

NEVER LEAVE A MARINE BEHIND



Suicide Prevention Training for NCOs

INSTRUCTOR GUIDE

SEPTEMBER 2011

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the NCO Suicide Prevention Training Course

The overall objective of the course is to support NCOs in their efforts to promote resilience, encourage Marines to seek help early, and maintain an ongoing dialogue on suicide prevention.

Specific Objectives

- To foster resilience, emphasizing that all Marines need to be physically and psychologically fit, and to provide guidance on building and maintaining resilience;
- To ensure that NCOs understand their responsibility to look out for their Junior Marines and for each other, and to take action when a fellow Marine is in trouble;
- To ensure that NCOs understand the RACE method, which includes recognizing warning signs, asking Marines if they need help, caring enough to take action, and escorting Marines to the appropriate resources;
- To show that stress is normal and that asking for help is a sign of strength that will not automatically hurt one's career;
- To ensure that Marines know where to seek assistance and to help build trust in those resources, including the chain of command.

Course Time

Total time to deliver this course is approximately 2½ hours. This includes 45 minutes to view and discuss a drama that is designed to launch the course. Two dramas are provided. The Decker drama focuses on a Marine who is in a downward spiral after a difficult deployment. The Hendricks drama focuses on a Marine who is in distress and his NCO, who is hyper-vigilant after losing another Marine to suicide. Instructors should select one of these dramas.

Materials

- PowerPoint slide presentation (on data DVD) with documentary video
- Instructor guide
- Sign-in sheet*
- Resource list and RACE pocket guide**

*Instructor should prepare the sheet for keeping a record of attendance.

**To print, go to www.usmc-mccs.org/suicideprevent and print out enough resource lists and RACE pocket guides for all class participants.

Equipment/Classroom Setup

- The optimal class size is 20–50 Marines.
- All locations must have audiovisual equipment, including a projector that can be connected to a computer.
- If possible, darken the room for optimal viewing of the videos. Close all shades or blinds, and turn off the lights to view videos. Have lights up for guided discussion.
- Cell phones and all electronic devices should be turned off.
- Have the title slide on the screen as participants enter the room.
- A significant portion of this course consists of video segments that are integrated into the PowerPoint slide presentation, in the form of Windows Media Video (WMV) files. To provide the best viewing experience, consider the following tips.
 - Copy the contents of the course folder onto your computer's desktop. The entire course is contained in a single folder on the disk. To copy this folder onto your desktop, simply drag the icon from the disk onto your desktop. Depending upon the speed of your computer, this may take several minutes to half an hour. If copying the folder to your computer is not possible, the course can be operated directly from the disk, though this is not optimal.
 - Test the projection system before the training starts, allowing time for troubleshooting with an audio-visual technician.
 - Make sure your set-up includes speakers. Sound quality is critical to the success of the video segments. Test the speakers beforehand, making sure you can hear clearly from all parts of the room. Make sure the computer's master volume control is on maximum. For most computer operating systems, use the following directions:
 - » Right click on the volume icon in the task bar at the bottom of your screen. Click on Open Volume Control. Adjust Master Volume to the maximum level. Close window. Right click on the volume icon again and go to Adjust Audio Properties. Look for Speaker Volume and set to high, and click on Advanced to select the speaker configuration. Consult an audio-visual technician for additional guidance on volume and speaker configuration.
 - » The video segments are launched from the PowerPoint slides. Each segment is identified by a still frame on a slide. The video does not play until you click on the play button. When you click on the button, the video should play in full-screen mode. (After launching each video, move the cursor to a corner so that it is off-screen.)
 - » After the completion of the video, click anywhere on the slide *except* the still-frame image to advance to the next slide.

Training Methodology

- The course should be led by a trained sergeant instructor.
- Central to the course are videos of two types: a drama to launch the course and documentary video of Marines and family members who have experience with suicide or suicide attempts.
- The videos have been carefully compiled as launching points for a series of guided discussions on the NCO's role in suicide prevention.
- All participants are expected to engage in discussions.

Format of the Instructor Guide

- A sample script and talking points are provided for each slide. In this guide, the slide appears at the top left-hand page with the talking points below, except on discussion pages. The talking points are an at-a-glance summary of the script, which appears on the opposite page. Ample space is provided for you to write in the guide so that you can customize the talking points and script to your training style and to the needs of your unit.
- For slides with embedded video clips, the guide tells you when to play the videos and how you might introduce them and put them into context.
- Many of the documentary videos are designed to launch guided discussions. You should select one discussion for each of these segments.
- On the subsequent pages associated with each of those slides are two-page spreads for each discussion topic. A discussion prompt, which should be read aloud, is on the left-hand page of each discussion spread. The right-hand page provides discussion guidance. You should study this guidance before training but should not read it aloud during training.
- The following icons are used in this Guide:



NOTE



PERSONAL STORY



SCRIPT



TALKING POINTS



VIDEO



DISCUSSION

Instructor Preparation

- Prior to the training, watch the video segments and go through the slides. Select one of the two dramas. Familiarize yourself with the names of the Marines and family members who are prominently featured in the documentary videos. There is ample space for taking notes in this guide.
- Select ONE discussion question for each video segment based on concerns relevant to your unit. Familiarize yourself with the guidance provided for your selected question. This will help you facilitate discussion, keep it on track, and be prepared to correct misinformation that may arise.

- Stick to what you know. If you don't know an answer to a question, don't fake it. Offer to contact the Marine Corps Suicide Prevention Program office later to find out the answer.
- Avoid reading directly from the slides or script.
- Personalize the script. A sample is provided for your guidance, but tailor it to your teaching style and to your unit.

Facilitation Strategies

Your job as a facilitator of this training is to help Marines take ownership of suicide prevention through guided discussion. Your job is not to lecture, though there will be a few points in the training when you should make certain teaching points. Your job is to encourage group participation and steer the group in the right direction regarding enforcement of current Marine Corps and organizational policy. Training participants should leave feeling they have learned from each other and have acquired additional tools for leading Marines.

