

CGHR

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE COAST GUARD
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMUNITY



DECEMBER 10, 2013

ON THE RADAR SCREEN

Human Capital Institute webcasts (registration required)

3 Steps for Succeeding as an HR Strategic Business Partner

This webinar will help you make sense of how HR can add value to the business and help enhance your credibility with the business leaders in your organization.



Wednesday, December 18 • 1:00pm EST

To register, go to <http://www.hci.org/lib/3-steps-succeeding-hr-strategic-business-partner>

Ken Blanchard webinar (registration required)

Increasing Effectiveness Through Situational Leadership II



You'll explore

- ◆ How to be more purposeful and intentional in your conversations with your people
- ◆ How to create a sense of partnership by aligning on goals, development level, and the leadership style match
- ◆ How to create a work environment that is optimally motivating
- ◆ How to use a common language of leadership to develop trust

Thursday, December 19 • 12pm EST

To register, go to <https://webexevents.webex.com/webexevents/onstage/g.php?t=a&d=667321496>

MSA Financial Wellness Webinar (registration required)

New Year ... New You! 10 Financial Resolutions You Can Keep!



Are you tired of making New Year's resolutions that seemingly end before they've even begun? Get your New Year off to a good start by concentrating on ten financial resolutions that you can actually keep!

Tuesday, January 7 • 12pm EST

To register, go to <https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/453112441>

American Management Association webinar
(registration required)



What Managers Do. -- and Can Do Better

Managing is important for anyone affected by its practice, which means not just managers, but everyone. We all need to understand it better, in order that it be practiced better.

Wednesday, January 8 • 12:00pm EST

To register, go to <http://www.amanet.org/training/webcasts/Simply-Managing.aspx>

ARTICLES AND RESOURCES

OPM updates winter dismissal procedures for capital area

<http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/reference-materials/handbooks/dcdissmissal.pdf>

Five Methods to Reverse Mentor with Millennials

<http://www.vocus.com/blog/reverse-mentoring-with-millennials/>

10 Simple Body Language Tricks That Will Do Wonders For Your Career

<http://blog.brazencareerist.com/2013/10/09/10-simple-body-language-tricks-that-will-do-wonders-for-your-career/>

New mobile version of TSP website debuts

Thrift Savings Plan participants who use a smartphone to access tsp.gov now will be directed automatically to a new mobile version of the TSP website. <https://www.tsp.gov/index.shtml>

How to Manage Someone You Don't Like

If you're like most leaders, you probably gravitate towards direct reports who act nice and don't deliver bad news. But it's often those who provoke or challenge you -- the people you like less -- who prompt new insights and help propel the group to success. When you dislike an employee you might -- consciously or not -- mismanage him, treat him unfairly, or fail to see the real benefit he can deliver. To get the most out of someone you don't like:

- ◆ **Learn how to handle your frustration.** Don't let your distaste show. Everyone wants their boss to like them, and your employee might presume that any disapproval has to do with his performance. Remain fair, impartial, and composed.
- ◆ **Check your bias.** If you're having trouble being fair, seek counsel from another manager who is familiar with the employee's work. Ask whether your evaluation matches the outsider's.
- ◆ **Keep an open mind.** It might help to spend more time with the problem employee, perhaps by collaborating on a difficult task. Remember that perspectives change, and your favorite employee today might become your least favorite tomorrow.

Original article: <http://blogs.hbr.org/2013/08/how-to-manage-someone-you-dont/>

What's your best excuse for not delegating?

