

## 2016 Occupational Health Psychology (OHP) Summer Institute

### OHP Innovation and Creative Strategies Leading to Total Worker Health July 12-14, 2016

Location: Portland State University Smith Memorial Student Union, Rooms 327-329  
Address: 1825 SW Broadway, Portland, Oregon 97201

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#### Behavioral Health Leadership in a High-Risk Occupation



*Abstract:* Perhaps nowhere is the potential for effective leadership more important than in high-risk occupations where subordinates are asked to perform under harrowing conditions. The military is a quintessential example of such an occupation, and numerous studies have documented problems in service member mental health and functioning associated with harrowing circumstances such as combat deployment. Studies have also identified the importance of small team leadership in promoting health and adjustment in service members, yet these studies do not provide concrete guidance for Army leaders. What should a small team leader do to support soldier health and well-being? What behaviors might make a difference?

Building on the concept of domain-specific leadership, we review emerging evidence from Army surveys that point to specific leader behaviors associated with better soldier adjustment. Broadly categorized as “Behavioral Health Leadership”, we focus on examples such as sleep leadership and health-promoting leadership. These two sets of behaviors are associated with better soldier adjustment over and above the benefits conferred by good general leadership. Specific behaviors like these can serve as a basis of training programs for small team supervisors, and broadening our conceptualization of supportive leadership can potentially enhance employee resilience in high-risk occupations.

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