



MACS-4 Commanding Officer

Policy on Suicide Prevention



The MACS-4 goal is to not lose one single Marine, Sailor, or family member to the tragedy of suicide. Accomplishing this will take the concerted effort and personal involvement, of every individual in our command. Every member of this command should establish an environment in which every individual – without hesitation - can approach another with an expectation that there will be an eagerness to help solve problems: No one is on their own.

Preventing suicide will require us to take action, be active (not passive), have empathy (not sympathy), be proactive (not reactive), and take a personal interest in improving the lives of others. This requires a hyper-vigilant approach in which we are ready to ask the difficult questions to help identify at-risk individuals, and then to provide immediate intervention, if required, to prevent losing an irreplaceable part of our team. If you see, hear, or think anything that implies someone has lost hope, swift action is necessary; do not assume you are over-reacting. Do not minimize the matter or keep it a secret. Get help. Use your chain of command to inform them of the situation. Find someone. Never leave a person alone who is even remotely contemplating suicide. Talk to them and let them know that you care and want to help.

Suicide is a permanent 'solution' to a temporary problem. Every one of us has deep roots, and it must be emphasized to anyone at-risk there are people who care about them; who will be left behind if they act on a passing impulse; and will have all of the associated guilt and doubt as to what they missed or did wrong. We must further discard some of our misconceptions regarding those who contemplate suicide, even in jest -- particularly that people who joke about suicide are not serious about acting. The exact opposite is true: Almost everyone who attempts suicide has given some sort of indication in the past.

Make no mistake: preventing suicide is a challenge that will require a serious intellectual, individual, organizational, and leadership commitment. Do not hesitate to help someone who is in a downward spiral. Get involved – a mad friend is better than a dead friend. If you are the one experiencing depression or thoughts of suicide – do not hesitate to talk to someone. **No one is in a one-man fighting hole – have the courage to ask for help!** Do NOT keep a problem that is eating away at you to yourself. Chaplains and MFLCs are always available. They are an integrated part of the unit with unique trust and confidence. Being outside the chain of command and having 100% confidentiality make them especially valuable as an adviser if you are unsure on what course of action to take. We must keep strings on each other, pay attention to the micro-details of our surroundings, and take care of each other.

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