



# LIFELINK

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## DoD Recognizes Suicide Prevention Efforts for Individuals and Installations

The Navy Suicide Prevention Branch's *Every Sailor, Every Day* campaign launches year-long efforts to re-energize engagement each September during Suicide Prevention Month. *Every Sailor, Every Day* is designed to support better stress navigation, enable early recognition of risk and promote early intervention for psychological health concerns through everyday actions.

This year during Suicide Prevention Month, the campaign continued its 1 Small ACT message, encouraging Sailors to take small steps towards strengthening their own psychological health through self-care. The campaign also focused on ways to recognize warning signs and practice ongoing safety during times of increased stress, supporting ways to "Be There" for others.

Sailors and their families from around the fleet participated in activities and events to highlight the ways they can help prevent suicide. NAS Patuxent River hosted its eighth annual "Laps for Life" walk/run, Naval Base Guam held the #ONEACT Suicide Prevention 5K, and student barracks at the Training Support Center Great Lakes designed and presented their Suicide Prevention Month-themed flags for a special event highlighting the month's 1 Small Act message.

Sailors also had the opportunity to demonstrate their Small ACTs and share their ideas to be there for themselves and others by posting Small ACT Selfies on social media. Over 200 new photos were submitted during this year's Suicide Prevention Month and are featured on the OPNAV N171 Flickr page at [www.flickr.com/photos/145295655@N08](http://www.flickr.com/photos/145295655@N08).

Although 2017 Suicide Prevention Month has come to a close, it is still a good time to reflect on recent suicide prevention efforts and how they can serve as a kick-off for events throughout the year to sustain engagement. Accordingly, the Defense Suicide Prevention Office (DSPO) is conducting its second annual Outreach Recognition Ceremony to honor one exemplary installation from each of the Services and one from either the Reserves or National Guard. This opportunity honors the installations with the most dedicated and influential suicide prevention programs during the month of September.

Individual units should coordinate with their homeport public affairs offices to ensure proper routing and that only one

submission per installation is made. Reserve component commands should work with their public affairs office to ensure that there is only one submission per unit. Nominations are due to DSPO no later than 13 October 2017. Detailed information on guidelines is available at <https://go.usa.gov/xRJ2Q>. To begin the submission process, email [suicideprevention@navy.mil](mailto:suicideprevention@navy.mil), Subject: "Suicide Prevention Month Nomination."

This year, DSPO will also recognize an individual from each of the four services as well as from the collective Reserve component for their outstanding suicide prevention engagement efforts. This award honors the contributions of those shaping fleet culture into one that encourages help-seeking behavior, supports well-being and fosters open dialogue about psychological health. Active and Reserve component Sailors, civilian personnel and family members are eligible for Navy nomination. Nominations are due no later than 10 October 2017. Details on nominee criteria are available at <https://go.usa.gov/xRJ2s>. Nominations should be sent to [suicideprevention@navy.mil](mailto:suicideprevention@navy.mil).

Bravo Zulu for all of the efforts conducted in September to spread hope and promote good psychological health. Follow the *Every Sailor, Every Day* campaign for additional resources to support your efforts throughout the year.



Naval Medical Center San Diego hosted a Suicide Awareness event in the courtyard for Suicide Prevention Month. (Facebook Photo/NMCSB)



## Lifelink Spotlight

### The Strength of Seeking Support

Reaching out and sharing stories with peers who have dealt with psychological and emotional distress and sought help can be extremely inspiring to those who are not sure how to approach their own psychological health concerns. Receiving care from a mental health professional can have many positive impacts on your overall well-being and is a sign of strength.

Retired Army Gen. Carter Ham was a brigadier general in Mosul, Iraq early during the war there. Ham experienced several traumatic events such as witnessing the aftermath of a suicide bomber attack that killed over 90 people, being left for weeks without the unit with which he had deployed after they returned to Fort Lewis, and moving to the D.C. area for a job not long after he returned to Fort Lewis. These events and transitions left him feeling isolated and depressed. He realized that things were not normal after crying uncontrollably when he was reunited with the family dog. At that point, Ham decided to seek emotional support from a chaplain. Ham felt that senior leaders often feel the need to just “power through” their problems, but he realized that sometimes, people need help after dealing with difficult transitions in life.