<https://smartblogs.com/leadership/2013/11/20/whats-your-best-excuse-for-not-delegating/>

RECENT MESSAGES

ALCGPSC 154/13: ACTIVE DUTY OFFICER WORKFORCE MGMT - WAIVING OBLIGATED SERVICE - http://www.uscg.mil/announcements/alcgpsc/154-13_ALCGPSC.txt

ALCGPSC 153/13: TSA PRE-CHECK PROGRAM - http://www.uscg.mil/announcements/alcgpsc/153-13_ALCGPSC.txt

ALCOAST 502/13: NEW COAST GUARD TUITION ASSISTANCE (TA) POLICY - http://www.uscg.mil/announcements/alcoast/502-13_ALCOAST.txt

ALCOAST 493/13: 2014 CHILD CARE SUBSIDY PROGRAM UPDATE - http://www.uscg.mil/announcements/alcoast/493-13_ALCOAST.txt

Messages authorized for internet release are available on the WWW at www.uscg.mil/announcements/. The internal message archive is located on CG Portal at <https://cgportal2.uscg.mil/library/generalmessages/SitePages/Home.aspx>

TIPS AND TRICKS

Thousands of Calls Blocked, Thanks to Contest Winner

<http://blog.howto.gov/2013/10/25/thousands-of-calls-blocked-thanks-to-contest-winner/>

Sign up for Nomorobo: <http://www.nomorobo.com/>

Scams Targeting Service Members or Veterans

<http://www.stopfraud.gov/service-members.html>

How to Improve Your Business Writing

<http://repcapitalmedia.com/how-to-improve-your-business-writing/>

Spelling, Punctuation, and Grammar Revision Checklist

<http://blog.ezinearticles.com/2013/05/spelling-punctuation-and-grammar-revision-checklist.html>

6 Exercises to Help You Write Concise Copy

<http://thecopybot.com/2013/07/concise-copy-exercises/>

25 editing tips to tighten your writing

<http://thewritelife.com/edit-your-copy/>

Does it pay to know your type?

http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/does-it-pay-to-know-your-type/2012/12/13/a12c9e90-4589-11e2-9648-a2c323a991d6_graphic.html

2014 Civilian Pay Calendar

http://www.uscg.mil/civilianhr/docs/pdf/pay_calendar_2014.pdf

2014 Federal Leave Calculator (Excel chart tracks actual leave balances)

http://www.federaljobs.net/Site/images/2014_Leave_Chart_Regular.xls

BBB's 12 Scams of Christmas

<http://www.bbb.org/us/12-scams>

RECENT FLAG VOICES

Flag Voice 402 - Civilian HR Services Delivery Changes - <http://www.uscg.mil/hr/flagvoice/fv402.asp>

Flag Voice 401 - Coast Guard-wide Civilian Hiring Pause - <http://www.uscg.mil/hr/flagvoice/fv401.asp>

Flag Voice 400 - 2013 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) - <http://www.uscg.mil/hr/flagvoice/fv400.asp>

All Flag Voices are online at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg1/flagvoice/default.asp>

SEMPER PARATUS

Back issues of CGHR are archived on CG Portal - <https://cglink.uscg.mil/2dfb4a63> (path: Communities > Human Resources Community of Practice > Human Resources Library > CGHR)

VOLUNTEER REPORTERS WANTED. Your story ideas and events are always welcomed. Send them to the [CGHR Editor](#).

The next issue of CGHR: On the Radar Screen will be sent on January 14.

“Ask the Expert” Web Chat (registration required)



The next web chat on January 16th at noon will feature the expertise of Dr. Ariel Dalfen, Psychiatrist and Author, on Women’s Mental Health Issues.

Sign up at <http://ondemand.lifespeak.com/asktheexpert/>

Please note: users may ask questions in either French or English and choose to view the web chat in any one of a dozen languages.

LifeSpeak On Demand Library (video and audio options)

Bullying 101

Watch and learn from expert Alyson Schafer, Parent Coach, TV Host and Author.

Topics include:

- ◆ Bullying - the New Epidemic
- ◆ Characteristics of a Bully
- ◆ The Victim - What Can Parents Do?

To watch these videos, or to download the audio MP3 files, go to http://cgsuprt.lifespeak.com/Volume_Details.aspx?vid=122&cid=582

Watch many more speakers and videos by visiting <http://cgsuprt.lifespeak.com/Default.aspx>

EXPERIENCE V-COUNSELING, *The new live, face-to-face, online counseling service*

What is V-Counseling?