Some of the best things a facilitator can do:

- Explain the purpose and importance of the training.
- Speak in simple, direct language.
- Create an open and trusting atmosphere.
- Let participants know that everyone is expected to speak up.
- Treat all participants with respect.
- Listen to all comments, validate those that are good, correct misinformation, and keep the discussion on track.
- Probe for comments from those who aren't speaking up.
- Maintain a high energy level.
- Remain flexible.

Some of the worst things a facilitator can do:

- Let discussions ramble without proper closure.
- Talk too much.
- Leave misinformation uncorrected.
- Be insensitive to differences of opinion that are based on culture or religion.
- Allow one or more people to dominate the conversation.
- Lose sight of the objectives or control of the discussion.

Note to the instructor: This course is designed as annual training. Each video segment offers discussion options. Questions not used in initial training can be used for training in subsequent years.

Course Agenda

Segment 1 | Leadership Message and Drama (Slides 1–4)

This short video depicts a Marine struggling to deal with mounting stress and how his NCO responds. (There are two dramas provided; select one.)

Segment 2 | Why Are We Here? (Slides 5–8)

This introduction stresses the importance of this training and offers some basic information about recent suicides in the Marine Corps.

Break (10 minutes)

Segment 3 | Focused and Engaged Leadership (Slides 9–10)

Documentary video focuses on leaders who are practicing a focused and engaged style of leadership and how connection to one's leaders and peers contributes to increased resilience.

Segment 4 | The RACE Method (Slides 11–16)

This segment focuses on the events that led Cpl Daniel O'Brien to end his life as well as the impact of his death on others. Discussion will focus on how resilience failed in this case. We will also look at what could have been done to prevent his suicide, using the RACE method of suicide intervention. This segment also explores the role of alcohol in several suicides or suicide attempts.

Break (10 minutes)

Segment 5 | Honor, Courage, and Commitment (Slides 17–18)

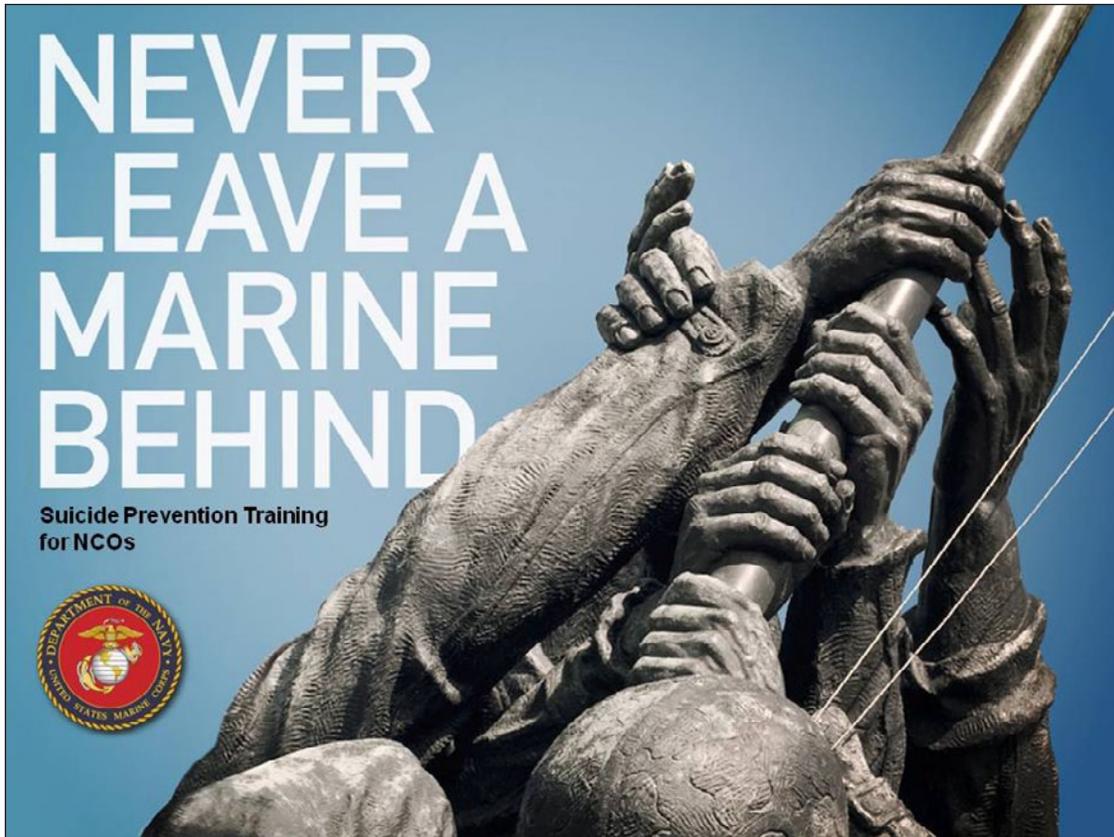
This segment features a case study of Navy Cross recipient Jeremiah Workman, demonstrating that even the toughest Marines can lose resilience when faced with multiple stressors at once. Discussion will focus on the factors that put Workman at risk.

Segment 6 | The Resilient Marine (Slides 19–20)

This video segment features advice from NCOs and other leaders on building and maintaining resilience. We will address the importance of being able to learn and grow in the face of adversity.

Segment 7 | Suicide Prevention Is Every Marine's Responsibility (Slides 21–23)

This segment recaps what we have learned and will motivate NCOs to be actively engaged in preventing suicides.



TALKING POINTS:

- ✓ Take your seats.
 - ✓ Turn off your cell phones.
-

Slide 1 | Never Leave a Marine Behind



NOTE: Have this slide on the screen 15 minutes before the start of the course.



SCRIPT:

- Leaders, take your seats.
- **Turn off your cell phones** and BlackBerries.

CMC/SMMC Message



2



TALKING POINTS:

Play video.

