



# LIFELINK

## NEWSLETTER

### Page 1

Helping Survivors of Suicide Loss

### Page 2

November Plan of the Week Notes, Lifelink Spotlight

### Page 3

Setting Healthy Boundaries to Support Self-Care

## A Different Kind of Grief: How to Help Survivors of Suicide Loss

**International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day** is November 17. When someone loses a colleague or loved one to suicide, grief can be compounded by feelings of guilt, confusion and even anger and embarrassment. How can you help?

### What You Can Do

CAPT Tara Smith, Ph.D., clinical psychologist for Navy Suicide Prevention Branch, OPNAV N171, offers these tips to help someone who is dealing with the loss of a loved one by suicide:

- 1. Don't be afraid to acknowledge the death.** Extend your condolences, express your feelings of sorrow. Talking about the loss lets the person know you're a safe and understanding person in whom they can confide.
- 2. Ask the survivor if and how you can help.** Though they may not be ready to accept help, asking signifies that you are there—not avoiding or distancing during this tragic event. Be prepared to offer specific support, such as providing meals, offering childcare or a coffee break.
- 3. Encourage openness.** Do your best to be non-judgmental and be prepared for a wide variety of emotional responses. There is no one way to grieve. Be accepting of however survivors need to express their feelings. It may be with silence, with sadness or even anger.
- 4. Be patient.** Don't set a time limit for a survivor's grief. Complicated grief can take years to process. Moreover, don't limit a survivor's need to share and repeat stories, conversations or wishes. Repetition is a key factor in grief recovery.
- 5. Be a compassionate listener.** This means resisting the urge to try to "fix" things. The greatest gift you can give someone you care about who has survived a suicide loss is your time, reassurance and love. It's perfectly okay to not know what to say or do. Simply being present is often the best support.

### Every Sailor, Every Day

Losing someone to suicide can feel very isolating, not just for the immediate family, but for members of the entire community. Be physically and emotionally present for the grieving person. Strong relationships built on trust are key **principles of resilience** that can promote recovery after experiencing loss. Every member of the Navy community is responsible for contributing to a culture that supports psychological and physical health, encourages seeking help for challenges and promotes a constructive dialogue about stress and suicide.

### Finding Support

There are many resources available on Navy Suicide Prevention's website at [www.suicide.navy.mil](http://www.suicide.navy.mil) to help you communicate safely about psychological health and suicide, find support and more. Confidential help is available through the **Military Crisis Line** (call 800-273-TALK and Press 1 or text 838255) and your command chaplain. Additional resources for survivors of suicide loss are also available at:

- **National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention U.S. National Guidelines for Responding to Grief, Trauma and Distress After a Suicide**
- **Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors**
- **American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Resources for Loss Survivors**



## Lifelink Spotlight

### USS WASP Sailor Creates Video to Share Powerful Stories of Suicide Loss and Prevention from Fellow Shipmates

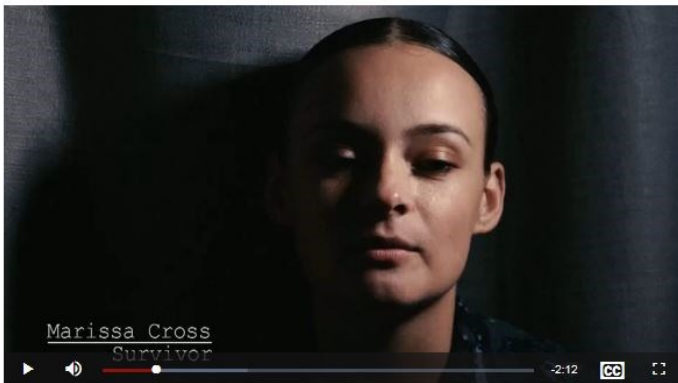
Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Jessica Bidwell, USS Wasp (LHD 1) has three things she wants you to know after watching the emotional and powerful video **“One More Day”** that she and her shipmates created. “I hope those that are considering suicide get help. I hope that those that have been affected by suicide know that they are not alone. I hope that those that have lost someone to suicide stop blaming themselves,” she said.

Bidwell and Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Michael Molina used their media skills to create the incredibly moving video in observance of Suicide Prevention Month. Real Sailors are featured, telling their own experiences of suicide loss, depression and of seeking help. The project was intensely personal, Bidwell said.

“I lost a good friend to suicide just over a year ago. I found it hard to process the fact that I had no clue as to what his plans were... It took months for me to realize that it wasn’t my fault, that there were no signs that I had missed, and that if he wanted me to know, I would have. I made this video as my way to give back and help others that might also be suffering, no matter what side of suicide they are on.”

To find others willing to share their stories, Bidwell reached out to the First Class Petty Officer Association. The raw and candid stories from both senior and junior members are touching and brave, Bidwell said. The process of conducting the interviews wasn’t always easy, and she is quick to praise her shipmates for their participation. “Throughout the interviews I attained goose bumps, I became teary eyed, I feared that I would not be able to do their words justice,” Bidwell said. “These Sailors are some of the bravest I know, they shared their deepest thoughts to help others, and they deserve the recognition for this video.”

Watch and share “One More Day” at <https://dvidshub.net/r/744zdl>.