V-Counseling, brought to you by CG SUPRT, allows you to have online visits at a time and location that is convenient for you -- no travel necessary!

Where can I have a V-Counseling visit?

By using a secure video/text chat, you can have a V-Counseling visit anywhere you have a computer with a webcam and internet access -- from home, school, etc.

How do I schedule a V-Counseling visit?

Call CG SUPRT at (855) CG SUPRT (247-8778) and make a confidential request to schedule a V-Counseling visit at a time that is convenient for you.

See [ALCOAST 513/13](#) for more details.

The Freedom to Give



When you see Christmas décor take over every store, you know the holiday season is near. Hanging up colorful lights and dusting off mini North Pole villages can be fun; nevertheless, when you start pulling money from your pocket to cover holiday expenses, the holiday cheer can fade away. But it doesn't have to! We're still a few months out, so you have plenty of time to plan, save and feel more confident that you can bestow a plethora of gifts and pay your bills without breaking the bank.

Your first order of business is creating a spending plan. Think back to the previous holiday season and how much you spent overall. Will you spend that much this year? Perhaps you will spend more because a family member got married or had a child, which means adding another gift to the list. Or maybe you had a family member move into the area so you won't have to pay for a flight. Whatever your circumstances may be, you can make a plan to keep your spending in check: estimate and set an amount that you think you will spend or you wish to spend, then, start saving a little bit each month to meet those expenses.

Still want a way to cut back costs? Here are a few tips for smart holiday shopping:

1. Set a specific price limit for each gift based on how much you have in your budget. Especially if there are family members who have more money than others, suggest that everyone uses (and agrees on) the same price limit so nobody feels pressure to spend more than they can afford.
2. Instead of everyone buying a gift for each person, have your family pick names out of a hat, so each person is only responsible for getting and receiving one gift. (Plus, it's fun to guess who picked your name.)
3. Make a list of the people you have to get gifts for and record what, when and where a purchase is made, so you see how each gift is fitting into your budget (and you won't buy more than you need). Also, if you use a credit card, make sure you check your statements for incorrect charges.

Holiday spending does not have to be overwhelming. Keep the season bright with a financial plan and a little help from your MSA Money Coach. They can provide more details on how to make a spending plan and meet holiday expenses. Call your Money Coach today at 1-855-247-8778 or visit www.cgsuprt.com. Services are free and confidential, within the limits of the law.

SAPR SITREP – Update on sexual assault court-martials - <http://allhands.coastguard.dodlive.mil/2013/12/05/sapr-sitrep-update-on-sexual-assault-court-martials/>

Why aren't you talking with your Shipmates about sexual assault? - <http://allhands.coastguard.dodlive.mil/2013/12/03/why-arent-you-talking-with-your-shipmates-about-sexual-assault/>

From the Homefront: Why military ID cards matter - <http://allhands.coastguard.dodlive.mil/2013/11/21/from-the-homefront-why-military-id-cards-matter/>

TSA Travel Tip: TSA Pre✓™ for military members expanded to 100 airports - <http://allhands.coastguard.dodlive.mil/2013/11/19/tsa-travel-tip-tsa-pre-check-for-military-members-expanded-to-100-airports/>

Cost-sharing reinstated for Coast Guard Tuition Assistance Program - <http://allhands.coastguard.dodlive.mil/2013/11/20/cost-sharing-reinstated-for-coast-guard-tuition-assistance-program/>

Coast Guard announces new sexual assault victim advocate standards - <http://allhands.coastguard.dodlive.mil/2013/11/26/coast-guard-announces-new-sexual-assault-victim-advocate-standards/>

Keep the holiday shopping season merry with these budgeting tips - <http://allhands.coastguard.dodlive.mil/2013/11/07/keep-the-holiday-shopping-season-merry-with-these-budgeting-tips/>

Moving at Internet speed, the highly evolving cyber mission.
<http://allhands.coastguard.dodlive.mil/2013/11/06/moving-at-internet-speed-the-highly-evolving-cyber-mission/>