After video:

- ✓ Welcome. Introduce yourself.
 - ✓ We're still losing Marines to Suicide.
 - ✓ The training could affect you and your Marines.
 - ✓ We will watch more videos.
 - ✓ And we will have guided discussions.
 - ✓ You are expected to participate.
-

Slide 2 | CMC/SMMC Message



Play video.

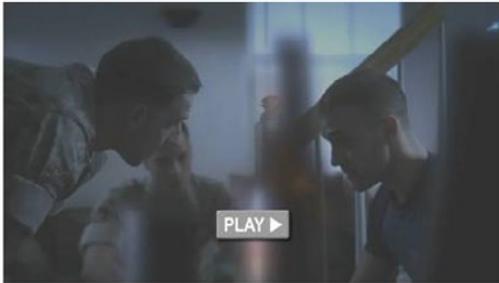


SCRIPT:

- **Welcome** to Marine Corps Suicide Prevention Training.
- I'm Sgt Xxxxxxxx.
- We're here because we're still **losing Marines** to suicide.
- The Commandant and Sergeant Major are telling us to **step up our efforts**.
- We shouldn't lose a single Marine to suicide.
- This training today could affect you and your Marines.
- We will watch more videos.
- This training will be **interactive**, with several **guided discussions**.
- You are all **expected to participate** in discussions.
- We can all **learn from each other**.

Play video without further introduction. Introduction will follow the video.

Never Leave a Marine Behind



3



TALKING POINTS:

Play video.

After video:

- ✓ The movie is realistic. The NCO made some mistakes.
 - ✓ You are responsible for your Marines on the battlefield, in garrison, and at home.
-

Slide 3 | Never Leave a Marine Behind



NOTE: Two dramas are provided. The Decker drama focuses on a Marine who is in a downward spiral after a difficult deployment. The Hendricks drama focuses on a Marine in distress and his NCO, who is hyper-vigilant after losing another Marine to suicide. Instructors should select one of these dramas. The script below and the discussion guidance on the following pages will work with either drama.



Play video.



SCRIPT:

- Let's talk about what we just saw. This movie is a **realistic** depiction of an NCO's handling of a Marine in distress.
- What you saw, though, is not the only way to help a Marine.
- Our **job as leaders is to know when to step in and take action.**
- Some leaders are so consumed with their own stress, at work and at home, that they **miss the warning signs.**
- **Others may be hyper-aware** of every minor detail of their Marines' lives.
- Some leaders struggle with finding a **balance between the professional and personal.**

If you choose the Decker drama and are asked about the gun, be familiar with this guidance.

If you know there is a weapon on the premises, notify your chain of command. They will make a decision about removing the weapon.

If a Marine has a loaded gun and it is in play, contact the MPs or police immediately. Don't put yourself in danger.

Never Leave a Marine Behind



Discussion



4

? DISCUSSION

Read the following discussion prompt:

What were some of the issues that contributed to the lance corporal's stress? What is your opinion of how the sergeant responded to the lance corporal's growing list of warning signs? Is there anything you would have done differently? How can NCOs develop a more personal relationship with their Marines while maintaining a professional relationship?

Slide 4 | Never Leave a Marine Behind



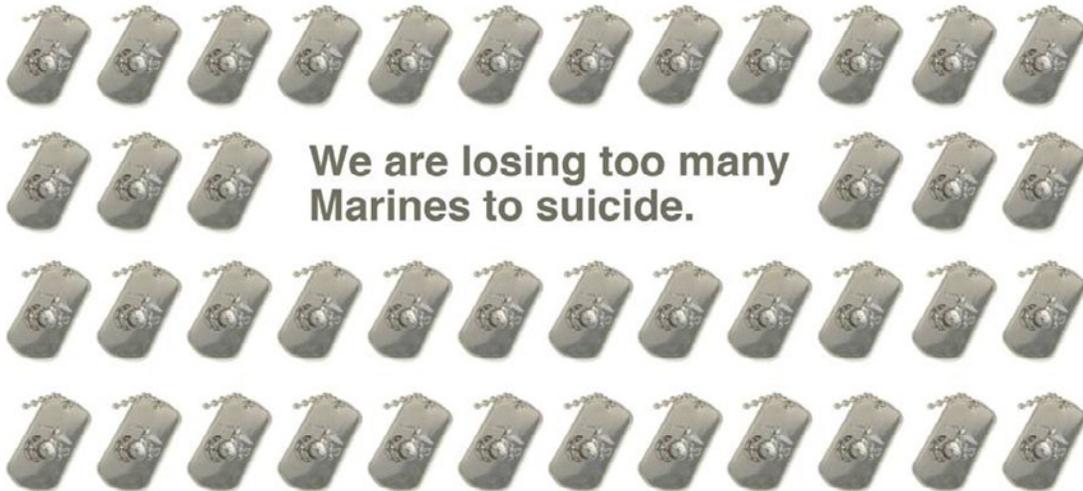
NOTE: The information below is provided so that you, as a discussion leader, can steer the discussion in a direction that is consistent with Marine Corps guidance. You should be familiar with these talking points but should not read them during discussions. There are multiple right answers, and the leaders in your class may have some good ideas that are not addressed below. Use your judgment about which of those ideas you endorse.



DISCUSSION GUIDANCE

- Relationship problems were an obvious sign of stress; that's a very common risk factor.
- The lance corporal's appearance had deteriorated.
- He appeared to be tired all the time.
- The previously squared-away Marine was showing up late.
- Adding to the stress, he was now worried about his career.
- He was abusing alcohol.
- Life experience, including stress, contributes to resilience.
- Some young Marines may lack that life experience and therefore lack resilience.
- Their leaders can help them gain perspective.
- Talking to your Marines about their personal lives is part of your job as a leader—especially if you suspect something is wrong.
- You can do this by checking on them at work, or by taking them out for coffee.
- Unit-wide social events are another good way to get to know your Marines.
- Be careful of showing favoritism or of inappropriate fraternization.

