



How to Make Recovery Intentional

What is intentional recovery?

Intentional recovery is a skill set all Sailors can use to reset and recover from stress while enabling peak performance through disciplined and deliberate restorative activities.

A Sailor's first thoughts of recovery may be about recovering from an injury or rescuing someone from the sea. While those are indeed examples of recovery, this article explores intentional recovery, its definition and how to perform it, examples and benefits of practicing it, and its relationship to Warrior Toughness and the Warrior Mindset.

Introducing Intentional Recovery

Practicing intentional recovery is making a deliberate and purpose-driven choice, and it is about the intention behind the task. When a Sailor practices intentional recovery, they allocate time during a busy day, post-duty, liberty, or leave to reset and recover from stress through disciplined, restorative actions. A Sailor may choose to spend quality time with friends, have a healthy snack, or go for a workout at the gym as a form of intentional recovery.

Sailors use intentional recovery to reset and recover their Mind, Body, and Spirit instead of creating barriers to healthy behaviors. Mindless activities, such as all-night gaming sessions or binge-watching shows on a phone or TV, are the opposite of intentional recovery, but they can be turned into intentional activities through the use of intentional recovery. For example, Sailors can set time limits instead of spending hours gaming or watching TV.

Practicing Intentional Recovery

Professional athletes are good examples of individuals who use intentional recovery to perform at a high level. They need to be able to recover, whether it is after a bad play, in the middle of a game, or postgame when the lights go out and they experience a big adrenaline drop.

One form of intentional recovery used by athletes is in-the-moment intentional recovery. Athletes have to find a way to recover in real time when the pressure is on, the crowd is electric, the team is counting on them, and they only have seconds to react. They stop for a few seconds to focus their Mind, control their breathing to get their Body in sync, and reset their energy to match the level needed for maximum performance on the next play.



A zombie playing video games



Intentional recovery is a skill set that we use after we put ourselves through a challenging situation or undergo stress.

CDR Kathleen Saul

They cannot dwell on the last play and let the moment overtake them.

Athletes' actions after the game are just as important. If they want to make it to practice the next day, they cannot celebrate a win or handle a loss by eating fast food and staying out late. Instead, athletes stretch their muscles, mentally prepare for the next day, and allow their Body to recover through healthy nutrition and plenty of sleep, which are also forms of intentional recovery.

Just as athletes condition their Mind, Body, and Spirit to be victorious, it is important that Sailors do the same.

Through the practice of intentional recovery, Sailors have the power to break cycles of unhealthy habits and find alternatives



Naval Academy football player in uniform on the field

to reset themselves in the moment or make better decisions with how they spend their time. Instead of spending hours scrolling through social media at night, Sailors can take that time to plan the next day or read a book for 30 minutes before they need to fall asleep.

Intentional recovery can also be Sailors training their Mind and Body by creating a sleep schedule to ensure they are well rested and ready to face whatever challenges the next day brings. Sailors can reclaim their time and trade mindless distractions for positive actions through regulated practice of intentional recovery.

Performing Intentional Recovery at Work

How many times a day do Sailors look at their phones?

It is not realistic to think they will never look at their screens, but they can control how often they interact with them. Sailors can intentionally practice breathing exercises, stretch, and loosen up their muscles, or get out of their seat and take a walk. By practicing intentional recovery, they will immediately start to feel a difference in their Mind and Body.

When Sailors go to the gedunk on break, are they making healthy choices or loading up on empty calories and energy drinks? If they control their urges and intentionally choose a protein bar, water, or fruit, they will begin to notice a shift in their energy levels throughout the day.

How many Sailors carry a vape and use it regularly on base and at home? Instead

of vaping, Sailors can alternate their recovery routine with intentional exercise, such as jumping jacks, planks, and walking around the ship or base.

These are all examples of opportunities to practice intentional recovery and make better personal choices. Just 30 seconds to 5 minutes of intentional recovery can make all the difference in the Sailor's ability to rest and recover.