How does Coast Guard Cyber Security keep our everyday systems operating safely?
<http://allhands.coastguard.dodlive.mil/2013/10/30/how-does-coast-guard-cyber-security-keep-our-everyday-systems-operating-safely/>

Coast Guard prohibits inappropriate relationships with recent boot camp grads
<http://allhands.coastguard.dodlive.mil/2013/10/28/coast-guard-prohibits-inappropriate-relationships-with-recent-boot-camp-grads/>

Volunteering: Give a little, get a lot
<http://allhands.coastguard.dodlive.mil/2013/10/25/volunteering-give-a-little-get-a-lot/>

From the Homefront: Making sure your voice is heard
<http://allhands.coastguard.dodlive.mil/2013/10/24/from-the-homefront-making-sure-your-voice-is-heard/>

What is your social footprint?
<http://allhands.coastguard.dodlive.mil/2013/10/23/what-is-your-social-footprint/>

New military website teaches parenting skills
<http://allhands.coastguard.dodlive.mil/2013/10/22/new-military-website-teaches-parenting-skills/>

Save the Coast Guard All Hands Blog to your favorites or sign up to subscribe at: <http://allhands.coastguard.dodlive.mil/>

13 PERSONALITY TYPES In Every Office

Which office characters are in **YOUR** office?



Better yet, are **YOU** one of them?

THE PASSIVE AGGRESSOR

{1} Though not openly complaining that someone else isn't working as much, this person can't resist mentioning how late he or she stayed last night or commenting on their "insane" amount of workload.

They also leave anonymous post-it notes asking for compliance in their ridiculous requests like, "When the coffee pot is empty please re-fill it, and be more considerate of others. Thank you."



THE BACKSTABBER



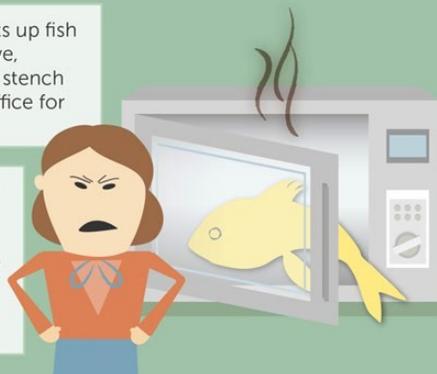
{2} This person pretends to be your friend just long enough to make it really hurt when they steal your ideas or badmouth you to management.

They creepily watch your every move and next thing you know, they steal your idea, get a raise and a corner office with a view.

THE KITCHEN SLOB

{3} This person heats up fish in the microwave, spreading the disgusting stench throughout the whole office for an entire week.

They stick burritos in the microwave that explode, they spill coffee all over the counter, leave moldy food in the fridge and dirty dishes in the sink.



THE CHATTERBOX



{4} The entire office avoids this person like the plague. As soon as they open their mouth, you know you're going to be tortured in a 30-minute boring story.

Whether anyone is listening or not, the Chatterbox just can't keep their thoughts to themselves...EVER!

THE DELEGATOR

{5} This person constantly delegates work to other people and never actually does any work on their own.

Their walk around the office is like a drive-by shooting as they fling a folder onto your desk and promptly demand to "report back by 3pm".



For some reason, your boss thinks they have excellent time management skills.

THE WORKAHOLIC



{6} They tend to be aggressive, independent, ambitious, volatile and rigid. They're always the first one in the office and the last one to leave.

The Workaholic eats, sleeps and breathes work and looks down on coworkers who actually have a life.

THE NOISEMAKER

{7} This person is oblivious to how they are infuriating everyone else around them.

They make noise with their whistling, singing, humming, knuckle cracking, gum-snapping, cell phones not set to vibrate, speakerphone conversations, chair squeaking, music without headphones, and more!



THE MEETING SCHEDULER



We need a meeting!



{8} This guy would like nothing more than to have a meeting all day, every day, 365 days a year.

It's truly his favorite activity, so much so that you can envision him calling a dinner meeting at home, or scheduling in a "bedtime story" meeting with his kids before bed.