Retired Army Sgt. 1st Class David Parish attempted suicide six years into his military career. Dealing with a difficult personal relationship and job-related stresses, Parish was exhausted from trying to pretend that everything was fine. After hospitalization for his suicide attempt, Parish continued regular psychological health therapy sessions. He chose to separate from the military at that time, but re-entered at the same rank a year later. He went on to retire from the Army with 21 years of service. Parish has since become involved with the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury's **Real Warriors Campaign**. Parish encourages anyone who needs help to ask for it before it is too late.

Read more about Gen. Ham ([health.mil/News/Articles/2017/09/14/Retired-Gen-Ham-I-got-emotional-support-You-can-too](http://health.mil/News/Articles/2017/09/14/Retired-Gen-Ham-I-got-emotional-support-You-can-too)) and Sgt. 1st Class Parish ([www.realwarriors.net/multimedia/profiles/parish.php](http://www.realwarriors.net/multimedia/profiles/parish.php)).



Then-Brig. Gen. Carter Ham (left) talks with the Army vice chief of staff, Gen. George Casey, after senior military leaders arrive in Mosul, Iraq, in June 2004. (Courtesy photo)

## 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 October:*

1. National Survey on Drug Use data shows a strong association between prescription drug misuse and suicidal ideation. Proper disposal of expired or unused prescription drugs can decrease the likelihood of misuse, which can have severe impacts on your career and your health. October 28th is National Rx Drug Take-Back Day. Visit [www.dea.gov](http://www.dea.gov) to find a participating Navy Medicine facility or location near you.
2. Including a healthy balance of whole grains, fruits and vegetables and lean protein in your diet can give you energy and help you improve mood and navigate stress. Find more information on the NavStress Blog at [navstress.wordpress.com/2015/08/13/food-and-mood-eat-healthy-mitigate-stress/](http://navstress.wordpress.com/2015/08/13/food-and-mood-eat-healthy-mitigate-stress/).
3. Building Small ACTs of self-care into your daily routine can better enable you to navigate challenges while optimizing your physical and psychological health, especially during the holiday season. Try practicing gratitude, taking time weekly to write down three to five things that you are thankful for. Gratitude has been linked to better sleep, stronger relationships and reduced symptoms of physical and psychological illness. More tips are available at [navstress.wordpress.com/2016/11/16/seasonal-self-care-for-military-families/](http://navstress.wordpress.com/2016/11/16/seasonal-self-care-for-military-families/).
4. Seeking help is the best thing you can do if you have psychological health concerns. Resources and information are available 24/7 at the Be There Call and Outreach Center via phone at 844-357-7337 or the website at [www.betherepeersupport.org](http://www.betherepeersupport.org).

## New Resources Available in the Naval Logistics Library

Four new posters from the *Every Sailor, Every Day* campaign are now available for bulk-ordering from the Naval Logistics Library (NLL). These posters educate Sailors and families on several important prevention and intervention concepts, such as employing the Principles of Resilience to navigate stress, practicing lethal means safety and recognizing suicide warning signs. To order these and other Suicide Prevention and Operational Stress Control materials, visit [www.suicide.navy.mil](http://www.suicide.navy.mil) > **Informational Products** to view the updated catalogue. Work with your supply officer to place your order (an NLL account is required). All orders ship free of charge directly to your command. Posters, fact sheets and graphics are available for download any time on the above webpage to support your ongoing efforts.