Performing Intentional Recovery Post-Duty

It is common post-duty for Sailors to grab a quick food option, even though it might not be the healthiest, or to settle on the couch when they get home. Watching TV or playing video games can be a form of intentional recovery if the Sailor limits the amount of time spent, and makes the activities part of a more productive schedule. The newly available time can be used to prepare healthier food options or write out an action plan for the next day of what the Sailor wants to accomplish.

The Sailor can also take some alone time to pray or listen to something motivational, spend time studying, or ensure they are getting enough sleep.



Healthy and unhealthy food choices

By performing these actions, they are already on the path to a healthier Mind, Body, and Spirit.

The initiative Sailors take today will have a direct impact on how they feel tomorrow. The goal is to create a regimented routine after work so they feel mentally and physically restored during their next day at work. These actions create an intentional transition from work to home and are key to maintaining long-term resilience and heightened levels of performance.



Research shows that people with good habits are not always the ones with the highest levels of discipline.

They're the ones that create the environment so the good choice is the easiest one and the unhealthy choice becomes harder to choose.

CDR Kathleen Saul

It is also important that Sailors think about why they are making the choice to practice intentional recovery and how it relates to their values. When Sailors' recovery activities reflect what matters most to them, such as family, faith, service, and growth, it becomes more than simply helping them to be productive. The Sailors' recovery activities are then helping to restore their sense of self and prepare them to show up with a sense of purpose the next day.

Performing Intentional Recovery During Liberty

Intentional recovery can and should be fun, especially when Sailors are not required to work the next day. Time definitely seems to go faster when an individual is not at work and in the blink of an eye the alarm goes off and it is time to start a new work week. A Sailor may be asked how they spent their time off and they shrug because the time just slipped away.

Now, imagine using that time doing something fun and fulfilling. Instead of letting

time escape, Sailors can join the command basketball or softball team, work out with friends, plan a day trip with their family, or schedule a day to work on something they are passionate about. The key is for Sailors to take time to recover from the stress of the work week by taking the opportunity to stop and enjoy their lives.

Sailors will always have errands and tasks they need to accomplish on their time off, but they can reclaim some of that time by performing activities that provide them with a sense of fulfillment and joy. Creating a plan and putting intentional recovery into action also resets the balance in the Sailor's life and helps them to focus on who they want to be.

How Can Sailors Get the Most Out of Their Leave?

When Sailors travel to new destinations they have never experienced before, it provides a chance to refresh their sense of adventure and exploration. The Body is not meant to be sedentary, and sometimes a little fresh air and sunshine on an extended expedition is just what a Sailor needs to reset and feel refreshed.

Intentional recovery can also consist of spending time achieving a deeper state of relaxation. People may think this means hour-long yoga sessions, but it is not that kind of relaxation. Instead, it is about pursuing creative personal projects like painting, writing a book, or focusing on long-term goals, such as creating a podcast channel or planting a garden. It all boils down to finding something enjoyable that creates a lasting feeling of accomplishment and personal fulfillment while they have the time to do it.

Intentional recovery is also about reconnecting with the Sailor's sense of individualism and experiencing personal renewal.



Sailors playing basketball



Liberty is well earned, but sometimes not well spent.

CDR Kathleen Saul

The more Sailors practice intentional recovery while on leave, the greater the possibility they will feel ready and recovered when they get back on base. The last thing a Sailor wants is to need a vacation from their vacation.

Benefits of Practicing Intentional Recovery

Whether it is taking time during a Sailor's busy day to find 30 seconds to 5 minutes to reset their Mind or taking the dream vacation they have been putting off, the opportunities to reap the benefits of intentional recovery are endless.

One of the most important benefits of intentional recovery is building resilience. Sailors that fail to perform intentional recovery regularly experience higher levels of stress

and a decline in their overall performance. Not only does intentional recovery foster resilience, but it also can help an individual perform at a high level when they are consistent and deliberate about choosing activities that meet their specific recovery needs.