THE GOSSIPER

{9} This person lives for the latest office scandal, whether it's actually true or not.

They spend their day discussing a coworker's troubled marriage, weird eating habits, who's on the verge of getting fired, salary differentials, and who is going around with whom.



THE OVERLY AMBITIOUS SUMMER INTERN



{10} They seemed great at first, but now they're popping over your shoulder like a whack-a-mole from hell.

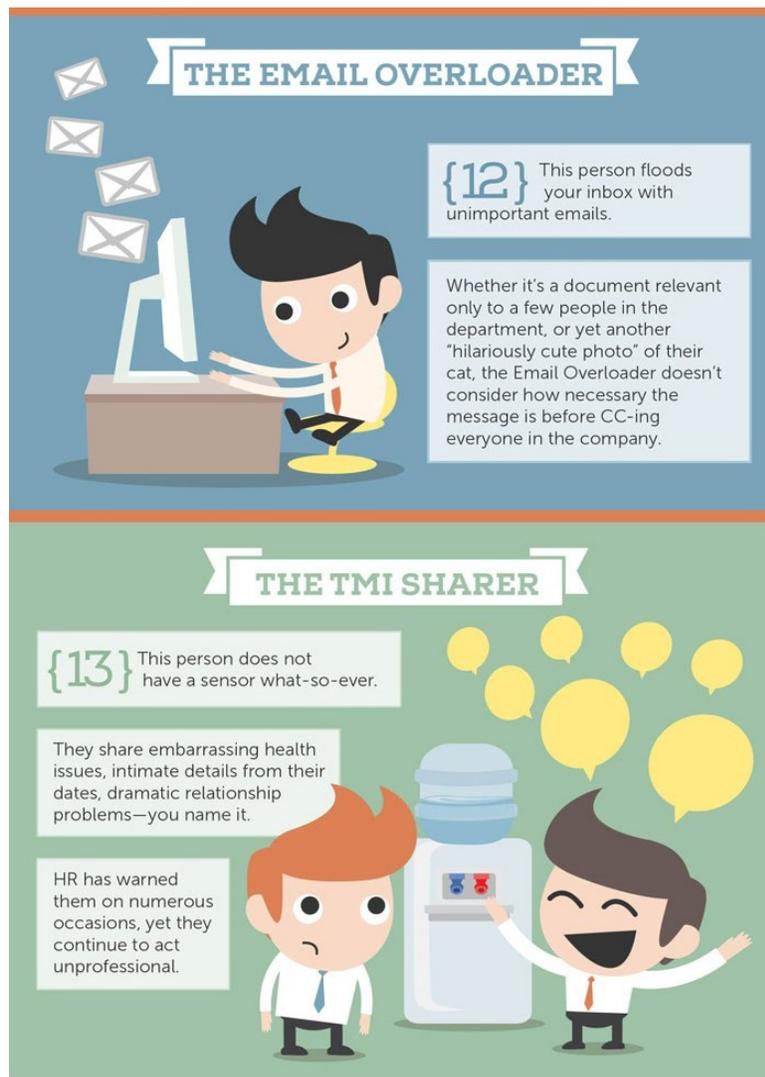
They are more of a headache than help and you're counting down the days until they have to go back to school.

THE DEBBIE DOWNER

{11} They do nothing but complain about coworkers, their workload, the management, and corporate policies.

Yet they've worked there for years and probably will never, ever leave.





Original post: <http://www.pens.com/blog/13-office-personality-types-infographic/>

[NEWTISWEEK]

Finally find out what the buzz was about. Get all 16 discs of **Breaking Bad: The Complete Series**, complete with a replica money barrel, commemorative challenge coin and Los Pollos Hermanos apron. List price: \$300 (Amazon sale price: \$200)



GUN VIOLENCE SOARS IN PG-13 MOVIES

The amount of gun violence in PG-13 movies has tripled since 1985, the year the film rating category was introduced, a new study shows. Not only that, violent gun scenes have become more common in PG-13 movies — which children 13 and under can see only with a parent — than they are in R-rated movies, the researchers said.

