

Optimal BrainHealth® for Warfighters

An empowering endeavor for our warriors, veterans, and their families.



Admiral (Ret.) William McRaven recently accepted the Courage and Civility (C&C) Award, which has been conferred since 2021 to individuals finding solutions for complex challenges. McRaven, a retired Navy admiral and former University of Texas System chancellor, received the C&C distinction in 2024 because of his commitment to the mental health and brain performance of veterans and the special operations community.



William H. McRaven
Admiral (Ret.)

“Our soldiers are coming out of combat, the battlefield, a firefight one day ... and within 24 to 48 hours, are back at home. The brain is the central processing unit for everything we do. Center for BrainHealth is making fundamental breakthroughs that can change the brain performance of every American.

— Admiral McRaven”

THE TIME IS NOW

McRaven and his wife, Georgeann, serve as national spokespersons for the BrainHealth Project and have been staunch advocates of our work with active-duty military service members and veterans. He has shared with us his intention to provide \$2 million through a challenge grant, immediately matching gifts in \$500,000 increments.

Your investment will produce **Optimal BrainHealth for Warfighters**, a brain performance model to be implemented through a partnership with US Special Operations Command (SOCOM) to support Special Operations Forces (SOF) and veterans. This program will introduce essential brain health tools—specifically, the BrainHealth Index and Strategic Memory Advanced Reasoning Tactics (SMART™) Training.

Current SOF personnel, referred to as “operators,” live in a constant state of fearful unpredictability. Physical training increases body strength and resilience which is recognized as a reason why operators never stop training. Staying physically fit allows them to rebound from physical injury and return to duty faster. But returning to a normative level of mental and cognitive health measures does not mean the operator is back to their personalized brain health level of performance. We have heard many warriors state – *“They say I may be ‘normal,’ but I am not me.”*

Optimal BrainHealth for Warfighters will address this by providing on-site training with embedded “BrainHealth Coaches” to support operators by measuring and improving their brain health.

- **Measure – BrainHealth Index (BHI).** This patent-pending tool has been developed, tested, and validated as a multidimensional assessment of brain health and performance. The composite BHI leverages 22 measures and reveals 3 validated factors: Clarity (cognitive, executive function health), Connectedness (to people and purpose, social adeptness), and Emotional Balance (well-being). Collaborating with SOCOM, we will integrate this index into initial performance evaluations empowering operators to set and achieve personalized goals.
- **Improve – SMART.** This training protocol is an evidenced-based program providing individuals with thinking tools to apply to everyday responsibilities for continuous brain strengthening. These high-performance strategies emphasize frontal executive functions that guide strategic attention, critical reasoning, and innovation.

OPTIMAL BRAINHEALTH

Optimal BrainHealth for Warfighters incorporates military-specific applications and transition tools into the BrainHealth App, granting operators and veterans continual access to online training and habit reinforcement. To address the disruptive impact of fragmented sleep on warriors, a Sleep Optimization module will be offered to them. Advanced technologies such as functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI), heart rate variability (HRV), sleep monitoring/fitness assessments, electroencephalogram (EEG), and transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) will also be provided to monitor improvements or declines in brain fitness over time.

Over the past 10+ years, we have introduced SMART to a variety of SOCOM cohorts, reaching 5,000 warriors and spouses. Your support will allow **Optimal BrainHealth for Warfighters** to be widely adopted and accepted across SOCOM, benefitting more than 20,000 warriors and their families.