



RHUMB LINES

Straight Lines to Navigate By



March 29, 2011

Suicide Prevention

"We have great resources and tools available to assist our Sailors and their families with suicide prevention. The programs are outstanding and will help, but the single best intervention tool is our shipmates. Shipmates helping shipmates, or shipmate intervention, is the strength of our great Navy."

– Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy(MCPON)(SS/SW) Rick D. West

The Navy can take important steps in reducing or eliminating suicides by focusing and training Sailors on effective ways to deal with stress. The Navy's goal is to ensure Sailors have a support network, health care, and skills to get through trying times. The Navy is committed to supporting its Sailors and building and maintaining a resilient force.

Suicide Prevention

- [Leadership](#), shipmates and family form the front lines in suicide prevention:
 - Suicide prevention is most effective when it starts at the local level, with active leadership knowing and understanding their people well enough to recognize when it is time to intervene.
 - [Sailor-to-Sailor intervention](#) is possible as shipmates work together on a day-to-day basis, allowing them to recognize when something is wrong and take the time to take action.
 - Families are often the first line of defense in suicide prevention. Family members know their Sailors better than anyone and are with Sailors when they are off duty and less defensive.
- [Early intervention works](#). If leaders encourage Sailors to seek out assistance early, everyone benefits. The command becomes stronger, because Sailors are trained and a culture that values psychological health is established. At the same time, Sailors understand how important they are to the command.
- Don't underestimate the positive effect of taking time to care for someone in need. There are many instances when an act of appreciation or understanding helped someone who was considering suicide find the confidence to ask for help or discover the hope to keep living.

Supporting a Resilient Force

- Operational Stress Control (OSC) helps build resilient Sailors and families by giving them tools to navigate the daily stress of military careers. Sailors should understand that the act of seeking help is a sign of strength and be [encouraged](#) to visit the [OSC website](#) for resources.

Getting Help Helps!

- There are many sources of support for life's struggles, including [Military OneSource](#), [fleet and family support centers](#), [Navy chaplains](#), and medical providers. All can contribute to Sailors learning to combat stress while leading fruitful lives and careers.

Key Messages

- Encourage Sailors, civilians and families to ACT:
 - Ask – Ask what is bothering someone.
 - Care – Listen and offer hope. Don't judge.
 - Treat – Take action, get assistance, and follow up. Take the person to get help. Do not leave them alone.
- The Navy recognizes that long before thoughts of suicide occur, there are opportunities to build resilience, intervene early, and create the connections that help sustain during stressful times.
- MCPON recently posted a suicide prevention video message to the fleet on his [Facebook page](#).

Facts & Figures

- Suicide is the third leading cause of death in the Navy.
- In 2010, Navy commands reported 1,546 suicide related behaviors (SRB). These Sailors were able to receive assessment, intervention, and support.
- More intervention = fewer deaths. The ratio of SRB interventions to deaths increased in 2010 to 39 to 1, compared to 29 to 1 in 2009. At the same time, deaths dropped from 46 to 38.
- In the [2010 behavior health quick poll](#), more than 80% of Sailors correctly identified ACT as - Ask, Care, Treat.