



LIFELINK

NEWSLETTER

Page 1

Suicide Prevention for Supervisors

Page 2

March Plan of the Week Notes, Lifelink Spotlight

Page 3

Boost Your Mental Health with Nutrition

Suicide Prevention and Supervisors: The Front Line

Navy leaders have great influence and impact on their shipmates' sense of connectedness. Front-line supervisors in particular can make a difference because of their unique position—the close quarters and long hours that characterize much of Navy life mean lots of day-to-day contact and many opportunities to really get to know your teammates. Supervisors are also knowledgeable about significant events Sailors are experiencing, such as promotion, deployment or family status.

Most Sailors who die by suicide were experiencing multiple stressors before their deaths, including relationship issues, transitions, and career or personal setbacks. Annual case reviews consistently reveal missed opportunities to “connect the dots” when a Sailor is experiencing negative effects of stress. Active communication is important, especially if a Sailor is alone and away from his or her support networks.

Though Sailors may compartmentalize their personal stressors to stay focused on the mission, if those stressors aren't being adequately addressed or continue to pile up, they're likely to spill over into their work performance. Taking the time to get to know your people can better enable you to notice when something seems off. For example, if a Sailor who used to be engaged at work is becoming more withdrawn, is unable to focus or is easily agitated, these can be signals they're in crisis. These are also opportunities for supportive conversation and ACTION. Consider reaching out to one of their peers who knows them well, as well as their family members who are more likely to have a more complete picture of what may be troubling the Sailor so that you can offer appropriate support.

It's also imperative to reach out to the Sailor one-on-one and mention that you've noticed that they haven't seemed like themselves lately. *Ask* directly “Are you thinking about killing yourself?” You can follow up with questions like “do you have a plan to kill yourself?” Show them that you *Care* by listening

without judgement and paying close attention to any additional warning signs, like statements about not wanting to live, feeling like a burden, feeling hopeless or discussion of lethal means. Help them get to *Treatment* immediately and escort them to a medical professional or Navy chaplain for safety. You can also call the **Military Crisis Line** with them. Be there throughout the process, follow up and offer continued support, regardless of the level of care needed to help the Sailor bounce back. Ensure that they have ample time to attend appointments for any services they may need and help them overcome logistical barriers.

Fostering communication and encouraging connectedness among team members are two strategies to increase protective factors against suicide that are recommended by the International Association for Suicide Prevention. Negative attitudes about mental illness can keep people from reaching out for help. Lead by example and reassure your Sailors that mental health problems can happen to anyone and are treatable.

All Sailors, regardless of supervisory status, have specific responsibilities for suicide prevention which are outlined in the Navy's latest Suicide Prevention Program Instruction, **OPNAVINST 1720.4B**.



Lifelink Spotlight

Healing from Invisible Wounds: The Power of Mindful Practice

By Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Joshua E. Walters, Defense Media Activity

Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Richard Vaughn deployed to Fallujah in 2004 with the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, A few weeks into the push, Vaughn and a Marine were leaving a courtyard of a house, both holding their weapons in one hand and gripping an insurgent in the other.

“As we were leaving, there was this blast,” said Vaughn. “It threw us forward pretty good, and I saw this Marine had stumbled. I saw his pants torn in the back and he got hit with shrapnel in the back of the leg pretty good.” He tended to the Marine’s wound. Then Vaughn took care of his own injury.

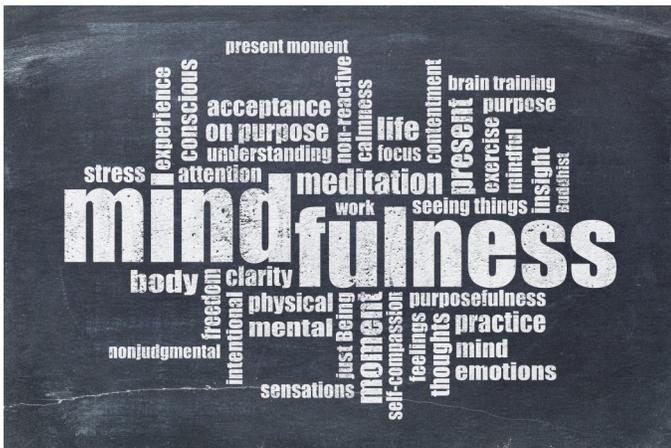
His scars, however, would go deeper than he realized at the time. What Vaughn saw in Fallujah became part of him; he still carries it with him today.

