



## Managing Energy to the Fullest Potential

**If Sailors were asked how they currently manage their energy level, what would they say?**

**T**hey might respond with the number of cups of coffee they drank or hours they slept last night. Caffeine and sleep have a direct impact on a Sailor's energy level but are not examples of energy management. This article will explain what energy management is, how Sailors can reach peak performance by up-regulating and down-regulating their energy levels, the benefits of practicing energy management, and how energy management relates to Warrior Toughness and the Warrior Mindset.

## What Is Energy Management?

Energy management is a skill set that allows Sailors to maintain the right amount of energy to perform optimally for the duration of a specific situation. Every task in a Sailor's day requires a different level of energy and they must determine how much energy is required to be successful. When Sailors practice energy management, they are aware of their current energy level and understand how to increase (up-regulate) or decrease (down-regulate) their energy based on the task.

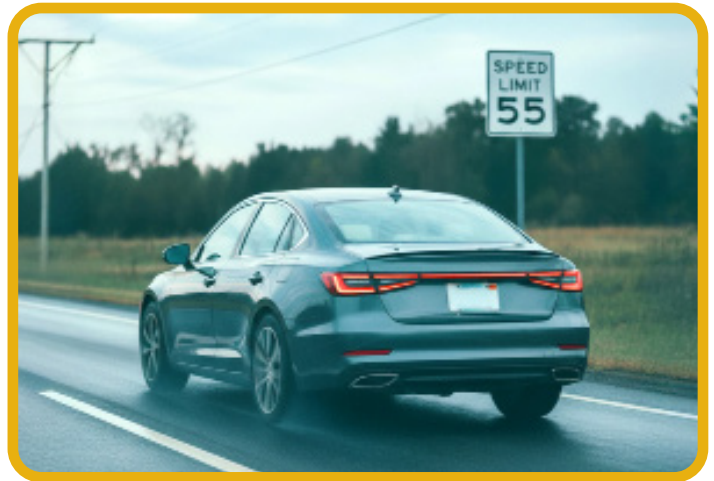
Think about a vehicle on a highway. Speed limit signs signify how fast the driver of the vehicle should drive, and to reach optimal speed, the driver must know their current speed and use the vehicle's pedals to control how much energy their vehicle exerts. A Sailor's energy level reacts similarly as they up-regulate and down-regulate their energy levels by using energy management to reach peak performance.

## Reaching Peak Performance

Peak performance is not about having the highest level of energy; it is about performing a task consistently for a duration of time while exerting the right amount of energy to be successful. There are three key components Sailors use to reach peak performance: knowing how much energy is needed for a task, being aware of their current energy level, and having the ability to alter and adapt their energy to the right level.

## How Much Energy Is Enough?

The amount of energy a Sailor needs for a task depends on what the task is and how much energy is required to reach peak performance. The importance of the task does not determine the amount of energy a Sailor needs to perform it. When a Sailor is standing watch,



A vehicle on a highway with a speed limit sign



You want to be at the optimum level of energy for every situation.

LCDR Mike Greenburg  
Warrior Toughness Training Master  
Clinical Psychologist (Psy.D., ABPP)

their energy needs are different than when they are fighting a fire onboard a ship.

Sailors can begin to prepare their energy level by understanding how much energy is required to perform a task. The more familiar a task is to a Sailor, the easier it is to gauge how much energy is needed to perform it successfully. Sailors' responsibilities change often, and the amount of energy needed for a task may vary with the duration of the task, so it is important for them to stay flexible.

## Sailors' Energy Levels

A Sailor's energy level varies throughout the day based on their mood, environment, and several other factors. Using a skill such as mindfulness helps Sailors become aware of their current energy level.



A Sailor with the Optimal Performance model labeled: Under Energized, Peak Performance, and Over Energized

The amount of sleep a Sailor gets and what they put into their body also has a direct impact on their energy level. Many Sailors rely on pre-workout supplements or energy drinks for energy, but the stimulants and sugar in them can make it harder for a Sailor's body to naturally regulate their energy levels.

Regular consumption of pre-workout supplements or energy drinks can create overstimulation and anxiety in Sailors, and then result in a draining energy crash as the effects wear off. Neither of these situations are conducive to reaching or maintaining peak performance. Instead of the Sailor up-regulating their energy level, they may find the supplements they took are inhibiting their ability to effectively manage their energy level and need to down-regulate to perform their best for the task at hand.

