



# VICTORY WELLNESS CHECKS: A QUICK GUIDE FOR MILITARY & FAMILY LIFE COUNSELORS

Victory Wellness Checks are a key component of Operation Victory Wellness. Each Soldier is expected to complete a 30-45 minute interview with a Military and Family Life Counselor (MFLC) on an annual basis. These interviews should be person-centered and individualized.

This Quick Guide is designed to ensure consistency in understanding across MFLCs, address potential questions from MFLCs, and support excellence in tailoring Victory Wellness Checks for each 1st Infantry Division and Fort Riley Soldier. It is not designed to be a script or set of rules; instead, these suggestions are reminders and offer a framework for MFLCs to use when conducting Victory Wellness Checks.

## SETTING EXPECTATIONS

<p><b>How are MFLCs being prepared?</b></p>	<p>Make sure that you know what the goals of Wellness Checks are—reading this whole Quick Guide might help.</p>
<p><b>How are Soldiers being prepared before the session begins?</b></p>	<p>Using the Soldier Quick Guide, Soldiers should already be introduced to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The goals of the session</li> <li>(2) The limits to confidentiality</li> </ol> <p>This information will then need to be briefly repeated at the start of the session.</p>

## INTRODUCING THE SESSION

<p><b>Cover the MFLC confidentiality statement.</b></p>	<p>Review the guidance around confidentiality with the Soldier:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) What they say is confidential (and non-attributable)</li> <li>(2) Limits to confidentiality include intent to break the law, and a threat to self or others.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Review expectations for the session.</b></p>	<p>Make sure you address the concept that this session is</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) For every Soldier in the 1ID and Fort Riley community</li> <li>(2) To support resilience and adaptability</li> <li>(3) To introduce Soldiers to counseling</li> </ol>
	<p>Below is potential starter language. Please make this your own and use your own words and phrasing.</p> <p>“You’ve probably heard lots of different things about these sessions—I want you to know that the goal here is to help support your personal resilience and to introduce you to what counseling is like. How you use this time is up to you. You are in the driver’s seat. My job as a counselor is to help and offer guidance that might be useful.”</p>

# LAUNCHING THE DISCUSSION

**Start with an open-ended question.**

Begin with an inviting question like “How would you like to use this time?”

**Follow-up as needed.**

Some people will jump right in with topics. Some will have specific issues and some will figure it out as they start talking. Others may hesitate—if they hesitate, you can prompt them in various ways:

- Think about your life right now—socially, personally—what would you like it to be like and how does that compare with how it is?
- If there is a gap—what is getting in your way of achieving that gap?

**Keep additional prompts handy in your back-pocket.**

If these initial questions don’t help launch the conversation, here are some back-pocket prompts to consider:

- Some Soldiers have talked about [describe a topic such as: personal goals, loneliness, sleep problems, drinking, problematic anger, finding meaning in what they do, building closeness with others]. I’m wondering if that’s a topic that might resonate with you.
- What do you think of as your strengths (as a person)? How can you use your strengths in other areas of your life?
- How would others in your life describe you? What would they say is your biggest strength? What would they say you should work on in this session? .
- Not everyone is comfortable with self-reflection. In what ways might self-reflection be useful to you in terms of building toward your personal goals?

**Follow the Soldier’s Lead.**

Take your cue from the Soldier – what are they interested in discussing? If they have a lot of topics they want to bring up, of course you won’t have time to discuss them all. Consider asking, “What’s the most important?” and ask them to prioritize. Remember, this Wellness Check isn’t the same as an intake.

**Remember the fundamentals.**

The basics of counseling—listening and reflecting—will go a long way in establishing an authentic connection. You won’t know at what point they are in their lives, so meet them where they are and focus on building that connection.

# BUILDING THERAPEUTIC ALLIANCE AND RAPPORT

<b>Remember to re-charge.</b>	Be sure to give yourself a break to re-charge and re-center before meeting each new person
<b>Remember to be psychologically present.</b>	Avoid the check-the-block phrases or resorting to a list of resources as a way to fill the time
<b>Remember the context.</b>	As you know, the Soldiers aren't coming in for treatment and might need encouragement to self-reflect
<b>Addressing previous experience with counseling.</b>	Some Soldiers will have had previous experience with counseling that they regard as negative or disappointing. Remember to acknowledge their experience. You can also let them know that this Wellness Check is a chance to start fresh and make the counseling experience something that is useful to them.
<b>Provide perspective.</b>	If the Soldier is reluctant to engage, you can try encouraging them by mentioning that even if they don't need this experience themselves, it might be useful for them to know what it's like in case one of their buddies needs help in the future.
<b>Remember there will be a range of experience.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• For some Soldiers, this experience may be unsettling because they will be uncertain about what you are going to do and what will happen in the session. The session may feel intimidating because it is out of their control. Set them at ease the best you can.</li><li>• Soldiers may be confused by the term "counseling" because it's a military term for leaders to guide their Soldiers in professional development and often described as an opportunity for correcting Soldiers. You may need to clarify terminology.</li><li>• Soldiers may have question about why Soldiers go to counseling or therapy. You can consider explaining it by noting that sometimes when people get stuck, and their normal ways of coping aren't working for them, they need new ideas of how to move forward. Or sometimes Soldiers want to unload a concern that they have that they aren't comfortable sharing with anyone else. Providing clear and direct explanations like this can help demystify the process.</li></ul>

## CONSIDERING META-GOALS OF THE SESSION

<b>Establish a counseling orientation.</b>	Encourage psychological mindedness and a growth mindset
<b>Provide perspective.</b>	Normalize that everyone struggles at some point in their life.
<b>Create a welcoming environment.</b>	Have them experience the relief that can come with sharing concerns, and that sharing their thoughts can be helpful—whether with family, friends or a counselor  This session may be their only exposure to counseling, and your role is to demystify it.
<b>Give them a gift.</b>	Can you give one good tip/idea/strategy (a kind of gift) that they can take with them—something to remember and work on? Essentially, see if you can give them something. (e.g., grounding techniques, deep breathing, rapid reframing, asking themselves: “will this matter to me a year from now?”).

## CLOSING THE SESSION

<b>Be sure to save time for a wrap-up.</b>	As you prepare to wrap up the session, consider asking questions to prompt reflection. You can consider asking questions such as “How was this session for you? What worked for you? Was it what you expected?”
<b>Offer resources as needed.</b>	Consider the need for follow-up and ask if there is anything they would like to follow-up with in terms of other resources. Provide targeted suggestions without overwhelming them with a long list.
<b>Ask for their way ahead.</b>	As you close out the session, prompt them to identify a point or topic that they might remember or take with them to think more about. And remember to offer your thanks for their participation.

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE

Thank you for being part of this ground-breaking effort in proactively supporting Soldier wellness and providing Soldiers with an introduction to the counseling process. Your role is unique, and you are serving an important part in this cultural shift in the Army

