



## Shipmates Looking Out for Shipmates Key To Suicide Prevention

According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, more than 33,000 people in the U.S. commit suicide every year. Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death for adults between the ages of 18 and 65. The Navy is trying to get a handle on why Sailors take their own lives and how the amount of suicides can be decreased.

Suicide prevention is everyone's responsibility, not just the mental health advisor's, the chaplain's or the commanding officer's job. Shipmates have to look out for each other. There are many warning signs that may indicate that a fellow Sailor is at risk for suicide. Change in behavior, personality, irritability and low energy levels could be a red flag.

If you know a shipmate may be thinking about suicide or is at risk of committing suicide, the response is the acronym ACT.

**A - Ask.** Don't be afraid to ask the question, "Are you thinking of suicide or of harming yourself?" it is a myth that by asking the questions one gives the person at risk the idea to harm themselves. The reality is that someone at risk for suicide has already experienced high levels of stress, may be suffering from depression, and, as a result, may not be able to see and understand all of their options to resolving their problems. So, asking the question does not trigger the idea of suicide. Instead, it enables the person at risk know that you are concerned and that symptoms are being noticed.

**C - Care.** Let them know you care and want to help. It takes commitment and courage sometimes to show someone you care about them and are willing to get involved. You may be met with resistance but, sometimes we must walk through this resistance in order to help. This in and of itself can be healing. Empathy for another is a powerful thing.

**T - Treat.** Get help. There are many resources such as a chaplain, your chain of command, medical, FFSC and hospital emergency rooms.

Sailors need to get away from the stigma that if they are depressed or have other mental health issues, they will get in trouble. The military over the past few years has become better at treating mental health issues. There is nothing wrong with going to talk to a trained professional at one of the many facilities the military offers. There is a lot of help out there.

For more information about suicide prevention, visit [www.npc.navy.mil/CommandSupport/SuicidePrevention](http://www.npc.navy.mil/CommandSupport/SuicidePrevention).