

A Few Words for Leaders

It is imperative to keep our fighting forces as healthy as possible to meet the unique challenges of the Global War on Terror. Troops must be mentally healthy as well as physically healthy.

Leaders must create an environment that will

- Help to identify Sailors and Marines who need help with mental-health issues.
- Allow Sailors and Marines to get that help without concerns they will be stigmatized.

Intervention for mental-health problems stemming from combat and operational stress should first be made at the lowest level possible to facilitate a rapid return to duty and to maintain unit cohesion.

If your Sailors or Marines are having difficulty adapting, encourage them to:

■ **Talk with each other.** This enhances camaraderie that has already been instilled in their various units.

■ **Talk to their docs.** Some of the corpsmen and doctors that are attached to your units may have experience with individual and group counseling techniques.

■ **Talk to a chaplain.** Some chaplains may have experience as counselors. For troops who are spiritually inclined, chaplains can help guide them when dealing with death, dying and some of the more gruesome aspects of war.

■ **Seek out a mental-health team.** Some of your units might be equipped with a mental-health component. If not, find one and inquire if they will see your troops individually, as a group or both.

■ **Get them to a hospital.** The Expeditionary Medical Facility in Kuwait (EFM Kuwait) has a central mental-health clinic and a number of outlying clinics that can assist you in providing care.

Remember, getting treatment for a stress injury is not a sign of weakness. It is a sign of good leadership for leaders to recognize the needs of their troops, get them the help they need and create an environment of hope.



Core Leader Functions

□ Strengthen

- Create confidence/ forewarn.
- Expose to realistic stress in training.
- Foster unit cohesion.

□ Identify

- Know crew stress load.
- Recognize reactions, injuries, illnesses.

□ Mitigate

- Remove unnecessary stressors.
- Ensure adequate sleep and rest.
- After-Action Reviews (AARs) in small groups.

□ Treat

- Rest and restoration (24-72 hours)
- Chaplain
- Medical

□ Reintegrate

- Keep with unit if at all possible.
- Expect return to full duty.
- Don't allow retribution or harassment.
- Communicate with treating professionals and make certain they communicate with you.