



Is someone you know at risk for suicide?

Shipmates, fellow Marines, family and friends are the front line of defense in suicide prevention. A close family member, friend or peer is often the first person to recognize changes in mood and behavior. You likely know them best and this places you in a unique position to intervene and connect your friend or loved one to the appropriate care and resources. If you are concerned that a close friend or loved one may harm themselves, trust your instincts and have an honest conversation with the individual. By knowing the signs to look for, asking the right questions, and knowing the resources available, you can provide support and assistance, and possibly prevent a suicide from occurring.

As the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan wind down, some of our service members are fighting a different battle here at home. Preliminary reports from the Pentagon indicate there were 60 deaths by suicide among active duty Sailors and six among selected reserve Sailors in 2012 (Department of Defense Suicide Event Report, unpublished data). The Marine Corps experienced 48 deaths by suicide in 2012.¹ Increasing awareness of the risk factors and warning signs of suicide, as well as where to go for assistance, can help prevent many of these tragedies.

Warning signs and risk factors

Very few suicides occur without warning. Knowing what to watch for can prevent a tragedy. To help remember the acute warning signs of suicide, think of the acronym IS PATH WARM and ask yourself if someone you know is experiencing²:

- I: Ideation – thoughts about suicide, either expressed verbally or written
- S: Substance abuse – increased or excessive drug or alcohol use
- P: Purposelessness – seeing no reason for living or having no purpose in life
- A: Anxiety – feeling anxious, agitated, having difficulty sleeping or sleeping all the time, experiencing nightmares
- T: Trapped feelings – believing there is no way out
- H: Hopelessness – feeling hopeless about self, others or the future
- W: Withdrawal – withdrawing from friends, family, normal activities or society
- A: Anger – experiencing rage or uncontrolled anger, seeking revenge
- R: Recklessness – acting without regard for consequences or excessively risky behavior
- M: Mood change – unstable mood or dramatic changes in mood



Various personal or professional circumstances, behaviors, physical changes, thoughts and emotions can increase someone's risk for self-harm or suicide. Is someone you know showing any of the following risk factors for suicide³:

- Feelings of hopelessness, worthlessness, or burdensomeness
- History of alcohol and/or substance abuse
- History of previous suicide attempts
- Recent loss of a loved one
- Social isolation (including those in transition, such as a PCS move)
- Experiencing depression
- Financial difficulties
- Current or pending disciplinary or legal action⁴



Photo credit: USS Iwo Jima, Lance Cpl. Tucker S. Wolf

How to help

If someone you know is exhibiting any of the warning signs for suicide, it is important to ACT⁵:

- A – Ask if they are thinking about suicide.
- C – Care about the individual. Listen, offer support and do not judge.
- T – Treat: take action, do not leave the individual, and get professional assistance.

If you or someone you know needs immediate assistance, call the Military Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 and press 1 or contact your commanding officer, chaplain, or medical representative.

Where to find help

Live, confidential support is available regardless of where you are stationed:

- Call the Military Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 and press 1, text 838255 or [chat live online](#).
- Contact [Military OneSource](#) at 1-800-342-9647.
- For service members who are deployed to Afghanistan, support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Call either DSN: 1-1-1 or ROSHAN: 070-113-2000, waiting for the dial tone and dial 1-1-1. Service members can also receive support by e-mailing OEFcrisisHotline@afghan.swa.army.mil.
- Service members in Europe can reach the Military Crisis Line by dialing 00800 1273 8255 or DSN 118.





Visit the following websites to obtain additional information and resources on suicide prevention:

- [Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center Suicide Prevention](#)
- [Navy Suicide Prevention](#)
- [Marine Corps Suicide Prevention](#)
- [Military Pathways](#)

Suicide prevention training can raise awareness about the warning signs for suicide and empower first responders to ACT. To learn more about training resources for commands and leadership visit:

- [Navy Suicide Prevention Training Resources](#)
- [Navy Operational Stress Control](#)
- [Marine Corps Suicide Prevention Training Resources](#)
- [Real Warriors Suicide Prevention Training for Line Leaders](#)

If you or someone you know has lost a loved one to suicide, support is available:

- [Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors \(TAPS\)](#) provides support and assistance for families of fallen heroes.
- Visit [Save.org](#) for resources and information on bereavement programs and events for survivors.

1. Shuttleworth T. Marine and family programs suicide prevention and response update January 2013. USMC Manpower & Reserve Affairs website. https://www.manpower.usmc.mil/portal/page/portal/M_RA_HOME. Accessed April 1, 2013.
2. Navy Personnel Command. Suicide warning signs. Navy Suicide Prevention. http://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/support/suicide_prevention/Documents/Suicide%20Warning%20Signs.pdf. Accessed March 29, 2013.
3. Navy Personnel Command. Risk factors. Navy Suicide Prevention. http://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/support/suicide_prevention/HowToHelp/Pages/RiskFactors.aspx. Updated November 20, 2012. Accessed March 29, 2013.
4. Real Warriors; Real Battles; Real Support. You are your friend's biggest support. <http://realwarriors.net/active/treatment/suicideprevention.php>. Updated September 11, 2012. Accessed March 29, 2013.
5. Navy Personnel Command. ACT. Navy Suicide Prevention. http://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/support/suicide_prevention/HowToHelp/Pages/ACT.aspx. Accessed March 29, 2013.