats because this ability has helped our survival as a species. This tendency is called the negativity bias, and it causes us to notice, remember, and process the negative information in our lives much more deeply than the positive. While this helps us with survival, it also prevents us from seeing the goodness in our lives.

**Strategy:** A first step in embracing honesty is to know it is okay to feel and communicate the negative. Everyone has bad days and it is important to acknowledge that. The trick is to not get stuck there, and intentionally cultivating gratitude can help you recognize the bad while still being open to the good. Practicing gratitude is associated with a host of positive outcomes like increases in life satisfaction, better quality sleep, improved health, resilience, and productivity. Practice gratitude by reflecting on challenging experiences and finding the silver lining or identifying something good that came from that experience. Express your gratitude to others who have helped you. To learn more and download your own gratitude calendar, [access this link](#).

## RELATED RESOURCES

[ASPR TRACIE Speaker Series Recording](#)

Human Performance Resources by CHAMP:

- [Gratitude Calendar](#)
- [Optimism Self-Check](#)
- [A Guide to Staying Resilient in Times of Crisis](#)
- [Resources for Healthcare Workers](#)
- [Active Constructive Responding \(ACR\) Worksheet](#)

## OPTIMISM

- Optimistic thinking can help healthcare providers and support staff navigate through sustained operational stress and stay resilient. It is a common misconception that optimistic thinkers just ignore the reality of a situation and “look at the bright side.” Optimistic thinking is about focusing on where we have agency and control. It is about acknowledging and recognizing the bad but choosing to focus your energy on how you can make things better.
- Among healthcare workers, fostering a sense of optimism and empowerment can improve outcomes on many fronts. It can enhance provider functioning and increase patient satisfaction and their therapeutic results. Research has found that staff members who are high in optimism report feeling less pressure, use fewer avoidance strategies, focus on practical problem solutions, are more likely to seek social support, and have more trust in people and organizations.

**Strategy:** To embrace optimistic thinking, start by gaining a self-awareness of your thinking patterns. Consider: are you only noticing problems or roadblocks? Are you controlling the controllable? Are you letting stressors bleed into other areas of your life? Take the [HPRC Optimism Self-Check](#) to learn more about building an optimistic mindset.

## PROFESSIONALISM

- At CHAMP, we work on optimizing human systems for both performance and well-being. This work is grounded in the belief that every individual and institution has the capacity and desire to want to put their best foot forward more consistently. In times of crisis, we are often asked for resources to help others maintain optimal levels of performance despite decreased resources and heightened operational stressors.
- CHAMP’s educational portal, [Human Performance Resources by CHAMP](#), offers evidence-based resources to support holistic fitness. We translate the best of science to help your own wellness and performance. Each of us have challenges that are preventing us from being the best professionals we can be. If you need holistic resources on how to support your nutrition for energy and immune function, or maintain physical resources like strategies to improve your sleep and recovery, you can find many related articles, videos, and tools there.

**Strategy:** Check out these resources for healthcare providers, leaders, and support staff and share them with those who might benefit: [HPRC’s A Guide to Staying Resilient in Times of Crisis](#) and [HPRC’s Resources for Healthcare Workers](#).



## EMPATHY

- We often think about empathy as the ability to understand where others are coming from when they experience hardships, loss, and trauma. And we have all certainly experienced our share of that over the past few months, especially healthcare providers who have witnessed the pandemic unfold on the front lines. But building positive empathy, or the ability to share, savor, and enjoy others' positive emotions and experiences is another approach to empathy that is often overlooked. Strong relationships are one of the most robust predictors of well-being and resilience.
- When other people take the time to choose to share the things that have brought them joy in their lives with you, we often miss out on a critical opportunity to strengthen those ties when we don't respond in a particular way. Strive to actively and constructively respond when someone shares good news with you. Doing so can increase trust, intimacy, connection, and satisfaction within the relationship. And being open to "seeing the good" can give you the energy you need to take care of yourself. When someone shares good news with you, seeing it as an opportunity to build the relationship and your own well-being.

**Strategy:** Review [HPRC's Active Constructive Responding worksheet](#) to learn about common empathy pitfalls and learn how being an "excitement magnifier" can build relationship trust, connection, intimacy, and satisfaction.

At CHAMP, we believe the HOPE framework can help healthcare providers expand their stress management and resilience skills to improve coping, maintain performance, and keep you resilient in the face of challenges. To keep up to date on the latest performance optimization information from the HPRC team at CHAMP, follow us on social media@HPRCOnline and sign up to receive our monthly [newsletter](#).

*Dr. Gloria Park is the Director of Performance Psychology with the Consortium for Health and Military Performance (CHAMP) at the Uniformed Services University and is a passionate advocate for sport, performance, and applied positive psychology. She serves as the subject matter expert for the performance psychology and mental fitness domains across CHAMP's leadership, education, and research initiatives. She has worked extensively with the military community providing resilience and performance enhancement training for the past decade. Gloria is an employee of the Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine. Inc.*

*Dr. Gabe Paoletti is a Mental Fitness Scientist at the Uniformed Services University's Consortium for Health and Military Performance (CHAMP). He serves as a subject matter expert in mental skills, positive and performance psychology, resilience, and leadership. Dr. Paoletti translates basic and clinical research to create culturally appropriate, evidence-based, impactful written and multimedia educational resources and presentations as part of the [Human Performance Resources by CHAMP](#) (HPRC) team. Gabe is an employee of the Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine. Inc.*