Why Are We Here?



TALKING POINTS:

- ✓ Too many Marines are dying.
- ✓ Most suicides are preventable.

Slide 5 | Why Are We Here



SCRIPT:

- **Too many Marines** are taking their own lives.
- ___ Marines killed themselves in ____.*
- **Most** of these suicides are **preventable**.

*Make sure you are using the latest statistics on suicide. Go to www.usmc-mccs.org/suicideprevent/stats_faqs.cfm and look for the numbers for the most recent year.

Why Are We Here?



Even one is too many.



6



TALKING POINTS:

- ✓ One is too many.
- ✓ We all have a role to play in prevention.
- ✓ We have to look out for our Marines.
- ✓ And we have to help establish a climate of trust.

Slide 6 | Why Are We Here



SCRIPT:

- Even **one is too many**.
- As leaders of Marines, **we have a role** to play in reducing this number.
- We have to get to **know our Marines** and **look out for them**.
- We also have to **establish a climate of trust** so that Marines will feel comfortable asking for and getting help.

Overall Objective



The overall objective of the course is to support NCOs in their efforts to promote resilience, encourage Marines to seek help early, and maintain an ongoing dialogue on suicide prevention.



7



TALKING POINTS:

- ✓ Resilience, early intervention, and suicide awareness are objectives.
- ✓ These are all part of Saving Marines' Lives.
- ✓ We will watch short videos.
- ✓ These feature real Marines and their families.
- ✓ We will talk about what NCOs can and should do.
- ✓ We will take a 10-minute break.

Slide 7 | Overall Objective



SCRIPT:

- **Resilience, early intervention, and suicide awareness.** These are **part of our overall objective.**
- All of these things are geared toward **one ultimate goal: Saving Marines' Lives.**
- The other videos we watch today will feature **real Marines** and **their families** talking about their experiences with suicide.
- We can learn from their experiences.
- We will talk about **our role as NCOs** in suicide prevention.
- Right now, we're going to take a break. Be back in 10 minutes.

Give the group a specific time to return from break.

Resilience is the Key

Resilience is the ability to recover, or bounce back, from stress or adversity, to maintain a hopeful outlook in the face of extreme circumstances, and to view challenges as opportunities to grow and learn.



6



TALKING POINTS:

- ✓ We hear a lot about resilience.
- ✓ It's a factor in preventing suicides.
- ✓ Here is one definition.
- ✓ Being a Marine is stressful.
- ✓ Resilience is about handling stress in a positive way.
- ✓ We'll talk about how to build and maintain resilience.

Slide 8 | Resilience Is the Key



SCRIPT:

- Our Marine leadership talks a lot about **the importance of resilience**.
- That's because we know that it's **a factor in managing stress**.
- It's a factor in keeping Marines healthy.
- And ultimately, it's a factor in preventing suicides.
- Here is one definition of resilience.
- Resilience **doesn't mean an absence of stress** or extreme circumstances.
- Marines are always going to face stress.
- Resilience is about **handling stress in a positive way**.
- There's an old saying: What doesn't kill us makes us stronger.
- Does stress overwhelm you, or do you know that you can overcome it?
- Throughout this training, we'll talk about **factors that help us build and maintain resilience**, including **how we can help each other** be more resilient.

Focused and Engaged Leadership



9



TALKING POINTS:

- ✓ We must know our Marines.
 - ✓ We have to know them as Marines and as people.
-

Play video.

After video.

- ✓ Being involved means showing our Marines we care.
 - ✓ This builds morale and resilience.
 - ✓ Marines who feel connected generally handle stress better.
 - ✓ Caring also builds trust.
 - ✓ When Marines trust us, they will be more receptive to help. When Marines trust us, they will ask for help.
-

Slide 9 | Focused and Engaged Leadership



SCRIPT:

- One of our leadership principles is: “**Know your Marines** and look out for their welfare.”
- This doesn’t just mean that we know them as Marines.
- We have to **know them as people**.
- And we have to **let them know us**.



Play video.



SCRIPT:

- **Being involved** with our Marines—all of our Marines—shows them we care.
- This helps **build individual and unit morale**.
- Morale is important to **mission success**.
- It also helps build resilience.
- Marines who **feel connected** to their peers and to their leaders generally handle stress better.
- Being involved with our Marines also helps **build trust**.
- When our Marines trust us, they are more likely to let us know when they are feeling overwhelmed.



DISCUSSION OPTIONS

Choose **one** discussion from the options below and read it to the group.

1. To play an active role in suicide prevention—and to ensure the well-being and effectiveness of our units—we, as NCOs, have a need to know. What are specific things that we can do to build trust so that our Marines will tell us when stress is getting to them and they need to get help?
2. NCOs sometimes need help coping with stressful situations. Is it effective and/or appropriate for us to speak openly with our Junior Marines about our own struggles? Should leaders speak openly about seeking counseling?
3. How do we maintain a professional relationship with our Marines while also developing a more personal relationship?

Instructions:

The discussion should be selected in advance so the facilitator can be prepared to lead a positive and productive discussion. The following pages provide guidelines for each discussion. Please study the guidelines for the selected discussion. Allow 10–12 minutes for discussion.

Focused and Engaged Leadership



Discussion



10

? DISCUSSION OPTION 1

Read the following discussion prompt:

To play an active role in suicide prevention—and to ensure the well-being and effectiveness of our units—we, as NCOs, have a need to know. What are specific things that we can do to build trust so that our Marines will tell us when stress is getting to them and they need to get help?

Slide 10 | Focused and Engaged Leadership



NOTE: The information below is provided so that you, as a discussion leader, can steer the discussion in a direction that is consistent with Marine Corps guidance. You should be familiar with these talking points but should not read them during discussions. There are multiple right answers, and the leaders in your class may have some good ideas that are not addressed below. Use your judgment about which of those ideas you endorse.

