“THRIVE IN YOUR COMMUNITY”
Gearing up for 2013 Navy Suicide Prevention Month

Suicide prevention goes beyond training people to recognize risk factors, warning signs or what to do in a crisis. You may not realize it, but suicide prevention happens everyday when you do something kind for someone who didn’t expect it, or just take the time to actually listen to someone when you ask how they’re doing. It’s a hard thing to quantify—exactly how many lives you’re impacting—but the one fact you can count on is that the little things you do mean something big to someone else. Often when we realize that we did something to help others, we have a renewed sense of purpose and contribution even when we’re experiencing challenging circumstances in our own lives.

Each September, the Dept. of Defense recognizes Suicide Prevention Month. The theme of Navy’s Suicide Prevention Month this year is “Thrive in Your Community.” Through our recent NavyTHRIVE communications focus, we’ve been discussing the importance of taking actions to help yourself grow in the face of stressors. This year’s Suicide Prevention Month theme not only underscores that concept, but relates it to important protective factors against suicide: a sense of community and purpose. By helping others, you help yourself.

We’re encouraging everyone to get together and make a difference. Whether you contribute as a unit, CSADD chapter, work center, or installation, we hope that you’ll be able to find some time during September and volunteer on a project that benefits others. Just as in years past, nothing is mandatory, but we’re communicating with you early so that you have time to plan a project or event if you choose. Remember, suicide prevention is an all hands evolution, so family involvement is encouraged.

Like last year, we’ll have direct communication with our SPCs to help spread the word at the deck-plate. The 2013 Suicide Prevention Month webpage will launch mid-August, housing ideas for volunteer projects, community events, background information and related products/resources throughout September. Please email us pictures or details about your event so that we can share them with the fleet. Together, we can make a difference in each other’s lives—and our own.
Sailors and leaders aboard guided missile-destroyer USS William P. Lawrence (DDG 110) know what it means to be proactive about stress. Recently, Lawrence senior leadership coordinated a series of seminars on stress control while deployed with Carrier Strike Group 11 in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of responsibility, supporting Operation Enduring Freedom.

Lt. Benjamin Box, a chaplain assigned to Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 23 and specifically designated for the Strike Group DDGs, conducted the seminars from July 15-18. He shed light on the negative and positive ways to handle stress and the impact that it can have on daily lives and relationships. Chaplain Box’s seminars focus on one simple question: *We all get overwhelmed by stress at times, so what can we do to overcome it?* He lays out and elaborates on seven steps to answer the question: “expect stress, remember you are only human, be smart, be resourceful, be positive, be resilient, and start somewhere.”

“Stress is a normal part of life, especially when deployed,” Box says in a related Navy.mil story. “There are many ways Sailors can deal with stress and it is different for every individual...Sailors are not powerless against stress.” Chaplain Box encouraged anyone under stress to seek help through their chain of command, chaplain, and the other resources available to them, emphasizing the importance of Sailors recognizing that “they are not alone.”

Providing Sailors with tools and resources to engage and overcome stress enables them to thrive in the face of challenges. Bravo Zulu Lawrence Sailors and Lt. Box!

**Understanding How Your Children Navigate Deployment**

No matter how many times you’ve been to sea, it’s never easy leaving behind your loved ones. From the moment the last embraces are shared, you already can’t wait to get back to your spouse or partner and especially your children. But when the time is nearing to come back home, it’s common to feel anxious about your return from deployment; nervous about holding your new baby for the first time, seeing your preschooler who seems to grow an inch every week you’re away, or trying to connect with your teenager who seemed distant even before you left. You may know how you’ll handle things, and might think that your kids “know the ropes” by now. Yet when you come home and they’re acting a bit differently than before or in comparison to your last return home, you may ask yourself *what's going on with them?*

Children can experience a wide range of emotions in the time surrounding a parent’s return from deployment. As exciting as it is to reunite with their parents, kids can display (or try to hide) very different reactions depending on their ages, personalities and developmental stages—and these reactions may not be what you expect after being gone for months.

According to a new Real Warriors feature, *Transitioning Through Deployment,* “it usually takes families six months to a year to fully reintegrate after a deployment. During this time, it is important that parents slowly and naturally reestablish family connections.” The article offers insight on common reactions to deployment that children experience based on their ages and provides suggestions on helping your children navigate their feelings.

There are several resources available to help make the transition for your family as smooth as possible, such as Transition Assistance Programs, *Operation Military Kids,* and the *Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program.* You can also visit your Fleet and Family Support Center for local resources, and check out Military OneSource offerings.

Coming home can be as exciting as it is scary because you may not know what to expect. While we can’t predict how life will be once we’re home, we can prepare ourselves with the resources to help our families, and ourselves, adjust to changes and build resilience.
Looking for resources for your command’s upcoming GMT? We’ve got you covered. Here are some quick tips and references so that your shipmates receive a tailored, interesting, and informative training—not just another snooze-session:

**Educate your shipmates on stress navigation and help them identify the stress zones.** Focusing on Operational Stress Control is a solid foundation for your training. The [OSC Stress Zone PSAs](#) are useful and informative videos that you can include within your GMT. The [OSC Principles of Resilience and Stress Control](#) and [Navy Leaders Guide for Managing Sailors in Distress](#) offer practical insight as well.

**Focus on the protective factors and promoting the truth.** Reducing barriers and negative perceptions is one of the most critical elements of suicide prevention. For the [Truth About Sailors and Suicide](#), click [here](#). While discussing risk factors and warning signs is important, it's just as important to talk about the things that help prevent stressors from becoming risks. Fitness, nutrition, responsible alcohol use, financial readiness, and strong relationships are just a few key elements we can help each other strengthen so that we’re better equipped to endure challenging times. Visit [www.navynavstress.com](http://www.navynavstress.com) for a myriad of useful resources addressing common stressors and relevant topics, any of which can be used to support your GMT.

**Know how to talk about stress and suicide.** This is important for **everyone**, not just SPCs and leaders! Facilitating open, proactive and supportive conversation encourages our shipmates to speak up when experiencing stress, and feel comfortable and secure doing so. Resources on discussing stress and suicide can be viewed [here](#).

**Tell a story.** It doesn’t have to be your own—it can be a chaplain or guest speaker offering hope about overcoming stressors before they amount to emotional crises. You could even show the [Public Service Announcement videos from the 2012 PSA Contest](#). These are storylines developed by your fellow shipmates, promoting awareness, solidarity and the value of seeking help. [Chief Jeremy Kelsey’s PSA](#) discussing his experience overcoming inner turmoil is another powerful example.

*For additional resources, visit [www.suicide.navy.mil](http://www.suicide.navy.mil) > Training Resources, or [contact us](#).*

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**PSA (video):** USMC Staff Sgt Josh Hopper [Real Warriors](#)  
**Security Clearances and Psychological Health Care** [Real Warriors](#)  
**Chaplains Embrace Hands on Approach to Suicide Prevention** [DC Military](#)  
**Take Total Charge of Your Health** [DoD Blog](#)  
**A Message from the Military Health System Leadership** [Navy Live](#)  
**It Doesn’t Take a Village** [All Hands Magazine](#)  

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**Performance Strategies: Basic Training for Couples—Communication** [HPRC](#)  
**Sailors Can Claim a Win Where Synthetic Drugs Are Concerned** [Navy.mil](#)  
**What you Need to Know about the Navy’s Expanded Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Initiatives** [Navy Live](#)  
**Need a good laugh today? Check out this cartoon by Jeff Bacon, creator of Broadsie:** [No Time Limit on Stupid](#)