Every Sailor has the power to incorporate intentional recovery into their daily activities, and once they start practicing it, they will notice a gradual change in their ability to bounce back no matter what they face in their work and personal life.

Warrior Toughness and Intentional Recovery

Warrior Toughness augments both toughness and resilience. Toughness is being able to withstand difficult conditions or challenges without breaking down, with a focus on improving performance in all areas of life. Resilience is a Sailor's ability to withstand, adapt, recover, and grow while in stressful situations and while handling ever-changing demands.



People paddling kayaks

Warrior Toughness means rising to any challenge and getting back in the fight no matter the odds, and intentional recovery enhances a Sailor's resilience. Intentional recovery is also directly tied to the health of the Mind, Body, and Spirit and these are the building blocks of Warrior Toughness.

Sailors can rest their Mind by playing a pickup game or by listening to a Warrior Toughness podcast after studying for an Advancement Exam, recover their Body by resting or taking a hike after a day of tackling administrative

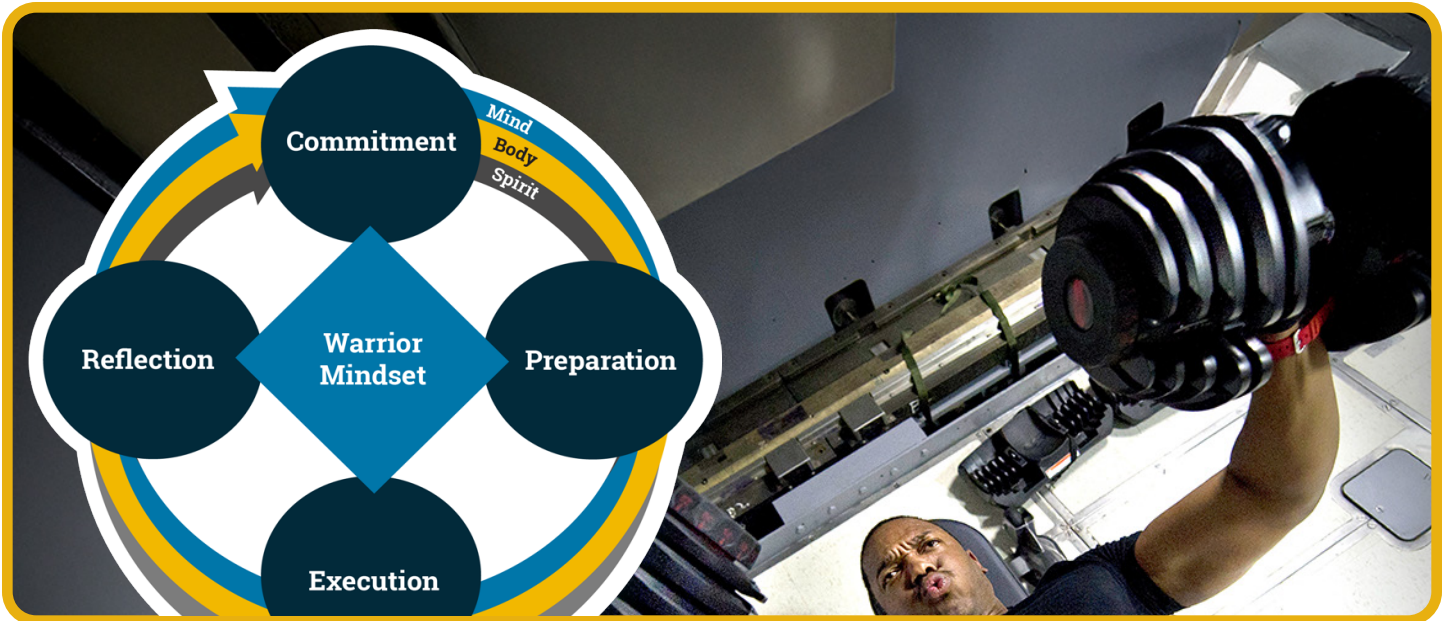
tasks, and recover their Spirit by listening to a motivational podcast or a religious sermon for 20 minutes after a stressful day.