? **DISCUSSION** GUIDANCE

Effective leaders:

- Ensure a supportive environment in their units.
- Speak openly about behavioral health services and encourage at-risk Marines to seek help.
- Publicly state that getting help is a sign of strength.
- Publicize a zero-tolerance policy for hazing of those who are struggling with or seeking help for stress.
- Make sure Marines are properly trained to recognize risk factors and warning signs as well as how to properly intervene.
- Encourage Marines to report another Marine's distress.
- Follow up with Marines after medical or behavioral health appointments; ask them how they are doing.
- Handle discipline fairly and consistently, acknowledging that good Marines sometimes make mistakes but that they can get past them.

Effective leaders do not:

- Try to "fix" Marines on their own, but refer Marines to professionals when stress becomes overwhelming.
- Refrain from disciplining Marines when necessary, or dwell on a Marine's mistakes unless there is a pattern of negative behavior.
- Compromise good order and discipline.
- Assume a Marine who seeks help is malingering.

Focused and Engaged Leadership



Discussion



10

? DISCUSSION OPTION 2

Read the following discussion prompt:

NCOs sometimes need help coping with stressful situations. Is it effective and/or appropriate for us to speak openly with our Junior Marines about our own struggles? Should leaders speak openly about seeking counseling?

Slide 10 | Focused and Engaged Leadership



NOTE: The information below is provided so that you, as a discussion leader, can steer the discussion in a direction that is consistent with Marine Corps guidance. You should be familiar with these talking points but should not read them during discussions. There are multiple right answers, and the leaders in your class may have some good ideas that are not addressed below. Use your judgment about which of those ideas you endorse.

? DISCUSSION GUIDANCE

Effective leaders:

- Recognize that leaders who talk openly about seeking help in dealing with their stress inspire other Marines to seek help when necessary.
- Acknowledge that all Marines, including leaders, are at risk for stress-induced injuries.
- Seek help when stress becomes overwhelming because talking about one's struggles can contribute to resilience and may make someone a better Marine and leader of Marines.
- Recognize that stress-induced injuries almost always heal when dealt with swiftly.
- Seek help as soon as possible during high-stress situations, such as combat operations, particularly if they are concerned that their struggles will affect their ability to lead.
- Remember that adverse reactions such as survivor's guilt or traumatic stress injury may occur during times of high stress. With proper treatment, such issues should have little or no impact on a Marine's career.
- Speak openly with Marines about experiences with high-stress situations and how they overcame stress-induced injuries.
- Speak positively and openly about mental health services.

Effective leaders do not:

- Refuse to get help when they need it.
- Judge other Marines who at times struggle with adverse reactions to stress.
- Consider themselves weak if they need to seek mental health services.
- Self-medicate to overcome difficulties.

Focused and Engaged Leadership



Discussion



10

? DISCUSSION OPTION 3

Read the following discussion prompt:

How do we maintain a professional relationship with our Marines while also developing a more personal relationship?

Slide 10 | Focused and Engaged Leadership



NOTE: The information below is provided so that you, as a discussion leader, can steer the discussion in a direction that is consistent with Marine Corps guidance. You should be familiar with these talking points but should not read them during discussions. There are multiple right answers, and the leaders in your class may have some good ideas that are not addressed below. Use your judgment about which of those ideas you endorse.

? **DISCUSSION** GUIDANCE

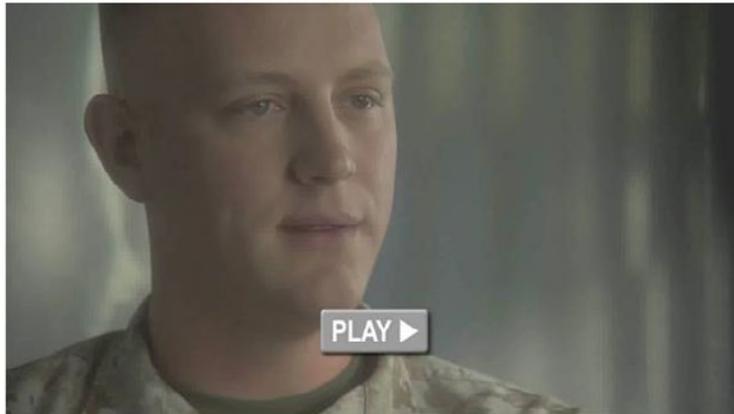
Effective leaders:

- Treat all Marines fairly and equally.
- Engage with all of our Marines on a daily basis.
- Show Marines we care by asking about their personal lives.
- Provide information on resources for family, financial, behavioral, or other counseling.
- Continue to hold all Marines to a high standard and maintain good order and discipline in our units.
- Respect Marines' privacy and do not share their personal struggles with those who do not have a need to know.
- Share personal experiences; don't just ask questions.

Effective leaders do not:

- Go too easy on our Marines.
- Neglect our Marines.
- Ignore fraternization policies.

When Resilience Is Tested



11



TALKING POINTS:

- ✓ Sometimes stresses build up.
- ✓ This can test resilience.

Play video.

After video.

- ✓ Cpl Daniel O'Brien faced multiple stressors.
- ✓ Most suicides are preventable.
- ✓ But sometimes Marines lose hope.
- ✓ We must help Marines understand they can make mistakes and get past them.
- ✓ They can ask for help and still get promoted.

Slide 11 | When Resilience Is Tested



SCRIPT:

- When **multiple things go wrong**, an otherwise squared-away Marine **can lose hope**.
- This may test that Marine's resilience, and the Marine may become suicidal.



Play video.



SCRIPT:

- The death of Cpl Daniel O'Brien is an example of what can happen when a Marine is faced with multiple stressors.
- We all have stress.



