



LIFELINK

NEWSLETTER

Page 1
Security Clearances and Mental Health: Judgment Matters

Page 2
September Plan of the Week Notes, Lifelink Spotlight

Page 3
Recognizing Risk and Reaching Out on Social Media

Security Clearances and Mental Health: Judgment Matters

This article is courtesy of our partners at the Human Performance Resource Center (HPRC) and is the first in their series about mental health and security clearances.

One of the biggest reasons Warfighters hesitate to seek professional mental health care is the commonly held misunderstanding that getting such assistance could impact their security clearances. Here are some basics: The existence of a psychological diagnosis or disorder *will not* automatically disqualify you from getting or retaining a security clearance. Almost no one has lost a clearance for having a behavioral health diagnosis. Of those who have lost clearances, only 0.04% did so for solely psychological reasons. What’s more, the simple act of meeting with a mental health professional or obtaining mental health care will not automatically result in a loss of clearance. The issue of mental health and security clearance is complex, so it’s important to clear up some common misconceptions about how mental health can impact security clearance status.

Judgment Matters

The real factors that heavily influence clearance status are whether an individual is trustworthy, dependable, reliable, and shows good judgment. Indeed, the vast majority of revoked or denied clearances occur because the applicant demonstrated a history of poor judgment and questionable decision-making. Infractions such as running up a credit card, getting numerous speeding tickets, or drinking and driving negatively impact clearance status much more commonly. The clearest disqualifier is active involvement with illegal drugs, including medical marijuana, which remains illegal at the federal level. Drug use and risky behavior, for example, are symptoms of more serious underlying psychological issues that can indeed impact clearance status. Many people incorrectly attribute negative clearance status to the simple act of seeking help instead of poor judgment and behavior.

Seeking help when you face a problem—including a mental health problem—actually demonstrates trustworthiness, dependability, reliability, and good judgment—the very factors being vetted for a security clearance. Being forthcoming about what you experienced and how you dealt with it by obtaining help from a mental health professional shows mental clarity and self-awareness.

Debrief/Bottom Line

Warfighters are expected to have the tactical skills and stamina required to perform at consistently high levels in stressful environments. However, even the strongest have moments in life that might require them to call for support. When you’re struggling, it takes courage to admit it and seek help. Doing so means you’re strong, and it means you have good judgment. Calling for support means that you can stay strong and be prepared for your teammates and your family, both of whom depend on you to stay on top of your game.

Obtaining mental health care when you need it demonstrates good judgment that can be favorably evaluated during a security clearance investigation. All Warfighters need maintenance, from time to time, of their physical and psychological health. Don’t let simple misconceptions about a complex process stand in the way of calling for mental health support. Be proud of yourself for seeking help and be candid during the clearance process. You’ll be glad you did.

DID YOU KNOW?
A psychological health condition or seeking professional help will not automatically disqualify you for a security clearance.

1 SMALL ACT CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.
Reach out to your nearest medical provider or the Military Crisis Line at 1-800-273-TALK.

1Small ACT
#BeThere for Every Sailor, Every Day.

Click [here](#) for new Every Sailor, Every Day campaign posters addressing seeking help and security clearances.



Lifelink Spotlight

Youth in ACTION for Suicide Prevention

Department of Defense (DoD) efforts to prevent suicide extend beyond service members. Children of service members experience stressors just as their parents and guardians do, and the all-hands approach to stress navigation and suicide prevention includes everyone. DoD Education Activity (DoDEA) is in partnership with Pennsylvania State University to develop comprehensive programming to educate students, parents, community members, school staff, teachers and administrators on suicide, risk and intervention.

The providers of messaging and education on suicide for students is not limited to teachers, staff and administrators. Students can also be peer educators on suicide risk and prevention. In October 2017, students in Career and Technical Education (CTE) Video Communication classes were challenged to create a 30-to 60-second public service announcement (PSA) for suicide awareness.

Students worked closely with instructors, school psychologists and counselors during the process, ensuring that the PSA conveyed the right message and adhered to suicide prevention safe messaging guidelines. Following these guidelines can avoid inadvertently contributing to risk among vulnerable audiences or perpetuating negative perceptions, while motivating help-seeking behavior. Practices include avoiding judgmental language and terms such as “commit suicide,” conveying a positive and hopeful narrative (minimizing use of statistics or data) and including support resources.