“Maybe movies that display gun violence should be rated R instead of PG-13,” said study author Brad Bushman, a professor of communication and psychology at Ohio State University. “That’s a possible policy decision that could be made based on such findings.”

But experts also noted that the findings do not definitively link more exposure to gun violence on the screen to more violent behavior among kids.

GEARSCOUT

Whether you’re heading to work, boarding a plane, going for drinks or cheering your kid’s football team, the new **Stio Shades Blazer** will be your grab-and-go, all-occasion fav. The NanoSphere-treated, schoeller-dynamic soft shell fabric wears hard, feels soft and will fend off a drizzle while resisting creases and stains like a 3-year-old resists naptime. This super-technical garment counters the baggy rain jacket look with princess seams and darts, shaped cuffs and style chops that work from barn to bar. It comes in beech or magnet. (\$239)

Men looking for similar form and function can check out the classically styled Stio Rounder Blazer (\$249).



JOHN HARMAN/STAFF

17 tips & tricks to ensure all stays calm

By Jon R. Anderson
jona@militarytimes.com

The holidays are supposed to be a time of joy and celebration, but let’s face it, sometimes they can be tough. And sometimes they can turn into a full-blown stress bomb.

There’s the stuff that everyone has to deal with — the typical civilian holiday headaches that range from the hunting and gathering of presents to family feuding, and then there’s the stress that only those in the military will know.

Here are some tactics and techniques to help you navigate those high-tension holiday minefields and defuse those stress bombs.

1. Find the funny. Try to find the humor in your crazy in-laws, the burned turkey or whatever holiday curveballs get thrown at you. Laughter is a great way to defuse tension and cope with stress.

“Have fun with things,” says Air Force Master Sgt. Mark Diehl, a

Defusing holiday stress bombs

first sergeant at Moody Air Force Base, Ga. “Try to find the positive in any situation.”

2. Cool off before things get heated.

When holiday stress gets high, tensions can flare even in the best of marriages and relationships. When things get heated, good communication strategies are key, Diehl says.

“Taking a cool-down period is probably the best thing I know to do,” he says. “Take a step away before things reach a boiling point.”

A little timeout can “maybe help

you realize that it wasn’t quite as serious as where the conversation was going,” he added.

If not, “then seek out some help,” he says, whether it’s from a trusted mutual friend or, if necessary, more professional resources through your chain of command.

3. Keep reasonable bedtimes for kids. “Lack of sleep can turn into drama, and then that can create friction between the parents,” says Diehl, who has two daughters, ages 8 and 10. It’s a lesson he learned the hard way.

“When our two girls were

younger, we kept things pretty strict, but as they’ve gotten a little bit older, we’ve been a little more flexible during holiday breaks. But there have been a couple of times where we’ve let them stay up later than we probably should have, and that turns into drama the next day with their attitudes.”

4. Amp up the exercise. It’s the holidays. You want to chill out, watch the game, eat some turkey. PT can wait until you’re back from leave, right? Maybe, but remember: Exercise is the great equalizer when stress is high.

“Exercising really allows you to work through the stress reaction. It will help you sleep better at night, but it will also keep your energy up. It’s a great way to relieve tension,” says Dr. David Barry, a clinical psychologist with the Defense Department’s Deployment Health Clinical Center.

So knock out some pushups at halftime or go for a run before the big turkey dinner.

5. Ease off the booze. With all of the parties and gatherings, some of that holiday cheer often comes in a bottle. Sometimes too much. Have a few drinks, if you want, but be smart about it.

“Excessive drinking for males is

having five or more drinks on one occasion. For women, it's four or more. And no more than 14 drinks per week for men and seven for females," Barry says. "During this time of year, people tend to exceed those amounts, which can lead to risky behaviors and get people in trouble."

