



Suicide Prevention

Providing light in the perfect storm

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The Perfect Storm

- Suicide is the result of an untimely convergence of multiple psychiatric, psychological, social, environmental, occupational, cultural, medical and academic factors that severely challenge an individual's capacity to cope" (Edwin Schneidman, 1954)



The Perfect Storm

- "The common purpose of suicide is to seek a solution. The common stimulus in suicide is intolerable psychological pain. The common emotion in suicide is hopelessness. The common cognitive state in suicide is constriction... AND the common consistent in suicide is the life-long coping patterns." (Schneidman, 1970)

Risk Factors that Apply to Everyone

- Axis I
 - Mood Disorders
 - Substance Abuse Disorders
- Axis II
 - Personality Disorders
- Axis III
 - Health problems
- Axis IV
 - Psycho-Social Stressors



The Perfect Storm

- Suicide becomes an option for those who return home because of the readjustment, residual impact of combat and normal ebb and flow of Axis IV issues.
- Add: Axis III issues
- Add: Any pre-existing I, II or IV issues
- Add: Any emergent I, II, III or IV issues
- Overwhelmed, overstimulated, hopeless, isolated (no one understands), drinking, access to a firearm

Where are they?



- Human beings have a tremendous ability to adapt, learn, change, overcome adversity
- The vet is attempting to find some predictability and stability; a starting point for moving forward
 - Meds can help with mood disorders
 - Treatment and education can help with substance abuse disorders
 - Technology and medical care can help with injuries and physical recovery
 - It is the acceptance and understanding of the adversity that lies ahead. Adjusting to meet the challenges.
 - The Axis IV issues are unpredictable and can cause the vet to quickly destabilize emotionally

Imagine feeling like this all the time

PTSD

pain

stress

Depression

loneliness

trauma

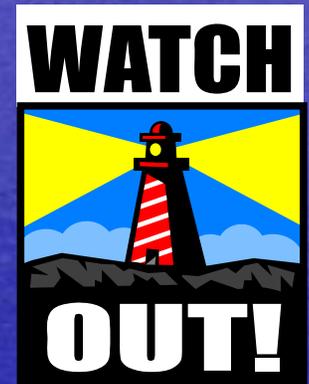
Anxiety

guilt



Is their ship on the rocks?

- How are they readjusting? (stability)
 - Are they employed? (purpose, structure)
 - What is the quality of their relationships? (connectedness, support, belonging)
 - Do they have medical issues?
 - Chronic pain (is it being managed)
 - TBI (has it been /assessed/diagnosed)
 - What are their plans for the future? (hope)
 - Are they eating and sleeping adequately?
 - Are they experiencing nightmares, an inability to relax, shaky or on edge?
 - These are all areas that can be touched on in conversation



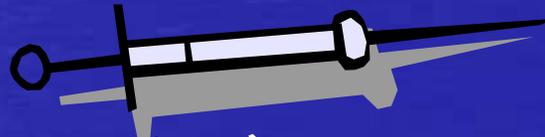
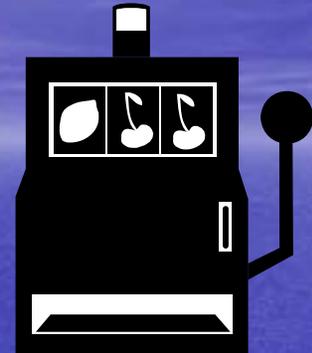
Coping Strategies

- How does an individual cope with stressors in life?
 - Productively remove, reduce or reframe the source of stress
 - Problem solving
 - proactive
 - Spirituality
 - Relational supports
 - Counseling
 - Exercise
 - Hobbies
 - Work



Coping strategies

- Maladaptive
 - Substance abuse
 - Alcohol, street and/or prescription drugs
 - smoking
 - Gambling
 - Distraction, Adrenaline rush
 - Thrill seeking
 - aggression
 - self-harm (i.e. cutting)



Be a Beacon of Hope

- Understand connection between despair (slow burn or rapid onset) and suicide
- Help veteran value their emotional/mental health as much as their physical health
- Encourage the development of healthy coping strategies rather than “quick fixes”
- Normalize the issues– the horror of war is not normal, but their reaction to it is normal.



Referral Sources

Suicide Prevention Hotline 1.800.273.8255

- Omaha Mental Health Clinic 402.995.4944
- Lincoln Mental Health Clinic 402.486.7823
- Grand Island Mental Health Clinic 308.382.3660 x92134
- Nurse triage line 866.687.7382
- Omaha Suicide Prevention Coordinator
 - Dave Tuttle
- Lincoln/Grand Island Suicide Prevention Coordinator
 - Colette Wheeler