## 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 November:*

1. The holidays are almost here, and that means family time and sometimes, family stress. The principle of controllability can help manage conflict before or after it begins. Learn five small acts to help you keep an even keel: <https://navstress.wordpress.com/2017/05/17/5-small-acts-to-help-you-chill-out/>
2. There’s never been a better time to give the gift of being a Designated Driver. The Keep What You’ve Earned Campaign’s annual holiday pledge to be a DD kicks off Nov. 19. Take the pledge at <https://go.usa.gov/xnj86>, and then print a gift card to present to the lucky person of your choice. Get your gift card at <https://go.usa.gov/xPWPH>.
3. Tobacco is a dangerous addiction that's expensive, deadly and has a serious impact on readiness. Sailors who smoke get sick more often, meaning more lost workdays and hospitalizations than nonsmokers. The Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center is promoting Tobacco-Free Living Month in November. Learn more at <https://go.usa.gov/xPp7P>.
4. Family traditions can be some of the most cherished parts of the holidays. In Navy life, though, change is inevitable. It is important to have a plan to navigate the tension between the desire for tradition and the reality of uncertainty. Understanding the role of tradition, and how to make your own special memories, can ease stress and promote bonding. Learn more at <https://navstress.wordpress.com/2016/12/16/finding-comfort-and-joy-in-family-tradition/>

## Suicide Prevention Month Outreach Recognition Submissions Due

Defense Suicide Prevention Office (DSPO) has extended the submission deadline for its annual Suicide Prevention Month Outreach Recognition to Nov. 23. Recipients will be recognized from each service for events launched during 2018's Suicide Prevention Month. Navy events should promote Every Sailor, Every Day campaign concepts such as risk factors, warning signs, self-care, help-seeking or practical applications of "1 Small ACT" and/or "BeThere," among others. For more information, contact Navy Suicide Prevention Branch at [suicideprevention@navy.mil](mailto:suicideprevention@navy.mil). Nomination criteria is also in the **FY-19 1 Small ACT Toolkit**.

## News and Resources

Keep What You've Earned  
Video Profile: ISC Amber  
Nuanez  
[NADAP YouTube Channel](#)

International Survivors of  
Suicide Loss Day Nov. 17  
[American Foundation for Suicide  
Prevention](#)

Resiliency Programs for  
Military Families  
[Real Warriors](#)

How Alcohol Affects Women's  
Health  
[That Guy](#)

Warrior Care Month: A Decade  
of Progress and Evolution  
[DoD Warrior Care](#)

Suicide Survivor Loss  
Assistance  
[TAPS](#)

Tricare Covered Tobacco  
Cessation Resources  
[Tricare.mil](#)

Transitioning Out of Uniform:  
A Major Life Change  
[Real Warriors](#)

Boosting Your Energy Without  
Prescription Stimulants  
[NavyNavStress](#)

A Broader Perspective of  
Health: Total Force Fitness and  
Treating Depression  
[Psychological Health Center of  
Excellence](#)

Suicide Prevention Resources  
for Military Families  
[NavyNavStress](#)

## Current and Upcoming Events

**Warrior Care Month**  
November

**"Give the Gift of a  
Designated Driver" Pledge  
Launch**  
Nov. 19

**SPC Training Webinars**  
Nov. 15, 10 a.m. CDT  
Dec. 13, 10 a.m. CDT  
[Register here](#)

## Practice Self Care by Setting Boundaries

Trying to keep people happy and avoid rocking the boat can be demanding and exhausting to one's physical, emotional and psychological health. People-pleasing can come in the form of agreeing to every favor, task or assignment. It could be allowing people to be present in personal space even when preferring to be alone. Or it may be putting up with behaviors that cause frequent feelings of anger, frustration or sadness and never acknowledging it to the offender. These actions may indicate a need to explore the process of setting boundaries. A boundary is the deliberate space that you establish between yourself and someone else.



Boundaries define the behaviors, actions and characteristics that are not tolerable within a relationship. It's important to determine what you will and will not accept in all relationships, including those with family, friends or shipmates.

### Benefits of Boundaries

Setting boundaries limits unwanted behaviors and treatment from the people in your life. It indicates that while your relationship with others is important to you, you still prioritize your own feelings and emotions. Remembering that "no" is a complete sentence is essential in the process of setting boundaries. Comfortably saying "no" to unwanted requests or inconsiderate actions tells your family members, friends, romantic partners, and fellow Sailors that you are not afraid to advocate for yourself.

### Steps for Setting Boundaries

Setting healthy boundaries can be a difficult process, but it is a necessary act of self-care that is crucial for psychological wellbeing and for maintaining integrity in your relationships with others. Here are some tips:

- Understand and acknowledge your values and your feelings. Centering your own emotions is necessary for establishing boundaries.
- Make your boundaries and consequences clear. Unless you clearly communicate to the people in your life what your boundaries are, they will never know what they are or how to avoid overstepping them. Be assertive.
- Don't feel bad about setting boundaries. Setting boundaries is a necessary part of a comprehensive self-care routine. Maintaining boundaries allows you to focus on your own physical, emotional and psychological health.
- Know when your boundaries are not being respected and respond accordingly. Prioritize your own boundaries and don't feel pressured to give multiple chances to someone who understands your boundaries but refuses to acknowledge them.

### Relationships after Setting Boundaries

People may feel hurt when you establish and enforce boundaries because they realize that they will no longer be able to interact with you in ways that are only beneficial to them (and potentially damaging to you). Adhering to your boundaries and refusing to allow negotiation is crucial. That is a part of learning to prioritize and take care of yourself.

### Reaching Out for Help

If you or a shipmate are dealing with psychological health concerns or issues with a spouse, family member or children, the Fleet and Family Support Program provides support through counseling services. Find your local Fleet and Family Support Center [here](#).