



Strength, Trust and Acceptance  
Key to Suicide Prevention



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Suicide continues to be the 10th leading cause of death within the United States, and it is estimated that about 20 Veterans die by suicide each month. Furthermore, death by suicide surpassed combat related deaths in 2012. We must rededicate ourselves to efforts that prevent these deaths and to decrease the stigma associated with mental health diagnoses, and it begins with a conversation.

As we take time during the month of September to increase our awareness of mental health and particularly of the risk of suicide, let us join together to educate ourselves, reinforce mental toughness, build trust, and encourage others to seek help when necessary.

Often, when people struggle with emotional pain, they feel isolated or alone in their struggle. In the military community they may begin to feel like a burden to their command or unit, or that they no longer belong. This sense of worthlessness and hopelessness works to drive a suffering person further into their depression. Sometimes, despair takes over and the suffering individual feels that the only way out is to take his or her own life.

A significant portion of individuals that chose to end their life by suicide have never been treated by a mental health provider. This demonstrates the important need for all of us to join together as a family, and be aware of any significant changes in personality or behavior in those around us. Changes that may indicate someone is suffering. More importantly we need to step in and ask them how they are doing, offer a caring ear to listen or shoulder to lean on, and help them seek the appropriate mental health treatment if warranted.

We need to look out for others. We need to be honest about our suffering. We need to educate ourselves on the risks of suicide, and the signs that someone is hurting. Most importantly, we need to step up, speak out, and change the direction and culture of mental health towards one of strength, trust, and acceptance.

Join us in our efforts to raise awareness, reduce the stigma, and make a difference in someone's life. Over the next several weeks we'll begin the conversation starting with various aspects of suicide awareness. More importantly we'll discuss the many paths to help that are out there. We'll have new blog posts each week, and will be holding a virtual town hall to hear from you. Please join us.