“For a long time, I was angry, I was hurt, and I was not the usual me for quite a while,” said Vaughn. It was difficult to explain what was going through his head; Vaughn needed a way to communicate those thoughts. He turned to something he was familiar with: painting.

“It’s not about painting, it’s about getting to communicate and communicating with yourself,” said Vaughn. “So in that moment when I’m painting — it’s like the ultimate mindfulness exercise — everything goes away.”

Vaughn also uses gardening to heal. “I love being outside, I love to feel the grass, I love to feel the leaves, I love to feel the dirt, the sensations, I love the smell of the air, I love to feel the rain, the sun,” said Vaughn. “There’s a lot of balance to it. As I find the balance in that, it balances me.”

Vaughn is now a counselor at the Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Clinic at Naval Hospital Bremerton, Washington.



Plan of the Week Notes

Below are sample Plan of the Week notes aligning with topics covered by the Every Sailor, Every Day campaign during the month of March:

1. March is National Nutrition Awareness Month. The Navy makes registered dietitians available to assume a temporary additional duty (TAD) status to commands, providing education on performance nutrition, healthy eating habits, hydration, and safe dietary supplement use. Bringing registered dietitians directly to the fleet greatly enhances Sailor access to nutrition education, which in turn increases medical readiness. Learn more at <https://go.usa.gov/xEdt7>.
2. National Sleep Awareness Week is Mar. 10-16. Sleep is sometimes seen as a low-priority to mission demands, but the risks for health issues associated with lack of sleep are serious. A good night’s sleep is so vital that even slight deprivation can negatively affect performance, memory, mood and judgment, as well as one’s perception of and response to stress. Learn strategies and get more information on sleep issues on the NavyNavStress blog at <https://navstress.wordpress.com/2016/07/27/fatigue-the-big-grey-elephant/>.
3. Celebrate responsibly this St. Patrick’s Day. If you’re a designated driver, get the keys before going out, make a plan and make sure your phone is charged and set to vibrate and ring. Get more tips from the Keep What You’ve Earned campaign at <https://go.usa.gov/xEE9v>.
4. March is Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Awareness Month. Know the symptoms and risks of concussion, and make sure your shipmates get treatment if needed. The Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center (DVBIC) is the TBI center of excellence for the Defense Health Agency. DVBIC treats, supports trains and monitors service members, veterans, family members and providers who have been or who care for those affected by TBI. DVBIC has resources for service members, families and caregivers and medical providers on their website at <https://go.usa.gov/xEE9H>.
5. The summer PCS season will be here before you know it. Moving can be a significant source of stress to Sailors and families. Start planning early, and get the tips on how to take the stress out of PCS at https://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=107775.

News and Resources

Suicide and Reflection on Our Changing American Society
[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#)

TBI Recovery Support Program Offers Resources for Sailors, Veterans and Families
[Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center](#)

Are You At Risk for Heart Disease?
[Human Performance Resource Center](#)

How Much Do You Know About Suicide Attempts and Their Reporting in the Military
[Psychological Health Center of Excellence](#)

Mending Hearts Broken by Deaths of Military Loved Ones
[Health.mil](#)

How to Access Benefits for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
[Real Warriors](#)

5 Reasons to Toss Your Take Out Menus
[Human Performance Resource Center](#)

Connectedness: Relationships Strengthen Resilience
[NavyNavStress](#)

The Disturbing Link Between Opioids and Suicide
[Suicide Prevention Resource Center](#)

