

Suicide Prevention Month: Looking Out for Each Other

By Denise Alford, NMRC Public Affairs Office

September is nationally recognized as Suicide Prevention month and the Navy's contribution to drawing attention to prevention is the "1 Small Act" campaign. 1 Small Act is a message Naval Medical Research Center's (NMRC) Suicide Prevention Coordinators, Lt. Kelly Nobles and Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Maria Potts-Szoke, take seriously.

"I've had many close friends go through rough times, and being there for them showed me that having someone listen to you is a bigger help than people think," said Potts-Szoke.

As coordinators, they are responsible for raising awareness among NMRC staff to ensure command members know where to go and/or where to refer someone if they need to talk.

According to Nobles, discussion about suicide prevention is important, even if it appears to be repetitive with the continuous use of phrases like 'don't be afraid to ask for help' or 'you never know what someone is going through.' These messages are found on websites, in informational pamphlets and repeated regularly by those in the mental health field because those small phrases have a tendency to positively influence help-seeking behavior.

"When looking at some of the reasons behind suicide, the truth in those phrases is clear; financial issues, problems at work, being away from loved ones and a negative self-image, are all issues that can cause someone to feel helpless and alone," said Nobles.

The Navy launched the "*Every Sailor, Every Day*," campaign to highlight the importance of reaching out to fellow Sailors. Being available and paying attention to co-workers are essential to suicide prevention.

"I think people are afraid to talk about how they're feeling and this causes frustrations and the feeling of helplessness. Talking to someone reminds people they're not alone," said Potts-Szoke.

According to a report from the Defense Suicide Prevention Office, 139 active-duty soldiers, 68 Sailors, 60 airmen and 58 Marines died by suicide in 2018.

"Being mindful about what signs to look for can help people recognize when they should step in. If it appears someone is acting differently, talk to them, ask them if everything is okay," Potts-Szoke said

"1 Small Act" encourages people experiencing tough times to ask for help and to make valuable differences in their lives.

Military Crisis Line 800-273-8255

Military One Source 800-342-9647

Veterans Crisis Line 1-800-273-TALK Press 1 or text 838255

<https://navstress.wordpress.com>