6. Embrace the suck. In 1976, a young Marine sergeant named Jerome Cwiklinski was working his first Christmas as a guard at the U.S. Embassy in Austria. Vienna may be one of the most picturesque places you could spend Christmas, but Cwiklinski wouldn't have known it. He was miserable, stuck in a cold, lonely guard post without so much as a strand of tinsel in sight.

Now one of the Navy's top chaplains, he looks back on that Christmas as one of his best ever.

"People say they want to cut through the tinsel and glitter to get to the real meaning of the season," says now-Capt. Cwiklinski. "The military can help you do that because there are times when you are stationed in places where it just doesn't exist."

Embrace those moments, he says.

"Those challenging times can form some of your best memories of the holidays because it forces you to reflect on what it is you are actually celebrating. In the future, the memory of those sacrifices you made are cherished. When you had very little, you were doing a lot to ensure your fellow Americans could celebrate their holidays in peace."

7. Find a faith community. No matter what time of year it is, finding the right faith community can be particularly challenging in an always-on-the-go military. But that can be especially important during the holidays.

Although chaplains come from particular denominations, part of their job is to help troops and their families connect with what works for them, says Cwiklinski, an Orthodox priest and force chaplain for U.S. Marine Corps Forces Pacific.

"We are a referral resource," he says. "It sometimes helps to talk that out with their chaplain, to tell them, 'This is what I'm used to — this is what we did back home.' Just having those conversations can help them embrace whatever is available."

If you're deployed, it may not be much, but a chaplain may be able

to connect you with others from your faith tradition whom you aren't aware of. If nothing else, consider bringing a touchstone of your faith — anything from prayer books to a Bible — that will help you connect to the spiritual side of the holiday season on your own. At larger installations, even downrange, there's often no shortage of faith groups that might be a good fit for you, Cwiklinski says.

8. Keep family traditions. Growing up, the old holiday classics were a must in Betsy Vial's home.

Now an Army spouse at Fort Benning, Ga., Vial says tuning into those old favorites helps her tune out the holiday stress.

"I'm from Faribault, Minnesota, so 'White Christmas' from 'The Andy Williams Christmas Album' is a must, especially since I'm stationed in a place with no snow. If I play this album while I decorate, I feel like I'm back at home," she says. "The best advice I can offer military families is to find ways to keep the family traditions from their childhoods alive. We can recapture the magic we felt back home and share that feeling with our children even though we have a nomadic way of life."

9. Tweak your traditions. Army Sgt. James and Melissa Langley always made it a point to get family pictures taken during the holidays to send to family and friends.

When James was deployed through the holidays, however, Melissa tweaked that tradition by bringing a big, framed picture of her husband along for the photo shoot with their daughter.

"I held his portrait so that he knows he is not forgotten, and our friends and family don't forget him," she says.

Some military families create "flat daddies and mommies," life-size headshots of deployed troops that can take their own seat at the holiday table and then move into the living room when it's time to open presents.

10. Create new traditions. Army Cpl. Paul Caiafa and his family have been stationed in Wiesbaden, Germany, for the past few years. Rather than focus on how much they missed their friends and family back in the states, they've learned to focus on those around them instead. Their new holiday traditions include cooking Thanksgiving and Christmas meals for the single soldiers who have not gone back home, donat-

ing to a local charity and visiting wounded troops at the military medical center in Landstuhl.

"It has done wonders for our hearts," says his wife, Sarah. "It's given my children lessons of giving back, and all the while, our Army family is with us."

11. Get creative with presents. Get brave and get real about money with the extended family.

Especially if finances are tight — or even if they're not — consider creative alternatives to the usual gift exchanges.

"If you have a large, extended family coming over, you can always make the suggestion of a 'secret Santa'-type gift exchange. That can help make the gathering fun and not financially burdensome," says Dana Lee, a licensed clinical social worker with the military.

Or you can make presents. If your brother loves barbecue sauce, find a great recipe and make him a jar instead of buying something expensive. Or craft a handwritten letter to each of your loved ones telling specific reasons why you love them. They'll treasure that present more than anything you could buy them.

"I've worked with service members who've sat down together with the kids and made a scrapbook or photo album. It's not only a final product, but also the experience — collecting the photos, sharing stories — that people will remember."

