



Suicide Prevention That Works



 **SEPTEMBER IS SUICIDE
PREVENTION AWARENESS MONTH**

Many of us have known someone who has attempted or completed suicide. This may be in part due to the fact that in any given year, over 40,000 Americans die by suicide.

A big part of the problem is the many commonly held **myths** surrounding suicide that shades our responses. Here are some of them:

1. The weakest military members are the ones who struggle with thoughts of suicide.
2. People who talk about suicide are just trying to get attention.
3. Once a person decides to commit suicide, there is nothing you can do to stop them.
4. Asking someone if they are thinking about suicide with increase the risk.

It is critical to understand these myths in order to respond appropriately. The most impactful weapon you have when faced with a coworker in distress is your relationship. Therefore, you must not only be proactive in reaching out to them, but build relationships with your coworkers before the need for intervention arises. It is extremely difficult for people when faced with a crisis to fully recover alone. Make it a shared responsibility.

- **Know your people** - care for them before they need it. Establish a caring and supportive relationship with your coworkers and those whom you supervise and become **relevant** in their lives. They'll feel more comfortable talking to you (honestly) about any possible personal concerns in the future.
- **Pay attention to the warning signs** - The most apparent indicators of possible suicide are: talking about feeling hopeless, feeling like a burden to others, feeling trapped, or wanting to die. But less obvious signs may be increased alcohol use, disappearing from social circles or self-isolating, demonstrating uncharacteristic sadness/anger/aggression, giving away prized possessions, or even very suddenly improving or "feeling better." If you notice one or more of these behavior changes, it's time to have a conversation.
- **Ask, Care, Escort (ACE)** - Be brave and directly ask the question: "Have you been thinking about killing yourself?" Then listen, encourage, and try to express understanding instead of judgment. If the situation warrants, ask if you can bring them to someone who can help: 1st Sergeant, Chaplain, Mental Health Clinic, or an embedded ART member.



Questions? Contact us at 363ISRW.ART.363ISRW@us.af.mil or at 757-764-9316