Practicing intentional recovery can help Sailors recover from moments that could easily lead to stress injuries when they are feeling the pressure of the day. Being Warrior Tough during stressful situations equates to using intentional recovery to reset and recover so that Sailors can continue to perform at peak performance, no matter what challenges arise.



When you take leave and return home always take an extra day off before jumping back into work because you will get burnt out quickly if you don't.

PSC Yim Gates



Warrior Mindset model next to Sailor lifting weights

Warrior Toughness empowers Sailors to become the best versions of themselves and intentional recovery is necessary to achieve this.

How Does Intentional Recovery Relate to the Warrior Mindset?

The Warrior Mindset is a continuous cycle of Commitment, Preparation, Execution, and Reflection. Preparation and Execution are important when performing intentional recovery. Just as an individual would not try to build a table without the instructions, Preparation provides the blueprint Sailors need to reach maximum recovery.

By preparing a plan of action, they can focus on ways to recover that will allow them to feel rested instead of continually drained and exhausted. Without a plan, it all falls apart, so it is imperative that Sailors prepare their actions in advance to achieve success.

Planning is the first step, but Sailors must execute that plan and put it in motion. When Sailors execute their plan daily, it creates new healthy routines and ways to handle stress instead of just trying to push through and hoping it will get better.

Remember, this takes daily practice to feel the results, so prepare that intentional recovery plan and execute it!



It's important for Sailors to engage in the preparation phase and make sure that they are making a plan for intentional recovery.

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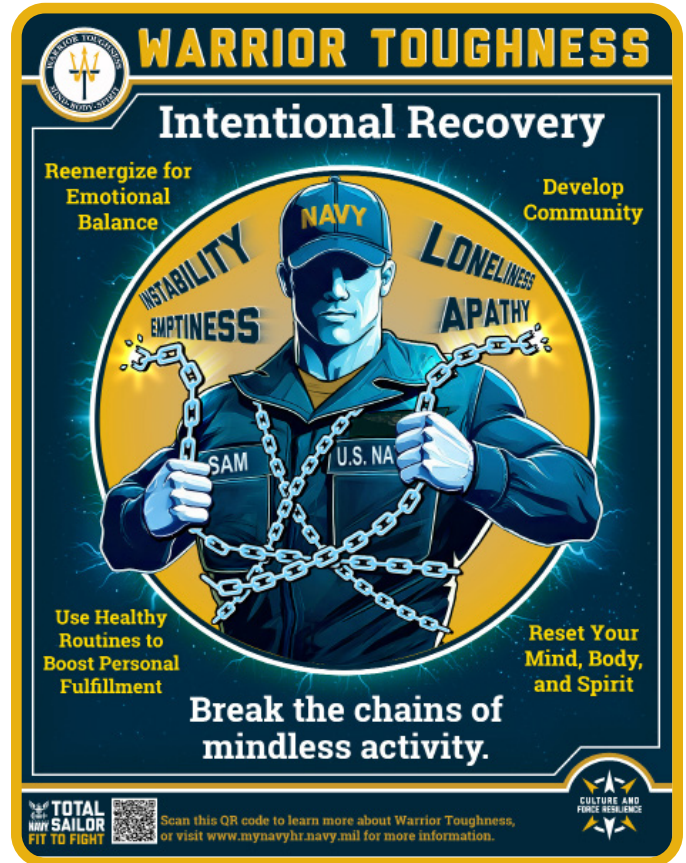


Sailor in combat

Wrap-Up

Many examples of intentional recovery have been covered in this article and through continued practice, applying this skill set will become second nature. As Sailors incorporate intentional recovery into their daily routines, they will begin to feel their stress levels decrease as their Warrior Toughness increases.

This article focused on the definition of intentional recovery and how to perform it, examples and benefits of practicing it, and how it relates to Warrior Toughness and the Warrior Mindset.



Warrior Toughness Intentional Recovery infographic

For more information, check out the Warrior Toughness app, videos, and podcast about Intentional Recovery.



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