12. Apply lessons learned. Sometimes the holiday season can feel more like a Halloween nightmare with the same cycle of stressors coming back to haunt you year after year. Take a page from your military playbook and do a thorough lessons-learned drill from previous years and try to figure out how you can do things better this time around.

"When you're making plans for the holiday season, you can apply those lessons learned to figure out the best way forward when engaging your friends and family," says Lee, who has worked with troops and families at Fort Hood, Texas, and is now with the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury Outreach Center.

Mentally review the last family holiday and consider what worked, what didn't and what has changed since. Then adjust.

13. Enlist help dealing with trouble-

makers. Civilians can say some pretty stupid stuff. Whether it's old Uncle Harry on another Thanksgiving dinner political rant or the over-curious brother-in-law who wants to know about all of the people you've killed, even well-meaning friends and family back home can be tough to deal with.

Barry, who has worked with troops and families at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., and Fort Belvoir, Va., once had a client with a family member who wanted to know about the gory details of combat. Over turkey.

An ally "can help deflect and defuse those situations before they happen, or at least help extract you from those circumstances and get to a different part of the party," Barry says.

Whether it's your wife or your mom or old buddy, recruit an ally who will help watch out for those moments and then redirect that crazy uncle or brother-in-law when the conversation gets weird.

14. Do a vector check. You don't have to have post-traumatic stress or be suffering from depression to get hit with a nasty case of the holiday blues.

"We will always have the holiday blues. There's all kinds of things that can contribute, whether it be something financial, or you're not taking care of yourself, or all of the pressure to perform and attend parties," Barry says.

Try to be mindful of how you're interacting with people and how you feel about yourself.

"I call it doing a vector check," Barry says. "You kind of lick your finger and see which way the wind is blowing. It's just another way of asking yourself, 'Am I going the right direction?'"

15. Find balance in the new normal. The holidays became a different experience after Army Maj. Ed Pulido got back from Iraq. The wounds — both mental and physical — inflicted by the roadside bomb blast make it hard for him to be around big groups of people.

"It's helpful to keep a balance between socializing and down time with my family, and by knowing my triggers, I'm able to avoid stressful situations and better cope when they do arise," says Pulido, now retired and working with the Folds of Honor Foundation, helping other veterans through similar struggles. "Mentally preparing for different

types of situations with my family is also helpful. For example, we've thought through different scenarios that could trigger a stress reaction and thought about how we'd cope with each so that we know what to do if any of us do feel stress."

16. Plan to keep holiday spirits high. When Navy Capt. Kurt V. Scott started spending the holiday season away from his family as a young officer in the submarine fleet, unable to call or check in often for months at a time, the work he had done over the summer kept his spirits up.

"We called it Christmas in July. That's when we'd do our holiday shopping because all too often you might not be there in December," he says.

That helped ease the pain of separation once Christmas rolled around.

"Because we had planned ahead and the kids were opening presents I had helped pick out, I was there in spirit," he says. "That's what got me through those periods, because I knew what they were looking at. I could put myself into the situation and know what they were experiencing that day."

His dad, who was also a submariner, taught him another trick. On the rare opportunities he could mail a letter or package back home, he'd always include a secret code.

"I would flip the stamp upside down, which was our little way of saying, 'I love you.'"

17. Don't isolate yourself. Especially for those wrestling through baggage from downrange, there's usually a big temptation to withdraw from friends and loved ones, says Scott, who now heads the Navy's suicide prevention office.

If you're feeling bad, you've got to reach out to talk to someone.

"The single most important thing is reaching out to a shipmate and talking about it," Scott says. "It's OK to talk about it. It's actually a sign of strength to reach out for help."

If your battle buddy or wingman isn't available, there are a variety of peer-to-peer hotlines available for military and veterans, Barry says.

"The great thing about these peer-to-peer programs is that, while it's fine to talk in generalities, they can talk in specifics and meet you where you're at mentally and situationally ... just not geographically." □