

## A HEALTHY FORCE IS A READY FORCE

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The Mission Essential Task List is an unconstrained statement of the tasks required to accomplish wartime missions. The availability of resources, such as the health of the force, does not affect METL development, but it does affect how and whether the mission gets accomplished.

A healthy force is a ready force.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death in the United States military. According to the Center for New American Security a member of the military takes their life every 36 hours and according to the Department of Veterans Affairs it is estimated a veteran commits suicide every 80 minutes. Statistically, suicide rates for the military are higher than the general population. However, suicide isn't a military versus civilian issue; it is a human tragedy! Although people behave differently there are some general themes to look for as indicators of serious signs of hopelessness and despair. This sense of hopelessness leads to suicidal ideation when people tend to feel as if they don't belong or fit in with others, perhaps feel as if they are a burden. The despair can mount, often resulting in risk behaviors unless the individual experiences an increased capability to overcome the fear and pain.

There are all kinds of risk factors to look out for: issues arise with their finances, in their relationships, at work, when they appear to have lost interest in daily activities that once excited them, when their overall mood seems "down" constantly or when they begin to exhibit increased agitation or frustration with cares they used to just let go. If you believe someone fits any of these categories please risk a confrontation and ask what is going on. Don't be afraid to intervene immediately at risk of losing the friendship. Don't keep it a secret. There are personnel trained to handle this situation and it is not a violation of any friendship to seek such assistance. If the individual is in the military and reluctant to accept assistance, inform the Chain of Command; if they are civilian inform their family. If the person isn't stable stay with them until they are in the proper care of health professionals and/or their chain of command. And by all means, don't put off until tomorrow what you should do or say today!

Soldiers and their battle buddies can access help through the following websites: <http://www.armyg1.army.mil/hr/suicide/default.asp>; [www.militaryonesource.mil](http://www.militaryonesource.mil) which provide information on crisis assistance, reintegration and deployment 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. Information can also be acquired through [www.VeteransCrisisLine.net](http://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net) which is anonymous, available to all military regardless of VA registration, and is accessible via phone at (800) 273-8255 or text (838255).

The Real Warriors Campaign is an initiative launched by the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE) to promote the processes of building resilience, facilitating recovery and supporting reintegration of returning service members, veterans and their families. The website is [www.realwarriors.net](http://www.realwarriors.net) and technologically savvy Soldiers can use one of several cell phone apps available through the

Department of Defense by visiting <http://www.t2health.org/mobile-apps> to track mood or various symptoms that seem to be occurring.

For current Army Suicide Prevention Programs, commanders can access information through [www.us.army.mil/suite/page/603513](http://www.us.army.mil/suite/page/603513).

For immediate help, 24/7, dial the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).