

LIFELINK NEWSLETTER

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SEPTEMBER 2020



3 Things to Remember This Suicide Prevention Month

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, we are collectively continuing to navigate uncertainty and ambiguous situations, so if you've been feeling a heightened sense of anxiety or stress—you're not alone. This Suicide Prevention Month falls as a momentous time, and whether or not you or someone you know might be exhibiting signs of increased stress, the messages regarding stress management have never been more universally needed. You've probably read or heard the follow over the past several months:

Now more than ever, it is important to prioritize your mental health.

In this unprecedented time, taking care of yourself and your community is vitally important.

With ongoing uncertainty, it is critical to practice healthy coping mechanisms.

These messages aren't wrong. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "taking care of your emotional health during an emergency will help you think clearly and react to the urgent needs to protect yourself and your family. Self-care during an emergency will help your long-term healing."

Each September, the Navy recognizes the Suicide Prevention Month in order to promote healthy behaviors, active engagement and open conversation about suicide and stress navigation. This month is intended to spark year-long conversations about psychological health and is not just a 30-day blitz of suicide prevention efforts, but a reminder of what we can be doing every day for ourselves and for others. Keep these three items in mind this Suicide Prevention Month:

1. **Connect to Protect.** Connections help strengthen our resilience, lead to a more meaningful, fulfilled life and play a vital role in feeling a sense of belonging and safety. Additionally, encouraging open, honest conversations about suicide and stress navigation

IN THIS ISSUE

PAGE 1

3 Things to Remember This Suicide Prevention Month

PAGE 2

Lifeline Spotlight

Plan of the Week Notes

PAGE 3

Connection Matters—Now More Than Ever

News & Resources

Current & Upcoming Events

2. **Suicide is preventable.** Preventing suicide is a community effort. Keeping open lines of communication and practicing help-seeking behavior within your social circles is a helpful way to lead by example. Find help with your local Navy chaplain, Fleet and family Support Center (FFSC) or medical provider. Review and share resources from **Military OneSource**. Use the Military Crisis Line (call 1-800-273-TALK, press 1 or text 838255) for assistance in navigating challenges. The Sailor Assistance and Intercept for Life (SAIL) program is also available to help Sailors navigate resources following instances of suicide-related behaviors (SRBs).
3. **1 Small ACT can make a difference.** The FY-21 1 Small ACT Toolkit is a helpful resource for suicide prevention coordinators (SPCs), leaders, providers and anyone who wants to support Navy's suicide prevention efforts. It contains messages and outreach materials to refresh engagement, including new information on the **Caring Connections** effort, **conversation starter** "recipe cards" for safe and effective conversations about mental health and a revamped version of the 30 days of Small ACTs Calendar.



RECIPE FOR A SUCCESSFUL MENTAL HEALTH CONVO

LEVEL: Medium to Hard
TIME: 20-30 minutes
SERVES: Everyone

INGREDIENTS

- Let people know you're willing to talk about mental health by being open about your own.
- Speak to them privately. Always start with an expression of care, followed by an observation.
- Let them know you get it, and that you understand it's both okay and normal to have both easier and harder mental health days.

DIRECTIONS

- "Maybe it's me, but I was wondering if you were ok?"
- "Hey, I've noticed you've seemed kind of down lately. What's going on? Is everything ok?"
- "Hey, we haven't talked in a while and I wanted to reach out. How are you doing?"
- "I've noticed recently that you haven't seemed like yourself lately. How are you?"
- "I was just thinking about the time when [share a fun memory] and wanted to check in."
- "This might seem awkward, but I'd like to know how you're really doing and if you're really alright."

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LIFELINK SPOTLIGHT

TOPGUN Fighter Foundation Officially Launches With a Mission to End Veteran Suicide

From PR Newswire

A former Navy fighter pilot is continuing his dedication to service, but not in the cockpit. E. Matthew Buckley now leads a nonprofit dedicated to helping veterans and preventing veteran suicide.

Buckley is the founder and chairman of the board of directors for the TOPGUN Fighter Foundation (TGFF). The Florida-based organization's primary mission is to prioritize help for people who need immediate support, especially those experiencing suicidal ideation or other at-risk behaviors.

"Being a former Navy pilot, I have lost many brothers to suicide and countless more who have struggled after re-entering civilian life," Buckley said. "As Americans, we must come together to protect the veterans that have given up so much to protect us. We win wars and battles but often men/women who serve lose their peace."

Through TGFF, veterans in crisis will be provided a professional psychiatrist to incorporate face-to-face interviews and a psycho-social model. The second focus area for TGFF will be to support those who are suffering from such emotional issues as post-traumatic stress, bipolar disorder, traumatic brain injury or stress. They will receive various services including counseling, therapy sessions and life transition coaching. The organization's third duty will be to help veterans manage daily life stressors, such as financial literacy, education, employment and housing.

