

## Suicide

Suicide Awareness Training: Contact Behavioral Health @ 228-2044 or 228-6126/7057

After Hours: If you are in crisis, call the Military OneSource at 1-800-342-9647.

National Suicide Crisis Hotline: 1-800-273-8255. If you, or someone you know, are in immediate danger, call 911.

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### ***MYTHS & FACTS***

**Myth:** Most suicides occur with little or no warning.

**Fact:** Most people communicate warning signs of how they are reacting to or feeling about stressful events in their lives whether it be a problem with a significant other, family member, best friend, superiors, financial matters or legal issues. Warning signs may present themselves as direct statements, physical signs, emotional reactions, or behaviors such as withdrawing from friends. When stressors and warning signs are present suicide may be considered as the only option to escape pain, relieve tension, maintain control, or cope with stress.

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**Myth:** You shouldn't talk about suicide with someone who may be at risk because you may give that person the idea.

**Fact:** Talking about suicide does not create nor increase the risk. The best way to identify if someone is thinking about suicide is to ask them directly. Avoiding the subject of suicide may contribute to suicide. Avoiding the subject reinforces a suicidal persons thought that no one cares.

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**Myth:** Non-fatal attempts are only attention-getting behaviors.

**Fact:** For some people suicidal behaviors are serious invitations to others to help them live. Rather than punishing or reprimanding someone who has expressed suicidal thoughts offer help and alternative answers. Get them to talk to a Chaplain or counselor. Suicidal behaviors must be taken seriously. If not addressed a thought of suicide can become an act of suicide.

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**Myth:** A suicidal person clearly wants to die.

**Fact:** Most suicidal people are ambivalent about their intentions right up to the point of dying. Very few are absolutely determined or completely decided about ending their life. Most people are open to a helpful intervention, sometimes even a forced one. The majority of those who are suicidal at some time in their life find a way to continue living.

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**Myth:** Only a professional can help a suicidal person.

**Fact:** While long term care should be handled by a professional, immediate recognition of a suicidal person or someone in need of help is up to you. By paying attention to what the person is saying, taking it seriously, offering support, and getting help you can prevent a potential tragedy. Many are lost to suicide because immediate support wasn't offered.

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**Myth:** Just because they talk about suicide does not mean they will actually go through with it.

**Fact:** Almost everyone who commits suicide has given some clue or warning. Do not ignore suicide threats. Statements like "You'll be sorry when I'm dead," or "I can't see any way out"-no matter how casually or jokingly said-may indicate serious suicidal feelings. ([www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org))

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**Myth:** A Marine that seeks help for suicidal thoughts will put his career in jeopardy.

**Fact:** Marines may be reluctant to seek help because of fears that such help will negatively impact their careers. Unfortunately, this often means a Marine in distress delays seeking help until the problem becomes so big that it affects their behavior both on and off work until, ultimately, they begin to collect Page 11 counseling entries, Letters of Reprimand, and NJPs. The consequence of waiting too long to seek help is what damages their career. Getting help early does not. It is important for Marines to be confident they can ask for help without prejudice to their careers. It is especially important for them to understand that what is more likely to affect their careers is not seeking help, and waiting until problems affect their job performance or mental health. But at any point, seeking help should be welcomed.

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**Myth:** A Marine who seeks help will be viewed as less of a Marine because Marines are supposed to be tough.

**Fact:** Many Marines worry that seeking help will make them appear "weak" or "defective" to their peers or leaders. In the past there has probably been some basis for this worry, and the stigma associated with seeking help may still be a problem in some units. Current Marine Corps policy is for commands to create a climate where seeking help is encouraged to promote maximum personal and unit readiness. It is every Marines job to make sure that they themselves are prepared and ready to be there for fellow Marines when needed. By seeking help for a problem that is impacting individual readiness, the Marine is simply doing their job and ensuring unit readiness.