

Suicide is rising as a leading cause of death in the United States, and rates among military and civilians are increasing to over 20 persons per 100,000.^{1,2} Below are some research-supported strategies to increase well-being, performance, and productivity. We are all in this together.

Promoting Psychological Health

Invest in Yourself

Investing in yourself can help prevent burnout. Burnout is characterized by feelings of physical and emotional exhaustion, low personal accomplishment, and suicidal ideation. The good news is that recovery from burnout can reduce suicidal ideation.³

Consider these tips for you and your team:

Self Care

- Schedule time for fun and guard your break time
- Take a break and get outside into nature
- Pre-plan leave and get it on your calendar - try using your leave to build long weekends
- Make sleep a priority
- Make exercise a habit (take a walk around the block after dinner every night)
- Set your eating habits up for success by preparing healthy snacks and meals

Stay Connected

Join a group. Being a member of a group, including social, educational, religious, or special interest, is known to promote well-being. Joining one group lowers the risk of depression relapse by 24% while being a member of three groups lowers the risk by 63%.⁴

Build connection through good communication. Even small improvements in how you communicate can improve the well-being of yourself and others

Listen Actively

- Focus on what the other person is saying
- Repeat back what you heard in your own words
- Avoid inserting judgement into what you heard

Monitor your Non-Verbals

- Remember the importance of eye contact - it communicates interest and respect
- Keep your posture relaxed (avoid crossing your arms)
- Mirror vocal tone and facial expressions

Demonstrate Respect

- Give people time to be heard
- Give others the benefit of the doubt
- Remember, even small amounts of encouragement matter

Invest in Your Team

Team Care:

- Build connections by talking about non-work-related topics
- Inject some humor into your conversations
- Acknowledge the reality of stressors
- Remind your team of the importance of their contributions
- Don't sacrifice your team's wellbeing for greater work productivity
- Know your team's workload and re-balance when necessary
- Communicate to higher when taskers overburden
- Communicate the priority level of specific tasks
- Give employees the room/time to manage stress
- Offer flexibility and remote working
- Reflect the emotion and temperament you want to see in your staff

What to look out for

There are warning signs that team members might notice if someone is at risk for suicide. Any one of these signs can indicate a natural fluctuation in our lives and doesn't necessarily indicate the intent to hurt oneself. As teammates, however, we want to look out for each other. Team members are in a good position to notice changes in patterns.

Keep the following risk factors in mind:

- Reporting feeling hopeless, helpless
- Giving things away
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Talking about death or suicide
- Increased anger, anxiety, or agitation
- Significant sleep disturbance
- Texts, posts, emails that make you concerned
- Sudden relief and "being at peace" with oneself
- Increased isolation or withdrawing

How to help if you believe someone is at risk

If you are not sure, ask your supervisor for help.
Don't feel like you need to handle the situation alone.

ASK

- Reach out and ask
"Are you thinking about killing yourself?" or, "Are you planning to kill yourself?"

*** Asking someone if they are suicidal does not increase the risk that they will kill themselves.***

CARE

- Practice empathy
- Identify & encourage common goals
- Recognize emotions
- You don't need all the answers
- You don't need to provide a fix
- Don't judge

ESCORT

- Remain calm
- Know appropriate resources
- Stay with the person
- Get assistance

Keeping it in perspective:

Sometimes you can do everything right and still things can go wrong. As a team, our goal is to create the kind of environment where people watch out for one another during tough times and help people thrive in working towards our critically important mission. One team, one fight.

Where to go

Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

988

Crisis Text Line

Text "HELLO" to 741741

Answers to common questions:

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/suicide-faq/index.shtml>

5 Steps to helping others:

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/suicide-prevention/index.shtml>

1. Department of Defense (2020). Annual suicide report: calendar year 2019. <https://www.dspo.mil/Portals/113/Documents/CY2019%20Suicide%20Report/DoD%20Calendar%20Year%20CY%202019%20Annual%20Suicide%20Report.pdf?ver=YO44ZVcVA9mzwtfsfdO5Ew%3d%3d>

2. National Institutes of Mental Health. Suicide Statistics. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/suicide.shtml>

3. Dyrbye, LN et al. (2008). Burnout and suicidal ideation among U.S. medical students. *Annals of Internal Medicine*. 149:334-341.

4. Cruwys, T, et al. (2013). Social group memberships protect against future depression, alleviate depression symptoms and prevent depression relapse. *Social Science & Medicine*. 98:179-186.