Navy Updates Medical Waiver Process
[Navy.mil](#)

AFSP Offers Trainings on Mental Health, Suicide Prevention
[American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)

Nine Eating Disorder Myths Busted
[National Institute of Health](#)

Current and Upcoming Events

SPC Training Webinars

Mar. 7, 2 p.m. CDT
Mar. 21, 12 Noon CDT
[Register here](#)

Boost Your Mental Performance with Better Nutrition

Have you ever felt tired, sluggish, or foggy after eating a big meal? Have you seen how kids (and kids at heart) get hyper or seem like they're not thinking straight after a candy binge? Then you probably know that what you eat affects how you feel.

In a state of optimal nutritional fitness, what you eat supports healing and your immune system, helps prevent injury, improves energy levels, and allows you to achieve optimal emotional, cognitive, and physical performance. When you eat right, you're likely to feel more energized, less fatigued, and have better focus, judgment, accuracy, and reaction time. The opposite is true when you fuel your body improperly. Whether you're at home or deployed, follow these tips to help you to stay alert, focused, and performing at your best.

To achieve nutritional fitness, focus on a balanced diet rich in whole foods, with plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, and lean meats. Read more on the **recommended diet** for Military Service Members.

- **Boost your intake of magnesium.** Magnesium is important to regulate muscle and nerve functions, blood sugar levels, and blood pressure. It also helps make protein, bone, and DNA. Nearly half of all Americans over age one are deficient in magnesium, and the deficiency is even greater for some gender and age groups. Foods high in **magnesium** include legumes, nuts, seeds, whole grains, green leafy vegetables (such as spinach), fortified breakfast cereals, milk, and yogurt.
- **Eat plenty of foods high in B vitamins.** These nutrients support metabolism, brain development, blood and nerve cell health, DNA production, and the development of serotonin, which impacts mood, memory, and emotions. Foods high in **B6** include poultry, fish, organ meats, potatoes and other starchy vegetables, and non-citrus fruits. Foods high in **B12** include beef, liver, clams, fish, poultry, eggs, milk and other dairy, and fortified breakfast cereals. Foods high in **folate** include asparagus, brussels sprouts, spinach, oranges, nuts, beans, peas, and grains. Food is the best source of most vitamins, but supplements can help if you're unable to eat some of these foods.
- **Fuel your body consistently.** Eat meals regularly to maintain blood glucose (sugar) and muscle glycogen (stored energy) levels throughout the day. Balance meals and snacks with whole grains, lean protein, fiber, and healthy fats to help keep your blood sugar steady. Avoid skipping meals, too much sugar, and imbalanced meals that are mainly refined flours (**carbohydrates**).
- **Rethink your meal choices on the night shift.** At night, your body's metabolic processes slow down. Eating at night has been shown to be bad for your health, including an increased incidence of obesity, diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular disease, and infections. But for **night-shift** workers, it can mean the difference between staying alert—or not—on the job. The right type and amount of foods and beverages can help keep up your blood sugar to stay alert.
- **Get a caffeine boost, but not too much.** Caffeine improves alertness, vigilance, attention, and reaction time when taken in small to moderate amounts. Caffeine can also help mental performance in sleep-deprived situations. But dose and timing matter; refer to **Operation Supplement Safety** for more information.
- **Drink enough water.** Water is the most abundant component of the human body—around 50–70 percent of your weight—so your body needs fluids regularly to function properly. Performance can start to decline once you've lost as little as two percent of your body weight. Carry a water bottle with you and refill it throughout the day. Aim to drink half your body weight in water each day to **stay hydrated** (e.g. 100 ounces if you weigh 200 pounds). And don't rely on thirst as a good indicator of your fluid needs. By the time you feel thirsty, you're already a little dehydrated.

Mental performance is just as important as physical performance. Fortunately, proper nutrition can help with both.

*This article was contributed by our partners at the **Human Performance Resource Center**.*