PERSONAL STORY



SCRIPT:

- There is **almost never just one cause** of suicide.
- And **hope is an important factor in maintaining resilience**.
- It's important that we make sure that all Marines understand that there is hope.
- Just because a Marine gets in **trouble does not mean his or her career is over**.
- And **getting help is not an automatic career-ender**, either, especially if you **get help early**, before problems are overwhelming.
- And **nothing is worth ending your life over**.
- **Most suicides are preventable**.
- We can **learn from Cpl Daniel O'Brien's story** and prevent other Marines from taking their lives.



DISCUSSION GUIDANCE

- Invite class participants to share their personal stories.

Your personal story should be about a stressful situation (losing a buddy in combat, being dumped, concerns about money, about being non-rec'd) **and how you felt and how you handled it**. Be candid about talking to the chaplain or a counselor if you did that. By telling a real story about yourself, you are letting the Marines in the training know you. You are demonstrating what you are teaching: that we need to let Marines know us so that they know it's OK to talk to us.

The RACE Method



RECOGNIZE

ASK

CARE

ESCORT



12



TALKING POINTS:

- ✓ RACE stands for Recognize, Ask, Care, and Escort.
- ✓ Recognize risk factors and warning signs.
- ✓ Ask tough questions.
- ✓ Care for Marines.
- ✓ Escort them to a professional.

Slide 12 | The RACE Method



SCRIPT:

- The **RACE method is effective in preventing suicide**, and in a minute we'll examine Cpl O'Brien's story in the context of RACE.
- It's easy to remember.
- RACE stands for **Recognize, Ask, Care, and Escort**.
- "Recognize" specifically is about knowing **risk factors and warning signs**.
- "Ask" is about **asking tough questions, including "Are you thinking about killing yourself?"**
- "Care" is about **how to reassure a Marine** who is considering suicide.
- "Escort" is about knowing **where to take a Marine** who is contemplating suicide.
- I will hand out RACE pocket guides at the end of class. These have phone numbers for resources and a website for more information.



NOTE: Instructors should download the RACE pocket guide from www.usmc-mccs.org/suicideprevent. The pocket guide has a place for local phone numbers, and the instructor should fill in the numbers for his or her unit and then print enough copies to distribute to the class. The pocket guide prints five per page.

The RACE Method



13



TALKING POINTS:

-
- ✓ In this video, we will look at Cpl O'Brien's story using RACE.
-

Play video.

After video:

- ✓ Cpl O'Brien's friends, family, and leaders recognized that he was having problems.
 - ✓ But they didn't put all the pieces together.
 - ✓ It's important not to cast blame.
 - ✓ He did not tell them everything.
 - ✓ And they didn't ask: "Are you thinking of killing yourself?"
 - ✓ It's a very difficult question to ask.
 - ✓ But it's important.
 - ✓ Sometimes the warning signs are subtle.
-

Slide 13 | The RACE Method



SCRIPT:

- In this video, we will take a **closer look at Cpl O'Brien's story**.
- We will examine the **factors that put him at risk** as well as the **warning signs that he was not coping** with stress.
- And we will consider **actions that might have saved him**.



Play video.



SCRIPT:

- **Relationship problems** and **administrative actions** such as non-judicial punishment or loss of rank are **two of the most common factors** in Marine suicides in recent years.
- Cpl O'Brien's friends, family, and leaders recognized that he was having difficulties with these two issues, but they didn't realize until it was too late how much those problems were affecting him.
- It's **important not to cast blame** after a suicide.
- Cpl O'Brien's friends, family, and leaders were there for him.
- No one asked: **"Are you thinking of killing yourself?"**
- Because they were close to him, they didn't think they had to ask.
- They thought he was being open with them.
- **It's a very difficult question to ask, but it's important.**
- If you ask and the answer is "no," think about whether you believe that answer. Ask again.
- If you are at the point where you have to ask the question, chances are the person is in serious distress.
- **Trust your instincts and be alert for any signs of distress.**
- Sometimes the warning signs are subtle.



DISCUSSION OPTIONS

Choose **one** discussion from the options below and read it to the group.

1. What are some specific things we can do to show a Marine who is in distress that we care? How can we reassure them that there is hope?
2. What may look like high standards, which are valued in the Marine Corps, may be rigid and inflexible behavior. This can put someone at risk. What are some things we can look for in Marines that suggest they may not adapt well to difficult situations? Think about some clues in Cpl O'Brien's case.

Instructions:

The discussion should be selected in advance so the facilitator can be prepared to lead a positive and productive discussion. The following pages provide guidelines for each discussion. Please study the guidelines for the selected discussion. Allow 10–12 minutes for discussion.

The RACE Method



Discussion



14

? DISCUSSION OPTION 1

Read the following discussion prompt:

What are some specific things we can do to show a Marine who is in distress that we care? How can we reassure them that there is hope?

Slide 14 | The RACE Method



NOTE: The information below is provided so that you, as a discussion leader, can steer the discussion in a direction that is consistent with Marine Corps guidance. You should be familiar with these talking points but should not read them during discussions. There are multiple right answers, and the leaders in your class may have some good ideas that are not addressed below. Use your judgment about which of those ideas you endorse.

? DISCUSSION GUIDANCE

Effective leaders:

- Acknowledge that life is stressful.
- Speak of challenges and obstacles as opportunities to grow and learn.
- Encourage the Marine to talk.
- Reassure the Marine that there is hope.
- Display optimism in the face of challenges.
- Help the Marine look at the big picture.
- Help the Marine to see beyond this moment.
- Reassure the Marine that getting help won't hurt his/her career.
- Reassure the Marine that the Marine Corps takes care of its own.
- Share our own experience in a similar situation and reassure the Marine that they can get past it.
- Talk to the Marine about resources that are available and ask who he/she would like to talk to.
- Assure the Marine that we will stick with him/her.
- Remind the Marine that we and many other people care for him/her.
- Notify the chain of command if there is knowledge that an at-risk Marine possesses firearms or other weapons.

Effective leaders do not:

- Leave a distressed Marine alone.
- Minimize how the Marine is feeling or suggest that he/she suck it up when there is evidence of a serious problem and not just malingering.
- Allow others to belittle a Marine who is in distress.
- Judge Marines who sometimes have trouble coping with stress.
- Assume this is someone else's problem.