Prolonged use of pre-workout supplements or energy drinks can have damaging effects on a Sailor's health and energy levels. When Sailors make an intentional choice to improve their nutrition and sleeping habits, instead of using artificial or natural stimulants, they begin to experience improved energy levels.

## Over Energized Presentation Disaster

Below is a story from LCDR Mike Greenburg, Warrior Toughness Training Master, Clinical Psychologist (Psy.D., ABPP) about how difficult it is to give a presentation if the right kind of energy level is not maintained.

"When I was a junior psychologist in the Navy, I discovered the utility of energy management during an important presentation in front of the command. I'm thinking in my mind, 'This is super important. I want to blow these people out of the water, and show them I'm an amazing presenter.' I'm standing in the waiting room doing jumping jacks and breathing quickly. I'm raising my energy level and thinking that I'm going to go out there and just blow this crowd away. I step out in front of the hospital higher ups, the CEO, and the directors, and my brain shuts down. I feel like a deer looking into the headlights of an oncoming vehicle. I'm looking around the room and my brain loses everything that I was hoping to talk about. I'm watching as the crowd's faces start to contort in horror and it feels like they have secondhand shame. I'm feeling stressed out and at the wrong end of the energy cycle. I turned around and had to read the slides verbatim. It was horrible. From that point on, I learned the purpose of energy management. This was not a high-energy task. I needed to keep myself calm, cool, and collected so I could retain my cognitive functioning. I realized I needed to know what kind of situation I'm walking into in order to efficiently optimize my energy level."

## What Does Altering and Adapting Energy Mean?

When Sailors approach a task and realize their current energy level will prevent them from performing it successfully, they must alter their energy level to adapt to it. If a Sailor's energy level is too high, it may be



I'm constantly having to slow down and breathe to down-regulate, but other people may need a little bit of spice. They might need something to pump them up because they're going to be so low on energy that they're not effective in how they present.

LCDR Mike Greenburg  
Warrior Toughness Training Master  
Clinical Psychologist (Psy.D., ABPP)



Sailors doing jumping jacks

tough to stay calm and focus while they are on watch or manning their station on a ship. If they feel tired and lethargic, they are going to struggle when trying to perform a drill. Sailors must use energy management regularly to alter their energy level if they want to meet the ever-changing needs of their daily life.

### Ways for Sailors to Up-Regulate Their Energy Level

Everyone has experienced moments in their life when they felt under energized and found it necessary to raise their energy level to meet the task at hand. Sailors jogging in place or stating performance statements are examples of Sailors up-regulating their energy levels.

Unfortunately, many people react to low energy by grabbing an energy drink or a sugary snack. While they may experience a momentary burst of energy, it quickly fades, and their energy level drops. Stimulants and sugar can make it harder for the body to naturally regulate energy levels. Sailors may also overestimate the amount of energy they will need in the short term and find themselves dealing with anxiety instead of improved performance. Instead of energy drinks and sugary snacks, Sailors can turn on upbeat music to fuel their energy levels with the lyrics and beat as a healthier alternative.

Performance statements such as, "I can do this! Let's go!" or "Get ready! Let's fight!" can

also effectively up-regulate a Sailor's energy levels. One of the most effective ways for a Sailor to up-regulate their energy level is through physical activity. A few sets of jumping jacks or push-ups and rapidly breathing in short bursts may be just what they need to get their blood pumping.

### Ways for Sailors to Down-Regulate Their Energy Level

If a Sailor's energy level is too high and they need to down-regulate, they can stretch their arms to release tension from their muscles or give themselves brief and instructive performance statements, but with a softer inner tone. Sailors can say to themselves, "Just breathe. Everything is okay." or "Be calm. Be safe." Their thoughts and emotions should gradually slow down as they down-regulate their energy and reach peak performance.

Listening to relaxing music helps to down-regulate a Sailor's energy level, as the slower melody and gentle tone creates a calming effect. Sailors can also use the recalibration breathing technique of breathing in through their nose for 5 seconds, and exhaling out their mouth for 7 seconds to down-regulate their energy and restore a sense of grounding.



