



Commanding Officer's Policy Statement on Suicide Awareness and Prevention

Suicide is one of the leading causes of death in the Marine Corps. Even one death by suicide is too many. It is a tragic and preventable loss, causing untold grief and devastation to those left behind. In addition, suicide and suicidal behavior can take a tremendous toll on the readiness and resources of this squadron. For these reasons, suicide awareness, prevention, and intervention must be of the highest priority to all Firebirds....as part of our mission, we will take care of one another by both "seeking help and seeking to help."

Suicide prevention and intervention is the responsibility of the entire Firebird family. Each of us, as fellow Marines, family members, and friends, is responsible for encouraging those who are troubled to seek help; we will always work together to address problems before they affect our relationships, work performance, health, or desire to live. Suicide prevention starts with caring, trust and communication; we must always take the time to observe, listen and when necessary, have the courage to ask and act when something doesn't seem right or someone is struggling. This is what family does!

Some Marines and Sailors may worry that asking for help will make them appear "weak" or "defective" to their peers or leaders. Without reservation, the policy of this command is to maintain a climate where seeking help is encouraged and seeking to help is expected.

If you are a Marine, Sailor, or family member who is considering harming yourself, please know that asking for help is **NOT** a sign of weakness. Just as there is no shame in seeking help for a battlefield injury, there is no shame in asking for help regarding distress, depression, or thoughts of suicide. Also, you have my word that asking for help will not negatively affect your career in the Marine Corps or Navy. Please use one of the contacts below if you need someone to listen:

- Someone in your chain of command or fellow service member that you trust
- Squadron Chaplain
- DSTRESSLine at 1-877-476-7734 or www.dstressline.com
- Military OneSource 24/7 (800-342-9647) or www.militaryonesource.mil
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800-273-TALK) or www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

If you are reading this and know someone who seems depressed or has recently become distant and detached, do not be afraid to ask them how they are doing and "have you had thoughts of hurting or killing yourself?" It should not matter if that person is a family member, peer, junior, or senior; taking care of each other often requires those questions up the chain, down the chain, and laterally. If they reply "yes," treat them with compassion, get additional help from the sources above, and do not leave them alone until additional help is there. We will rally around our fellow Firebird and make a positive difference in their lives.

Realize that YOU are important to other members of the Firebird family and suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. If you are having thoughts of harming or killing yourself, please ask for help. Your fellow Firebirds will listen and respond!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. I. Brown'.

N. I. BROWN
Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps
Commanding Officer, MWSS 17