



**Who we are:** Mindstrong Guardians was founded by U.S. Coast Guard veterans to improve mental health outcomes for military members and first responders. Our team draws upon the talents and lived experience of:

Veterans | Licensed clinicians | Trauma survivors | Professional coaches | Chaplains | Medical professionals

**Mission:** Deliver innovative pre-crisis prevention and awareness programs and post-traumatic healing events.

**Duration:** 2.5 hour OST Lived Experience Conversation and 3 hour OST Workshops

**Primary Goals:** Improve the mental health of military members and first responders by modeling peer support through lived experience conversations, workshops, and first-person accounts of recovery.

**Alignment:** Our OST Program supports the Coast Guard’s Integrated Primary Prevention Program and implementation of the Coast Guard Behavioral Health Playbook; specifically, Section 2 - Conversations that Matter:

*“It is important for Command Cadre and all supervisors to engage in conversations about behavioral health and normalize help-seeking behaviors.”*

To accomplish this, we maximize the: (1) power of peer-support and (2) benefit of lived experience conversations.

Evidence shows trauma-informed peer engagements make a difference by providing:

**Increased:** Self-esteem & social functioning | Empathy and acceptance (camaraderie) | Engagement in self-care and wellness | Sense that clinical treatment is responsive to needs | Sense of hope and inspiration | Sense of control and ability to bring about change in their lives

**Decreased:** Substance use and depression

**OST Lived Experience Conversations (2.5 hours):** Conversations center around the lived experience of a veteran with service-connected mental health disability who is a model of post-traumatic growth. Our clinician provides expert insights on the complexities of stress, trauma, and recovery. Discussion may include:

Differences between stress, trauma, and disorder | Incurring & internalizing mission-related trauma | How the brain, mind, and body keep score of trauma | Impact on work-life | Reaching-out for help | Counseling & medications | Peer support and social networks | Building protective factors & reducing risk factors | Recovery-oriented approaches to post-traumatic growth

**OST Workshops (3 hours):** Our two workshops seamlessly integrate peer-led conversation with experiential learning to enhance connection to all themes explored, thus offering a powerful and immersive experience for the crew.

The mental health leadership workshop sets leadership dimensions against the challenge to de-stigmatize mental health conversation, build mental health advocates, and create positive team culture. The mental health innovation workshop captures the ingenuity of the workforce to foster, collect, and vet ideas for change and provide a summary to the sponsor.