A firefighter breathing in through their nose for 5 seconds and breathing out through their mouth for 7 seconds

By using energy management, Sailors are able to down-regulate and adapt their energy level for the duration of any challenge while maintaining peak performance.

### **Benefits of Energy Management**

Each situation or task in a Sailor's life has a different ideal range of energy needed to accomplish it, and energy management provides techniques to reach and maintain personal peak performance. Whether it is keeping up with the kids on the playground or reaching a steady pace during a training evolution, energy management helps Sailors to identify and reach the right amount of energy needed to complete each task.

Daily practice of energy management also helps ensure Sailors are able to maintain their energy levels during critical moments when lives are on the line.

### **How Does Energy Management Relate to Warrior Toughness and the Warrior Mindset?**

Energy management is one of the Warrior Toughness skill sets required for Sailors to

be able to take a hit and keep on fighting, optimize their performance, perform under pressure, and become the best version of themselves. Whether Sailors are manning a radar or running headfirst into a fire, their ability to identify, manage, and maintain their energy level is vital.

Commitment, Preparation, Execution, and Reflection are the four pillars of the Warrior Mindset and energy management is one of the keys to unlocking each one. When Sailors prioritize their energy levels to maintain peak performance, they are aligning with their unwavering commitment to give their all. By understanding how much energy a task will need and being aware of their current energy level, they are demonstrating preparation.

A Sailor's ability to alter and adapt their current energy level while performing a task represents execution because it allows them to act with precision, speed, and discipline. Taking time for reflection after an event provides Sailors the time to analyze and learn from their past experiences while strengthening their Mind, Body, and Spirit.

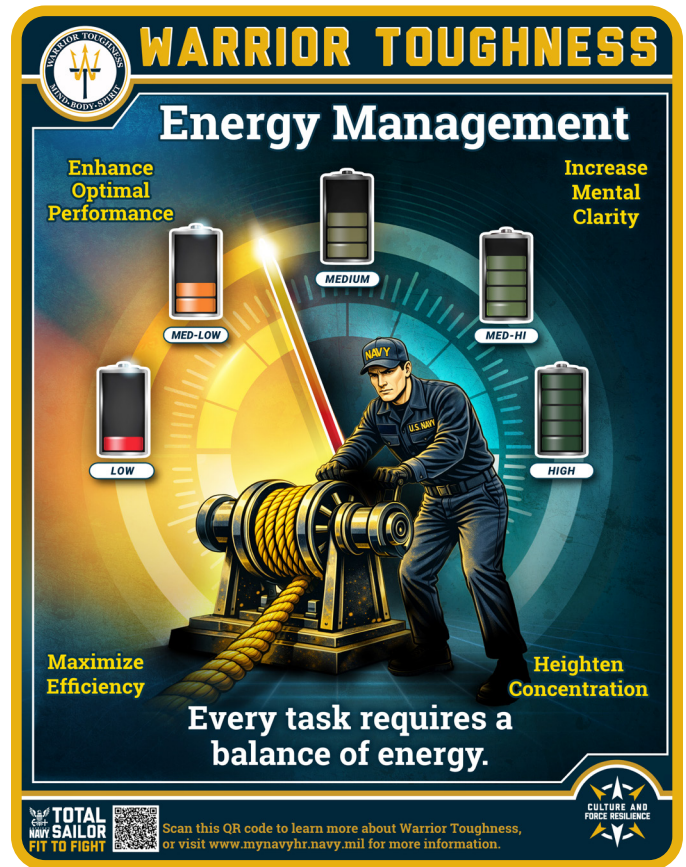
## Wrap-Up

Sailors can reach peak performance by knowing what energy is needed, being aware of their current energy level, and having the ability to alter and adapt their energy levels.

Practicing skills such as performance statements and the recalibration breathing technique can help Sailors up-regulate or down-regulate to raise or lower their energy levels to meet the task at hand.

The effective use of energy management helps Sailors keep fighting, optimize their performance under pressure, and become the best version of themselves.

This article covered what energy management is, how Sailors can reach peak performance by up-regulating and down-regulating their energy levels, the benefits of practicing energy management, and how it relates to Warrior Toughness and the Warrior Mindset.



Warrior Toughness Energy Management infographic

For more information, check out the videos and podcast about Energy Management.



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