



# LIFELINK

## NEWSLETTER

**Page 1**

Suicide Prevention Month: Re-energize and Renew

**Page 2**

September Plan of the Week Notes, Lifelink Spotlight

**Page 3**

How and Why to Create a Self-Care Plan

## Suicide Prevention Month: Every Sailor Makes a Difference

By Ms. Kim Myers

### Navy Suicide Prevention Program

September is Suicide Prevention Month and a great time to reenergize our efforts to connect with one another, build healthy relationships and promote a sense of community. It's also a good time to renew our commitment to ourselves and reflect on our individual self-care practices. Remember, taking good care of ourselves enables us to more effectively #BeThere for others. As we know, suicide prevention isn't a 30-day blitz; it's the starting point for year-long conversations on how to recognize and navigate stressors in our own lives and in the lives of our shipmates. We all play a part in creating a supportive environment where those who need help have the courage to seek help and feel supported.

One of the goals of the **Navy Suicide Prevention Program** is to empower you to know what to do, both before and during a crisis. To that end, we offer many resources on our website that focus on stress navigation and wellness. There are several resources featured in the **FY 2020 1 Small ACT Toolkit**. The toolkit contains graphics, talking points, event ideas and other materials to refresh local engagement. Some of the resources I would like to highlight are the SAIL Program, the Stress Navigation Plan and the 30 Days of Small ACTs Calendar.

### SAIL Program

Sometimes it's helpful to have an advocate outside of your command or medical team. This is especially true for Sailors who have experienced a suicide-related behavior (SRB). The **Sailor Assistance and Intercept for Life (SAIL) Program** provides those advocates. The SAIL Program isn't treatment; it's a support network that assists Sailors in navigating resources. SAIL Case Managers are Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) counselors who initiate and provide a series of caring contacts after an SRB. These case managers can help with everything from assisting with care coordination to connecting Sailors with financial counselors or other resources as needed. This month we are

encouraging suicide prevention coordinators to invite local SAIL Case Managers to the command to provide more information on the SAIL Program.



### Stress Navigation Plan

It's hard to make good decisions or think clearly when we're in crisis. That's why it's so important to make a plan with positive strategies and support resources before adversity strikes—while you're emotionally and physically healthy. Your stress navigation plan should be a resource that you can turn to in times of increased stress. Include information on crisis help, like the **Military Crisis Line**, where you can get free confidential support 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Also include activities that you find relaxing. Writing down activities that are meaningful to you in your stress navigation plan means you'll be more likely to use them when you need them.

### 30 Days of Small ACTs

The final tool I'd recommend to you is the **30 Days of Small ACTs Calendar** from the FY20 1 Small ACT Toolkit. Resolving to ACT – Ask, Care, Treat – means being willing to Ask shipmates the hard questions about how they're really doing, being willing to show you Care by actively listening without judgement and helping those who need it get to Treatment. The 30 Days of Small ACTs Calendar has simple challenges for each day of the month. Print a copy of the calendar and hang it in a busy area. Challenge your colleagues to complete as many of the ACTs as they can.

Suicide prevention isn't just the business of the Suicide Prevention Program. It's an all-hands responsibility, and we need your help to change the conversation about suicide in the Navy by openly and honestly discussing psychological health and promoting the power of seeking help. Through connectedness and vigilance, we can #BeThere for Every Sailor, Every Day.



## Lifelink Spotlight

### MyNavy Family App

The MyNavy Family App was developed as a result of the Navy asking spouses about their Navy experience and how the Navy could help make it better. MyNavy Family combines information from more than 22 websites into a convenient app. There is also a feedback section, so suggestions can be incorporated into future updates.

The app is broken down into milestone events that impact families and spouses. While not every family will need support in these milestone events, these are some of the more stressful areas many Navy families must address.

The 11 milestone events are: New Spouse, Mentorship and Networking, Employment and Adult Education, Parenthood, Special Needs Family Support, Moving & Relocation, Service Member Deployment, Counseling Services, Recreation, Lodging, & Travel, Family Emergencies, and Transition & Retirement. The app also includes a Military Installation Search and point of contact information for the MyNavy Career Center (MNCC).

The app was developed by the Navy community for the Navy community with the support of more than 1,100 spouses. The spouses provided feedback on their experiences and ways to improve Navy life for families by participating in online surveys, face-to-face and online focus groups, and participation in an app development workshop. Spouses across all paygrades, experiences and locations worked on the project and included both active and reserve status.

The MyNavy Family App is part of a larger effort underway to build the best Navy spouse and family experience. Other efforts include improving existing family programs and websites, and the development of an official MyNavy Family website. The official website will be tied to a CAC-less page on MyNavy Portal.

The app is available now in the [Navy App Locker](#).