The RACE Method



Discussion



14

? DISCUSSION OPTION 2

Read the following discussion prompt:

What may look like high standards, which are valued in the Marine Corps, may be rigid and inflexible behavior, which can put someone at risk. What are some things we can look for in Marines that suggest they may not adapt well to difficult situations? Think about some clues in Cpl O'Brien's case.

Slide 14 | The RACE Method



NOTE: The information below is provided so that you, as a discussion leader, can steer the discussion in a direction that is consistent with Marine Corps guidance. You should be familiar with these talking points but should not read them during discussions. There are multiple right answers, and the leaders in your class may have some good ideas that are not addressed below. Use your judgment about which of those ideas you should endorse.



DISCUSSION GUIDANCE

- Marines who are excessively organized or easily upset if anything is out of place may have trouble with inflexibility.
- Watch out for Marines who are particularly hard on themselves over minor setbacks. (O'Brien was hard on himself in softball games.)
- Be conscious of the tendency for a Marine to overreact or to be easily angered or upset.
- Watch out for a Marine who spends a lot of time "in his own head," perhaps obsessing over a negative circumstance such as a failed relationship.
- A Marine's excessive nervousness or constant worrying may be a warning sign.

Recognizing Alcohol Abuse



15



TALKING POINTS:

- ✓ Pay attention to alcohol abuse.
 - ✓ Marines work hard and we play hard.
 - ✓ But alcohol is a problem when it's used to mask pain.
 - ✓ It's a factor in many suicides.
-

Play video.

- ✓ What are some signs that a Marine may be abusing alcohol or other substances?
 - ✓ Frequent hangovers are a clue.
 - ✓ Is work performance slipping?
 - ✓ Is the Marine drinking more or drinking alone?
-

Slide 15 | Recognizing Alcohol Abuse



SCRIPT:

- We also need to **pay close attention to alcohol abuse.**
- Marines like to have fun, and alcohol is often part of that fun.
- We work hard, and we play hard.
- And alcohol is often part of unwinding after a rough day or week.
- But alcohol can become **a problem when it's used to mask pain.**
- And it's **a factor in a lot of suicides and suicide attempts.**



Play video.

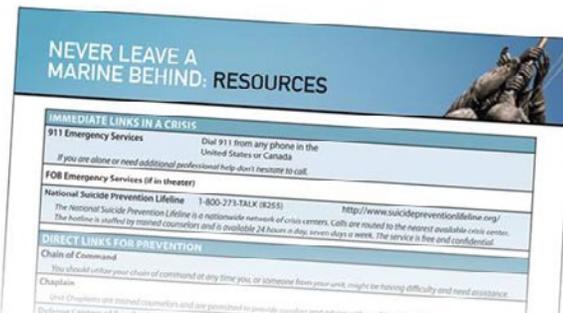


SCRIPT:

- What are some **signs that a Marine may be abusing alcohol** or other substances?
- If a Marine is **showing up for work hungover** or smelling of alcohol, ask what's going on.
- Is **work performance starting to slip?**
- Has alcohol **use increased?**
- Do you know Marines who **drink until they are drunk?**
- Do they **drink alone?**
- Are they **underage and drinking?**
- Have they made **bad decisions while under the influence**, such as driving while intoxicated or getting into fights?
- These are all signs that there may be a problem.
- If a Marine in distress has had too much to drink, **don't let him/her go home alone.**
- **Suicides too often happen when Marines are drunk and alone.**

Resources

- Chain of command
- Chaplain
- Medical



[www.usmc-mccs.org/suicideprevent/ncotrng/
USMC_SP_ResourcesList.pdf](http://www.usmc-mccs.org/suicideprevent/ncotrng/USMC_SP_ResourcesList.pdf)



16



TALKING POINTS:

- ✓ Where can Marines go if they are in distress?
- ✓ The chaplain, medical, or the chain of command are the best resources.
- ✓ Seeking help is a sign of strength.
- ✓ Call 911 if a Marine is talking about immediately ending his/her life.
- ✓ The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a 24/7 emergency resource.
- ✓ Never leave a distressed Marine alone.
- ✓ We will have a 10-minute break.

Slide 16 | Resources

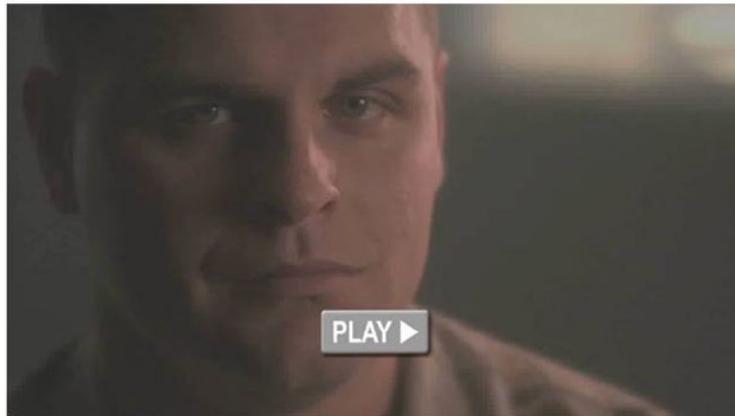


SCRIPT:

- Let's talk more about **where Marines can go** if they are in distress.
- If you ask a Marine if he or she is considering suicide and the answer is yes, what is the next step?
- Where would you escort that Marine?
- Consider the **chaplain, medical, or the chain of command** as the best resources in almost all circumstances.
- They will know about additional resources.
- **Ask Marines in distress where they want to go.**
- **Chaplains offer confidentiality.**
- Reassure Marines that **seeking help is a sign of strength.**
- If a Marine is in **extreme distress and is talking about immediately ending his/her life, call 911.**
- Another emergency resource is the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, which offers 24/7 assistance.** The number for the Lifeline is on the RACE pocket guide I will hand out at the end of the course.
- **Never leave a Marine in distress alone.**
- Don't *send* a Marine to someone for help; **escort them.**
- Right now, we're going to take a break. Be back in 10 minutes.

