



HEALTHY HABITS

Healthy habits, real life.

Healthy habits should support your life, not consume it.

Military and public-safety schedules rarely cooperate with the ideal routines we see online. Duty days run long. Calls come late. Shifts rotate. Field time, training, travel, injuries, family responsibilities, and transition seasons interrupt even our best plans.

This issue is about building habits that can bend without breaking: small choices that protect your health, your relationships, and the woman you are beyond the uniform.

FROM NIKKI

You do not need a perfect routine or another standard to meet. Start with what helps you feel more rested, more grounded, and more connected to your own life. Let that be enough to begin. Take your time. Give yourself grace. You deserve it.

**IN THIS ISSUE**

- **01 – Life beyond the job**
- **02 – Post-shift recovery**
- **03 – Habits for unpredictable schedules**
- **04 – Member spotlight**
- **05 – Resources + what's next**

Rest. Rise. Reconnect.



MENTAL WELLNESS

Making room for life beyond the job

The shift may end before your nervous system realizes it is safe to stand down.

Military and first-responder work trains you to stay ready, scan for problems, make decisions quickly, and put the mission or emergency first. Those skills matter on duty. At home, they can make it difficult to slow down, reconnect, or tolerate needs that feel less urgent.

Create a transition - not an instant switch

Choose a short, repeatable signal that work is ending: change clothes, shower, walk for ten minutes, sit in the car for one song, or take five slow breaths before entering the house. The goal is not to erase the day. It is to give your mind and body a bridge into what comes next.

Protect more than productivity

Put rest, relationships, hobbies, and joy on the calendar before every open space is claimed by work, school, appointments, or other people's needs. Personal time is not what remains after everything important is done. It is part of what keeps you well enough to keep serving.

"Your life does not begin when the work is finished."

PROTECT THESE THREE THINGS

Something that helps me rest

Something that helps me feel like myself beyond the uniform

Someone I want to stay connected to

TRY THIS

Choose one action for each answer and place it on your calendar this week. Make the smallest version count: ten quiet minutes, one chapter, one phone call, one walk around the block.



PHYSICAL WELLNESS

A post-shift wind-down that supports real rest

Your bedtime may be 9 p.m., 9 a.m., or whenever the mission, call volume, and household finally allow it. Build the routine around your intended sleep – not the clock.

A FLEXIBLE 30-MINUTE RESET

30 MIN

Reduce stimulation.

Dim light, silence nonessential alerts, and step away from work-related content.

20 MIN

Prepare the sleep environment.

Cool, dark, and quiet. Blackout curtains, an eye mask, white noise, or earplugs may help daytime sleepers.

10 MIN

Use one reliable cue.

Shower, stretch, breathe slowly, read, or drink something caffeine-free. Repeat the cue even when sleep times change.

0 MIN

Let the day end.

Write down tomorrow's essentials so your brain does not have to rehearse them in bed.

PROTECT THE WINDOW

- Time caffeine backward from intended sleep. -8 hours
- Manage bright light based on whether you need alertness or wind-down.
- Keep sleep and wake timing as consistent as your schedule realistically permits. Yes, even on the weekends.

RECIPE

Ember Tart Cherry Recovery Spritz

- **4 oz** unsweetened tart cherry juice
- **4–6 oz** sparkling water
- **200–400 mg** of elemental magnesium
- Ice + squeeze of lime

Pour over ice and stir. If you use magnesium, add it only when appropriate for you and according to the product label or clinician guidance.

Tart cherry may support sleep for some people, but it is not a treatment for insomnia, sleep apnea, shift-work disorder, PTSD, or another medical or mental-health condition.

SLEEP HYGIENE HAS LIMITS

Persistent insomnia, nightmares, severe snoring, breathing pauses, daytime sleepiness, or exhaustion despite adequate time in bed deserve professional evaluation. Operational stress, PTSD, sleep apnea, shift-work disorder, pain, medications, and other conditions may require more than a routine.



EDUCATION & GROWTH

Build habits that can survive an unpredictable schedule

When your schedule moves, anchor the habit to an event instead of a perfect time.

01

Choose a reliable anchor

After waking. After removing your gear. Before your first caffeine. After arriving home. Before brushing your teeth.

02

Build two versions

Create a normal-day version and a duty-day version. Both count. The smaller version protects continuity when capacity is low.

03

Reduce friction

Put the book on the pillow. Set the shoes by the door. Prep the drink. Make the next right action the easiest one.

Stop using interruption as evidence of failure

Field time, mandatory overtime, a difficult call, deployment, injury, illness, family demands, and transition can interrupt a routine. An interruption does not erase what the habit has already given you.

