



Health Promotion Toolbox

September: Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Month

Message for Commanding Officers

Serving in the Navy or Marine Corps can be demanding. Deployment or mobilization can cause stress for service members and their families. But sometimes the most significant stressors are everyday situations like a relationship problem, a transition, or a permanent change of station. As a leader, you are in a unique position to promote an environment free from the negative attitudes that can be associated with seeking support to help overcome life's challenges. Encourage your Sailors and Marines, from the most junior to the most senior service members, to use the resources available to them. Reaching out and accepting help is a sign of strength and ultimately enhances mission readiness.

Support Sailors and Marines during Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Month by promoting positive coping strategies to manage challenges, and by encouraging them to seek help from peers, helping professionals, and helping resources such as the Military Crisis Line, the Marine DSTRESS Line, and Military OneSource. Every day, each of us has the opportunity to encourage and support our fellow shipmates and Marines in navigating life's challenges before those challenges seem like they are no longer manageable.

The resources in this toolbox are designed to assist with fostering an environment free from the fear and barriers that can be associated with reaching out for help. By incorporating these tips into daily positive mental health behaviors, Sailors, Marines, their families, and civilian personnel can access the resources they need to support themselves and each other.

What Can Leadership Do?

As a Commanding Officer, you play an important role in promoting mental health among your Sailors and/or Marines:

- Take advantage of the [Navy Leader's Guide for Managing Sailors in Distress](#), a guide tailored to support leaders. The guide can also be accessed through a mobile app (download instructions listed on the top left-hand corner of the page).
- The more informed you are, the better you will be at establishing a safe work environment and building trust within your command. Start by taking a look at the [Suicide at a Glance](#)



infographic to understand definitions, facts, and resources for suicide prevention and intervention.

- Be able to spot warning signs of suicide with [IS PATH WARM](#), a mnemonic device designed to help others identify individuals who may be at acute risk for suicide.
- Reference the [ACT Now!](#) guide to learn how to engage personnel who may be having suicidal thoughts or behaviors.
- Provide the [Psychological and Emotional Well-Being Guide](#) to all personnel to make help-seeking behavior the norm.

You can work with command Suicide Prevention Coordinators (SPCs) and Health Promotion Coordinators to:

- Make sure Sailors and Marines know they are never alone. Urge your command to support one another by promoting the [Navy's Suicide Prevention campaign](#) "Every Sailor, Every Day" and "1 Small ACT" key messages.
- Inform your command about access to confidential support including:
 - [Military Crisis Line](#): Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255), Press 1; text 838255; or connect with a [peer consultant](#) from Military OneSource at 800-342-9647.
 - [Military OneSource](#): Call 1-800-342-9647.
 - [Marine Corps DStress Line](#): Visit the site to live chat or call 1-877-476-7734 to anonymously speak with veteran Marines, former Fleet Marine Force Corpsmen, Marine Corps family members, and licensed clinicians with specific training in Marine Corps culture.
- Recommend mental health strategies that will help [Build Psychological Toughness](#) in your command.
- Has anyone in your command experienced a loss recently? Share this guide to [cope with a loss and understand grief](#).
- Give your command the tools they need to thrive by sharing these [10 Tips for Navigating Stress and Developing Resilience](#).
- Help your wounded, ill, and injured Sailors and Marines understand the [stressors they may face and how to positively navigate stress while recovering](#).
- Encourage Sailors and Marines to create a [personal stress navigation plan](#). You never know when you'll have to overcome your next challenge, so during periods of low-stress take the opportunity to plan ahead.
- Promote the regular updates from the [Navy Operational Stress Control Blog](#).