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# Psychological Fitness and Resilience

## A Review of Relevant Constructs, Measures, and Links to Well-Being

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RAND Project AIR FORCE

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## Summary

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Psychological fitness, as part of the Total Force Fitness (TFF) construct, is defined as the integration and optimization of cognitive processes and abilities, behaviors, and emotions to positively affect performance, well-being, and response to stress. These resilience factors can be thought of as antecedents of a complex process whereby individuals deal with stress. As such, they provide the foundation for psychological fitness.

This report focuses on three categories of key resilience factors in the psychological domain: cognitive, affective, and self-regulatory. The cognitive category includes constructs that reflect individuals' thoughts and beliefs about themselves (e.g., self-efficacy, self-esteem), in addition to interpretations of their situation (e.g., perceived control). The affective category includes constructs that measure the experience of positive and negative emotions (e.g., positive and negative affect). And the self-regulatory category includes constructs that measure self-regulation and control (e.g., coping strategies). In general, the actual measurement of these psychological constructs is primarily accomplished via self-report survey or questionnaire.

The report also reviews existing research on training programs and interventions to promote the development of psychological fitness. Common themes across interventions to promote psychological fitness include two components: self-awareness and skill-building. Self-awareness is related to individuals' understanding of how they respond to stress, the emotions they experience, and their thought processes. Skill-building is associated with the promotion of positive emotions, happiness, confidence, self-esteem, and well-being.

It is important to bear in mind that much of the research conducted to date is correlational. Since correlation does not imply causation, it is difficult to draw strong conclusions about the potential benefits of interventions to promote resilience. Thus, interventions to promote psychological fitness may not be as effective as anticipated if other potential explanations for the correlation are not also examined.