Track trends instead of perfect streaks. When life changes, return to the smallest version and rebuild from there.

Consistency is returning - not never being interrupted.

BUILD YOUR HABIT

I want to feel more...

My reliable anchor is...

On a normal day, I will...

On a duty, shift, or overwhelmed day, my minimum version is...

EXAMPLES THAT BEND

Movement: full workout / ten-minute walk.

Connection: dinner together / one honest text.

Rest: full wind-down / three slow breaths before bed.

Learning: one chapter / one page.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

From the Collective



Amanda Sloan Munsey

Idyllwild Fire Protection District
Battalion Chief
Type 1 Public Information Officer

Ember is built around real women, honest stories, and the belief that none of us should have to explain every part of our experience before we can feel understood.

**"You can be independent, strong,
and capable and still lean on others."**
-Amanda

What helps you transition out of work mode?

I'm not always great at it. My work doesn't fit into regular business hours. Finding quiet time with my pups and putting down my phone to be present helps me refocus.

What helps you stay connected to yourself beyond your role or uniform?

For most of my career, my identity outside of work was being a mother. Now that my children are adults, I'm learning who I am as an individual. Turns out, I really love traveling and history! I love my job, but I've never let it become my identity. I prioritize time with people who have supported me in my personal life and always try to have something on the calendar to look forward to.

What realistic habit is supporting you right now?

I give myself permission to say no when I'm near capacity. Not everything deserves my time, energy, or a response. I make room for things that bring me joy. There will always be more work to be done, but our time is limited.

SHARE YOUR STORY

Want to be featured or nominate a woman in the Ember community?

Email:

connect@emberelevationcollective.org.



EMBER RECOMMENDS

Keep learning. Keep what helps.

Four resources selected for women navigating service, shift work, operational stress, recovery, and life beyond the job.

PODCAST

Sleep Hygiene Is Not Enough

First Responder Reset, Episode 3 • Amie Peterson

[LISTEN](#)

Why an exhausted brain may remain on high alert after shift, and why blackout curtains and white noise may be only part of the answer for first responders, veterans, and other high-stress professionals.

BOOK

How to Keep House While Drowning

KC Davis, LPC

[READ](#)

A compassionate, shame-free approach to care tasks when service, shift work, injury, transition, depression, or plain overload has reduced your capacity.

NEWS + WELLNESS

Starting at Sunrise

Stew Smith • Military.com • Dec. 2, 2025

[ARTICLE](#)

An all-day routine for better sleep and performance. Shift workers can translate “sunrise” into their own wake period and apply the principles relative to their intended sleep window.

PEER-REVIEWED

Sleep Disorders Among First Responders

Huang et al. • Journal of Global Health • 2022

A meta-analysis of 28 studies involving about 100,000 first responders found substantial estimated prevalence of shift-work disorder, sleep apnea, insomnia, and excessive daytime sleepiness.

DOI: 10.7189/jogh.12.04092

[RESEARCH](#)

A NOTE FROM EMBER

Use research to ask better questions – not to diagnose yourself. Persistent sleep problems, exhaustion, mood changes, or safety concerns deserve assessment by a qualified professional.

Recommendations are provided for education and general information. They do not constitute medical, mental-health, legal, or other professional advice.



WHAT'S NEXT AT EMBER

Connection is part of readiness - and part of life.

EMBER VENTURE - IN PERSON

Ember Social Destin, Florida

September 2026

A low-pressure, off-duty space for military, veteran, and first-responder women to meet others who understand, share honest conversation, and enjoy time together.

Date: September 26, 2026

Time: 9:00AM - 1200PM EST

Location: Suncoast Coffee

73 S John Sims Pkwy
Valparaiso, FL 32580

Cost: Free

RSVP

EMBER SESSION - VIRTUAL

Connection as Prevention

The protective power of
community

For Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, we are talking about isolation, belonging, peer support, recognizing withdrawal, reaching out without judgment, and connecting someone with professional care.

Date: September 26, 2026

Time: TBD

Platform: Zoom

REGISTER

Need immediate support? Call or text **988** for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. Veterans and service members may press 1. Community support matters, but it does not replace professional or emergency care.

CONNECT WITH EMBER

Website: emberlevationcollective.org

Email: connect@emberlevationcollective.org

Instagram: [@emberlevationcollective](https://www.instagram.com/emberlevationcollective)

Facebook: [@emberlevationcollective](https://www.facebook.com/emberlevationcollective)

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Healthy habits are easier to build
and easier to return to when we
don't have to do it alone.