## 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. Navy leaders have great influence and impact on their shipmates' sense of connectedness. Frontline supervisors in particular can make a difference because of their unique position. Read more about the supervisor's role in suicide prevention here: <https://navstress.wordpress.com/2019/02/27/suicide-prevention-and-supervisors-the-frontlinewhen-things-get-tough/>.
2. Addressing psychological and behavioral health needs is essential to maintaining personal and mission readiness, and your ability to be there for others. However, concerns about career implications may lead to apprehension about seeking help. The truth is there are DoD-level policy protections in place to help prevent negative career impacts for those who seek proactive help. In fact, less than 1% of security clearance denials or revocations involve psychological health concerns or behavioral health support. Seeking help is a sign of strength. Further, it's an indicator of the good judgment and reliability needed to maintain a security clearance.
3. Take a moment to understand how to reduce access to lethal means. Reducing access to lethal means of suicide and self-harm is key if a person is at risk. Storing medications and firearms safely and always disposing of medications properly are small steps you can take to help save lives.
4. Alcohol misuse has consistently been associated with suicidal behavior, according to the National Institutes of Health. Seeking help early is a sign of strength. The Navy's non-disciplinary self-referral process allows Sailors to seek help and remain an active duty Sailor. Learn more and get answers to some frequently asked questions at <https://navstress.wordpress.com/2019/04/17/self-referral-seeking-help-early-is-a-sign-of-strength/>.
5. Suicide Prevention Month is an opportunity to reenergize the conversation and set a positive tone about being there for yourself and others for the upcoming fiscal year. Use this month to find everyday ways to make a difference in the lives of others—and ways to carry that forward into the coming months. Bringing a shipmate a cup of coffee, sharing a meal together, asking how someone is doing or lending a listening ear may seem small but can have a big impact.

## News and Resources

Back to School: Child and Adolescent Mental Health  
[National Institute for Mental Health](#)

The Gratitude Board: 1 Small ACT for Cultivating Active Gratitude  
[NavyNavStress](#)

Interactive Screening Program Connects People to Health Services Before Crises Emerge  
[American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)

PHCoE Can Help with Suicide Prevention Month Activities  
[Psychological Health Center of Excellence](#)

Annual Mental Health, Substance Abuse Survey Data Announced  
[SAMHSA](#)

Real Warriors Campaign Breaks Barriers to Psychological Health Care  
[Health.mil](#)

Navy Leader's Guide for Managing Sailors in Distress  
[Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center](#)

Six Tips to Boost Your Social Fitness  
[Human Performance Resource Center](#)

Updated VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guideline for Suicide Released  
[Psychological Health Center of Excellence](#)

## Current and Upcoming Events

**SPC Training Webinars**  
September 5, 2PM CDT  
September 19, Noon CDT  
October 10, 8AM CDT  
[Register here](#)

**Suicide Prevention Month**  
September  
**Domestic Violence Awareness Month**  
October

## How (and Why) to Create a Self-Care Plan

Sailors know that no military operation is undertaken without significant planning. Personal duties like a permanent change of station or even trips to the store are often accompanied by detailed checklists, too. However, planning to prioritize self-care may be a new idea. Building a self-care plan can help make sure we take care of ourselves, so we can take care of the mission and of others.

A self-care plan is a customizable tool and preventative measure to help you identify what you value and need as part of your daily life (maintenance self-care) and the strategies you can use if you face increased stress or a crisis (emergency self-care).

There is no "one-size-fits-all," but the plan should represent a commitment to attending to your physical, psychological and emotional health in ways that are meaningful to you. An effective self-care plan helps you take the guesswork out of how to direct your energy in positive ways.

When you begin writing your plan, you'll need to do a little self-reflection. Think about the ways that you currently cope with stress in your life, and whether those ways are positive or negative. A self-care plan can include abstaining from negative behaviors, like overspending or overusing alcohol, as well as developing new and more productive strategies. Think about the things in your life that bring you joy and increase your well-being. Make a list of those positive activities. Come up with a reasonable amount of time per week that you're able to dedicate to those activities, and then block that time off on your calendar in advance. Some activities may be easy to incorporate into your daily routine, like a walk with your dog. Some activities may fit in better on a weekly or monthly basis, like a manicure or massage. Find what's right for you, and then make it a priority.

Customize your self-care plan to meet your needs, but also make sure you aren't neglecting any part of your total wellness. A good self-care plan should include practices or activities related to a variety of health areas.

**Physical** – These are all the things that involve taking care of your physical health, like nutrition, preventive medical care and good sleep practices. Learn how to get a great workout without equipment in [this blog post](#) about minimalist fitness workouts designed for Sailors. Yoga offers a complete mind and body workout, and [this article](#) can help you start a yoga practice. For tips on creating a sleep-friendly environment to recharge your resilience, check out [this article](#).

**Psychological** – There are many ways to nurture your mind and mental health. [This article](#) from the [Real Warriors Campaign](#) describes stress reduction techniques that can help, especially for people in high-stress occupations. Achieving work-life balance is an important part of psychological wellness, and [this article](#) offers help on finding that balance in the Navy.

**Social/Relationships** – Time alone is important, but relationships are one of the [Principles of Resilience](#). Whether it's relationships with friends, a spouse or other family members, or professional relationships and community ties, connectedness can have significant positive effects on a person's well-being. Learn techniques on how to strengthen connections, whether in person or at a distance, [here](#).

Self-care can be challenging to adopt or maintain, often due to demands on time, energy or putting the needs of others before your own. As you implement your plan, keep track of how you're doing. Tracking your progress over time will help you understand and recognize your habits, successes and any difficulties you may not have originally anticipated. Remember, you can revise your plan as needed! Being there for others starts with being there for yourself. 1 Small ACT can make a difference.

