

Resilience expert encourages USAWC students to ‘get bent back in shape’

By Elena Patton 10 August 2021



Dr. Kathleen Yancosek delivered the keynote address about motivation and change in a presentation she labeled, “Getting Bent Back into Shape” as part of USAWC Leadership Resiliency Day, Aug. 10.

The U.S. Army War College has a unique way of building and maintaining resiliency among its students.

Resiliency issues and resources took large in orientation week, zero week, which devotes time for health and wellness experts' briefings to students.

Tips, tricks, and services available through the Senior Leader Sustainment program were highlighted for students on Leadership Resiliency Day, Aug. 10. Students heard from SLS and Dunham Army Health Clinic specialists: SLS Deputy Director Col. Dawn Ryan, Chief of Physical Therapy Maj. Rachel Snell, nutritionist Alexis Caponera, and licensed social worker Jane Long about how to improve and sustain mental, emotional, and physical resiliency.

Dr. Kathleen Yancosek delivered the keynote address about motivation and change in a presentation she labeled, "Getting Bent Back into Shape." This functions as a metaphor for our emotional resilience, said Yancosek. She explained that Like memory foam, our emotional health can get bent out of shape by life stressors. With the right tools, one's emotional health can be restored because like memory foam, it reverts to its original form.

Before one can get bent back into shape, one must understand the factors that can get a person bent out of shape , she said.

She offered the acronym HALT to identify the universal factors that bend people out of shape—hunger, anger, loneliness, and tiredness.

Very attuned to the experiences of our military students, Yancosek went into detail about how moving a lot, prolonged trauma, and singular traumatic events can affect one's emotional resiliency.

One of her themes was that change must be sustained over time, but that does not mean it has to be laborious or time consuming.

To demonstrate this, she walked students through a "tangible form of rescue breathing" they could use when they are feeling overwhelmed. Using five fingers, inhale and exhale slowly, once for each finger, she suggested. Once physically centered, they can work on changing their mindset by observing, thinking, and feeling to refresh their perspective on any situation.

Students can do the breathing exercises in seminar. The mental exercises can be done during study breaks. However, they must be done consistently, noted Yancosek, comparing the technique to braces. Wear braces and teeth will not revert to the original position.

Yancosek is a retired Army lieutenant colonel with a Ph.D. in Rehabilitation Science. She has a private

practice that works to rehabilitate people with neurological and behavioral health issues.

Today's senior leaders face multiple challenges that seem to come from all directions, from mission demands and expectations, career pressure, work-life balance, and more. There's a program for that - Senior Leader Sustainment.

"SLS dedicates time to those who have been dedicating 100 percent of their time to somebody else for the last couple of years," said Lt. Col. Scott Benson, director of the Senior Leader Sustainment program. "It's a moment to catch up on their health care and get them back into their best condition to reengage and to carry on the fight.

"We try to take a holistic method for everyone that comes through and take a team approach to what needs to do to get each individual tuned up and get them back out in the best condition possible while they are here and head on their next assignment," he said.

Specific to the needs of senior leaders, the medical, physical, and behavioral resilience components are incorporated into a comprehensive assessment to optimize lifestyle behaviors and achieve health and human performance goals.

One of these assessments is nutrition.

"Nutrition comes into play in different ways," said Benson. "A lot of the students live out of a fast-food bag on occasion while they work into the night. We do weight, body fat measurements that are more precise than the Army's tape measure. The dietitian will give them an Individualized nutrition assessment and the resources so they can tune their diet and help improve themselves as much as possible."

Following the initial assessment, students will be able to tap into other SLS program services, including:

Behavioral resilience: customized advice on stress management, sleep optimization, and attention control

Nutrition: Individualized nutrition assessment with a dietitian

Fitness & exercise programming: tailored recommendations, individualized programs

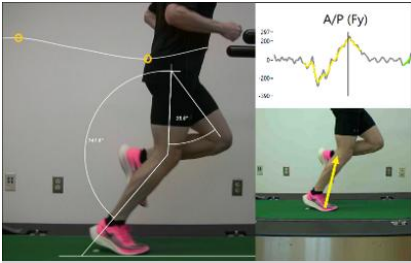
Running analysis: shoe recommendations, technique coaching, sprint and endurance programs

Physical therapy: Direct access to PT at Dunham, spinal manipulation, dry needling

Periodic health assessments: SLS will complete all Army PHA Physical and Vision screening during your assessment. PHA Part I: Senior Leader will complete Part I NLT 7 days before the scheduled SLS appointment.

The Senior Leader Sustainment Program is uniquely offered to Army War College students of the signature resident and distance education programs, the Nominative Leader Course for Sergeants Major, and the

General Officer educational programs.



The Senior Leader Sustainment Program is uniquely offered to Army War College students the Nominative Leader Course for Sergeants Major, and the General Officer educational programs.