Prior to leaving the Navy, Buckley was an F/A-18 Hornet Adversary Instructor pilot, graduate of the Navy Fighter Weapons School and flew 44 combat missions over Iraq. Buckley says he personally struggled with getting treatment for his service-related injuries after his separation from the Navy, and that TGFF will provide essential services to those in need.



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. Learn more about the supervisor's role in suicide prevention at <https://navstress.wordpress.com/2019/02/27/suicide-prevention-and-supervisors-the-front-line-when-things-get-tough/>.
2. 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. Get more Suicide Prevention Month information at <https://navstress.wordpress.com/2020/07/07/making-the-most-of-your-summer-meals/>.
3. We all need breaks. It's easy to get caught up in the responsibilities that stem from different areas of your personal and professional life. Actively creating time and space to unwind may be challenging, but it can help you build resilience and live more mindfully. Practicing mindfulness is one of many skills that can help decrease instances of negative emotions, such as anxiety and anger. Read more about tools to try when you need a mindful moment at <https://navstress.wordpress.com/2020/08/31/tools-to-try-when-you-need-a-mindful-moment/>.
4. Addressing psychological and behavioral health needs is essential to maintaining 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 and an indicator of the good judgment and reliability needed to maintain a security clearance.

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NEWS & RESOURCES

2020 Suicide Prevention Month Planning Guide

[Defense Suicide Prevention Office](#)

How to Stay Connected During Times of Physical Distancing
[#BeThe1To Campaign](#)

COVID-19 Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Key Messages
[The Action Alliance](#)

Navigating a Mental Health Crisis
[National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)

Suicide Prevention Month: Ideas for Action
[Suicide Prevention Resource Center](#)

Overcoming the Barriers of Seeking Treatment
[Real Warriors Campaign](#)

Supporting Military Families in Crisis
[Defense Suicide Prevention Office](#)

Hear Stories of Recovery
[Make the Connection](#)

Mental Health, Substance Use and Suicidal Ideation During COVID-19
[SPRC](#)

CURRENT & UPCOMING EVENTS

Suicide Prevention Month
1 September—30 September

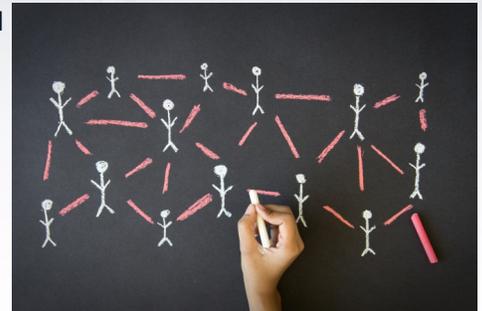
World Suicide Prevention Day
10 September

SPC Training Webinars

Sept 24, 10 AM CDT
[Register here](#)

Connection Matters—Now More Than Ever

Sailors and their families know a thing or two about staying connected while apart. Even so, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought new challenges and tested our ability to maintain connectedness in new ways. Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations and an infectious disease outbreak that requires social distancing, quarantine or isolation can generate stress. Many of us are feeling stressed, anxious and uncertain—and maybe, sometimes, hopeless. For some people, these experiences can be associated with an increased risk for suicide. Finding healthy ways to cope with stress during this time will help us to remain strong. This year's Suicide Prevention Month theme is "Connect to Protect" and it's more important than ever.



Being connected can take many forms. Here are a few ways to navigate the challenge.

- **Stay connected to others.** Whether through phone calls, virtual meet-ups, texts or sending and posting messages via social media platforms—talk about your experiences and feelings with friends and loved ones if you find it helpful. Share words of support, listen without judgment; and, if needed, connect with resources and help.
- **Stay connected with yourself.** Make it a priority to eat healthy, to exercise regularly and to get plenty of sleep. Use practical ways to cope and to relax. Relax your body often by doing things that work for you—deep breathing, stretching, meditating or engaging in other activities you enjoy. Pace yourself between stressful activities and do something fun after a hard task.
- **Stay informed.** Stay up to date on what is happening, while limiting your media exposure. Avoid watching or listening to news reports 24/7 since this tends to increase anxiety and worry.
- **Get help.** Numerous support resources are available including your Chaplain, behavioral health provider, supervisor, peers or family members, Military OneSource, Military Crisis Line or the Make the Connection website.

These unprecedented times have forced us to change our daily lives and routines. For many, we've hunkered down in our homes, limited trips to stores and learned how to physically distance ourselves from family and friends. We can take another important safety step by fighting isolation through connection. Take the time to contribute to your own self-care and the care of those around you by implementing these tips to Connect to Protect.

Article written with information from the Defense Suicide Prevention Office's Connect to Protect campaign.

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