The Golden Honors went to Germany’s **Wiesbaden High School** for their PSA highlighting the importance of being there for someone who may be considering suicide and to Okinawa, Japan’s **Kadena High School** for their video explaining warning signs and how to ACT. These videos give important tips on how students can approach suicide prevention among their peers.

To learn more about how you can start important conversations about suicide with a fellow Sailor, look to the **FY-19 1 Small ACT Toolkit** for additional guidance.



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 September:

1. Times of increased stress can heighten the risk of suicide. Practicing lethal means safety ensures that highly lethal means of suicide such as firearms or certain prescription medications are not as easily accessible during these times, and it has been proven effective in preventing suicide. Learn more about protective factors against suicide and find information and resources about lethal means safety at <http://go.usa.gov/xUe4a>.
2. Every month, there seems to be at least one new #challenge on social media. This Suicide Prevention Month, try out the “30 Days of Small ACTs” challenge. Check out the calendar at <http://go.usa.gov/xUfUc> to find daily tips for improving your psychological health that you can add to your self-care toolkit and utilize even after the month is over. The calendar can be printed and displayed in high-traffic areas to help you and your shipmates be there for Every Sailor, Every Day.
3. It is impossible to pour from an empty cup. Being there for Every Sailor, Every Day includes being there for yourself. Incorporating self-care practices and taking care of your emotional health daily allows you to better deal with stress, build resilience and improve your relationships with others. Learn more about ways to be there for YOU and stay physically, emotionally, and psychologically healthy at <https://navstress.wordpress.com/2016/09/14/be-there-for-yourself/>.
4. Reaching out for help when dealing with psychological health concerns and crises is the best thing you can do for yourself or a fellow Sailor. Find 24/7 support from the Military Crisis Line, available online at www.militarycrisisline.net; at 1-800-273-8255, press 1; or by text at 838255.

Suicide Prevention Twitter Chat

U.S. Navy Operational Stress Control will host its first Twitter chat, #ACT2PreventSuicide, on Sept. 27, 2018 at 1 p.m. CDT. The chat will focus on daily application of ACT and create discussions on recognizing warning signs and risk factors in daily life, starting the conversation with someone who may be at risk, knowing where to find help and fitting small ACTs of self-care into hectic schedules. To learn more and participate, follow [@NavStress](https://twitter.com/NavStress) on Twitter. During the chat, use the hashtag #ACT2PreventSuicide to ask and to respond to questions. This chat is ideal for all audiences, including family members, suicide prevention coordinators, gatekeepers, military health organizations and others that serve the Navy community.

News and Resources

New Tools for Suicide Prevention Month and Beyond
[NavyNavStress](#)

Recognizing Signs of Stress in Your Family
[Guard Your Health](#)

Healthy Sleep for Healing
[Health.mil](#)

Treating Unresolved Trauma in the Deployed Environment
[Psychological Health Center of Excellence](#)

Grief and Loss of a Loved One, The Days Ahead
[Military OneSource](#)

How to React to Almost Anything
[Human Performance Resource Center](#)

Eligibility for Confidential, Non-medical Support Services
[Military OneSource](#)

Transitioning Through Reunion
[Real Warriors](#)

Getting off Tobacco Road Leads to Renewed Relief
[Health.mil](#)

Facebook Use During Deployment: Bane or Boon?
[Psychological Health Center of Excellence](#)

Understanding Different Types of Therapy
[Real Warriors](#)

Stress Management During Deployment
[Military OneSource](#)

Swimming for Good Health: Just Go With the Flow
[Health.mil](#)

Current and Upcoming Events

Suicide Prevention Month
September
[Resources here](#)

National Suicide Prevention Week
September 9-15, 2018

World Suicide Prevention Day
September 10

SPC Training Webinars
September 19, 6 p.m. CDT
October 4, 10 a.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!

I		P		W		Ideation Substance Abuse
S		A		A		Purposeness Anxiety Trapped Hopelessness
		T		R		Withdrawal Anger Recklessness Mood Change
		H		M		

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

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

Every Sailor, Every Day