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:
  
  o Thinking about hurting or killing him/herself

  o Seeking access to pills, weapons or other means of harming/killing him/herself

  o Talking or writing excessively about death, dying or suicide

  o Unable to sleep or sleeping all the time

  o Withdrawing from friends, family or society

  o Significantly alcohol or drug use

  o 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