## News and Resources

Stress Reduction Techniques for High-Stress Operations  
[Real Warriors](#)

Guard Your Brain  
[Guard Your Health](#)

Veteran Helps Advance Conversation on Lethal Means Safety  
[NavyNavStress](#)

You Lose if You Don't Snooze  
[Navy.mil](#)

You Can Practice Mindfulness Meditation—Every Day  
[DCoE](#)

Helping a Friend via Text: Tips from Crisis Text Line  
[AFSP](#)

John C. Stennis Tackles DUIs  
[Stennis74](#)

Child and Youth Behavioral Military and Family Life Counselors  
[Military OneSource](#)

On Your Side: Military Financial Support  
[Military OneSource](#)

FY-18 1 Small ACT Toolkit  
[Navy Suicide Prevention](#)

## Current and Upcoming Events

**Domestic Violence Awareness Month**  
Oct.

**Women's Health Month (NMPHC)**  
Oct.

**Breast Cancer Awareness Month**  
Oct.

**U.S. Navy 242nd Birthday**  
Oct. 13

**SPC Training Webinars**  
Oct. 11, 10 p.m. CDT  
Oct. 26, 6 p.m. CDT  
[Register here](#)

## Recognizing Risk and Reaching Out on Social Media

Aside from enabling people to stay connected during deployments or after long distance moves, social media platforms have become channels for expressing thoughts, opinions and emotions. Sometimes, signs of suicide risk are displayed, but people may not know how to recognize them. Understanding how to spot content that may indicate risk is an important first step that can enable early intervention. Here are a few ways to identify signs that your friend is in distress on social media:

- Joking about dying or feeling no reason to live.** Any posts directly indicating a desire to die or cause self-harm are warning signs of immediate danger. Sometimes these posts may be masked by sarcasm or a casual tone, or even disguised as jokes. Just because there's an "LOL" or emoji in the post, doesn't mean that the person is playing around. Often these statements are subtle ways of asking for help and are opportunities for others to reach out, show concern and get help.
- Expressing hopelessness, feeling trapped or other intense emotions.** Posts that discuss feeling stuck in a situation that won't get better, or experiencing unbearable pain, guilt, shame or intense rage can be signs that someone needs help. **IS PATH WARM** is an acronym developed by the American Association for Suicidology for recognizing suicide warning signs. By familiarizing yourself with these signs, it may be easier to detect them in social media content.
- Patterns or changes in the type of content posted.** Posts describing destructive behaviors such as abusing substances or alcohol, driving recklessly, buying weapons or engaging in unsafe sexual behaviors can also be signs that someone is at risk. Each year, Navy Suicide Prevention Branch conducts cross-disciplinary case reviews and examines the publicly available social media posts of all Sailors who died by suicide. Many of those posts included more frequent images or discussion of excessive alcohol use in social settings and/or alone, communicating about a bad break-up, a career setback or a strained relationship with a shipmate or supervisor leading up to the Sailor's death. Posts about personal stressors such as social isolation, significant health issues, loss of a job or home or deaths of loved ones were also common.

When you notice something that exhibits suicide risk in a friend or family member's social media postings, ACT:

- Ask.** Reach out and ask direct questions, such as "are you thinking about killing yourself?"
- Care.** Show that you care by listening without judgment and offering hope. Be there.
- Treat.** Help your friend connect with a support system immediately. Notify the social media platform's safety team (**Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat or Instagram**). Encourage your friend to contact the **Military Crisis Line** (call 800-273-TALK and Press 1 or text 838255), reach out to a chaplain or call 911 if you know the person's location. Stay in contact with your friend throughout their treatment to promote a healthy recovery.

Are you or someone you know on a path to suicide?  
**Know the WARNING SIGNS!**

<b>I</b>		<b>P</b>		<b>W</b>		Ideation
<b>S</b>		<b>A</b>		<b>A</b>		Substance Abuse
		<b>T</b>		<b>R</b>		Purposelessness
		<b>H</b>		<b>M</b>		Anxiety
						Trapped
						Hopelessness
						Withdrawal
						Anger
						Recklessness
						Mood Change

You don't have to see every sign to ACT.  
Help is always available through the Military Crisis Line. Call 1-800-273-TALK (press 1), text 838255 or visit [www.militarycrisisline.net](http://www.militarycrisisline.net)

**1 Small ACT**  
#BeThere for Every Sailor, Every Day.  
navstress.wordpress.com

Every Sailor, Every Day