

Suicide Awareness Prevention Month (September 2011)

Key Messages and Talking Points

- No warrior or military family is alone.
- It is a sign of strength to seek help.
- Seeking help is congruent with mission readiness
- Strength in all areas of fitness is critical for military readiness and personal wellbeing.
- Service members with strong mental, physical, social and spiritual fitness are better able to withstand, recover and/or grow in the face of stressors.
- The military provides multiple programs that enhance the capacity of service members to effectively manage stress.
- The military services are committed to building a strong community whose members are resilient and have a sense of belonging.
- The following behaviors and feelings can all be signs for concern. It is important to seek professional guidance right away if your loved one, co-worker or friend is:
 - Thinking about hurting or killing him/herself
 - Seeking access to pills, weapons or other means of harming/killing him/herself
 - Talking or writing excessively about death, dying or suicide
 - Unable to sleep or sleeping all the time
 - Withdrawing from friends, family or society
 - Significantly alcohol or drug use
 - Engaging in risky behavior, such as driving recklessly

- Experiencing excessive rage, anger or desire for revenge
 - Having feelings of anxiety, agitation or hopelessness
 - Repeatedly reliving past stressful experiences
 - Experiencing dramatic changes in mood
 - Feeling there is no reason for living
 - Feeling trapped, like there is no way out
 - Distinctive or drastic change in behavior
- If you are concerned that a service member or veteran in your family is considering harming him/herself, free resources are immediately available to aid your family in its time of crisis.
 - To get help for someone immediately, call the Veterans Crisis Line at 800-273-TALK and press 1.
 - Use the ACE/ACT framework to guide your actions:
 - Ask your family member - Have the courage to ask the question, but stay calm; ask the question directly: “Are you thinking of killing yourself?”
 - Care for your family member - Calmly control the situation; do not use force; be safe; actively listen to show understanding and produce relief; remove any means that could be used for self-injury.
 - Escort your family member / Get them treatment as soon as possible - Never leave your family member alone; escort to chain of command, chaplain, behavioral health professional, or primary care provider; call the Veterans Crisis Line.
 - Adopting an attitude that you are going to help your loved one may save his or her life.

- The armed services offer a variety of resources for soldiers, Marines, sailors and airmen, as well as their families:
 - U.S. Army MWR
 - Army Suicide Prevention Program
 - Marine Corps Community Services
 - Navy Fleet and Family Readiness Program
 - Navy Suicide Prevention Program
 - Air Force Suicide Prevention Program
- Speaking to families
 - Help Guide: Spotting the Signs and Helping a Suicidal Person http://helpguide.org/mental/suicide_prevention.htm
 - Half of us: Help a friend: <http://www.halfofus.com/HelpAFriend.aspx>