Give the group a specific time to return from break.

Honor, Courage, and Commitment



17



TALKING POINTS:

- ✓ This video shows us that anyone can become overwhelmed by stress.
-

Play video.

- ✓ Jeremiah Workman wasn't someone you would expect to attempt suicide.
 - ✓ He did, he got help, and he moved on.
 - ✓ He isn't afraid to talk about needing help and getting help.
-

Slide 17 | Honor, Courage, and Commitment



SCRIPT:

- This video shows us that **even the most squared-away Marines** can sometimes become so **overwhelmed** with stress that they contemplate or attempt suicide.



Play video.



SCRIPT:

- Jeremiah Workman **embodied our core values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment** when he led his Marines into that house in Fallujah.
- He probably is **not someone you would think would attempt suicide**.
- But **he did**, and **he realized that he needed help and he got it and moved on**.
- He also realized that it's OK to talk about it.
- It's not just OK; it can be a matter of life and death.

Honor, Courage, and Commitment



Discussion



16

? DISCUSSION

Read the following discussion prompt:

Think back to what we learned about recognizing risk factors and warning signs. What circumstances put Jeremiah Workman at risk for suicide?

Slide 18 | Honor, Courage, and Commitment



NOTE: The information below is provided so that you, as a discussion leader, can steer the discussion in a direction that is consistent with Marine Corps guidance. You should be familiar with these talking points but should not read them during discussions. There are multiple right answers, and the leaders in your class may have some good ideas that are not addressed below. Use your judgment about which of those ideas you endorse.



DISCUSSION GUIDANCE

- It's never just one thing.
- He had PTSD from watching his fellow Marines die in Fallujah.
- He had survivor's guilt because his friends died and he was left behind.
- He was having trouble in his marriage.
- He was not getting adequate sleep because of nightmares.
- Taking care of yourself physically, including getting enough sleep, eating right, and exercising, are important for maintaining resilience.
- He was drinking to mask his emotional pain.
- He got in trouble at Parris Island and was assigned to maintenance duty.
- He was ashamed of what he had become.

The Resilient Marine



19



TALKING POINTS:

- ✓ Being a Marine is stressful.
- ✓ Some Marines handle stress better than others.
- ✓ The ability to recover easily from stress is resilience.
- ✓ All Marines need resilience, but not everyone has it.
- ✓ Everyone *can* develop it.
- ✓ There are ways to be more resilient.

Play Video.

Slide 19 | The Resilient Marine



SCRIPT:

- **Being a Marine is stressful.**
- Some Marines handle stress better than others.
- **Resilience is something that all Marines need.**
- Not everyone has it, but **everyone can develop it.**
- Young Marines may not have enough life experience to have developed resilience.
- Let's look at some ways to be more resilient.



Play video.



DISCUSSION OPTIONS

Choose **one** discussion from the options below and read it to the group.

1. Being a Marine is inherently stressful, and the challenges of the 21st century have increased the burden on our force. As leaders, it is our job to help our Marines maintain the resilience required to cope with life as a Marine. Resilience seems to come naturally for some people, but not for others. What can we do to help our Marines develop resilience?
2. Learning from life's challenges is an essential component of resilience. How can leaders help Marines view challenges as opportunities to grow and learn?

Instructions:

The discussion should be selected in advance so the facilitator can be prepared to lead a positive and productive discussion. The following pages provide guidelines for each discussion. Please study the guidelines for the selected discussion. Allow 10–12 minutes for discussion.

The Resilient Marine



Discussion



20

? DISCUSSION OPTION 1

Read the following discussion prompt:

Being a Marine is inherently stressful, and the challenges of the 21st century have increased the burden on our force. As leaders, it is our job to help our Marines maintain the resilience required to cope with life as a Marine. Resilience seems to come naturally for some people, but not for others. What can we do to help our Marines develop resilience?

Slide 20 | The Resilient Marine



NOTE: The information below is provided so that you, as a discussion leader, can steer the discussion in a direction that is consistent with Marine Corps guidance. You should be familiar with these talking points but should not read them during discussions. There are multiple right answers, and the leaders in your class may have some good ideas that are not addressed below. Use your judgment about which of those ideas you endorse.



DISCUSSION GUIDANCE

Effective leaders:

- Acknowledge that being a Marine is stressful.
- Understand that upbringing, culture, religion, and other factors have an impact on a person's resilience.
- Understand that coping with stress builds resilience.
- Believe that resilience is a quality that can be developed.
- Talk to their Marines about facing challenges and learning from them.
- Speak of challenges and obstacles as opportunities for growth.
- Display optimism in the face of challenges.
- Give Marines responsibilities.
- Acknowledge that a situation may be bad, but offer hope of getting past it.
- Put Marines through progressively more challenging circumstances or exercises.
- Acknowledge that multiple stressors such as loss of a fellow Marine or a family member can wear down resilience.
- Acknowledge that multiple losses may make Marines reluctant to establish bonds with others and that increased isolation puts Marines at risk.
- Encourage team-building activities in units so Marines feel connected to each other.
- Help Marines learn to set clear goals.
- Praise Marines for success in achieving those goals.

Effective leaders do not:

- Focus on the negative.
- Try to force their personal belief system on their Marines.
- Assume that Marines who struggle with stress are weak.
- Complain about duties or otherwise focus on the negative.
- Pretend that being a Marine isn't stressful.
- Isolate troubled Marines, because it increases the feeling of not belonging.

The Resilient Marine



Discussion



20

? DISCUSSION OPTION 2

Read the following discussion prompt:

Learning from life's challenges is an essential component of resilience. How can leaders help Marines view challenges as opportunities to grow and learn?

Slide 20 | The Resilient Marine



NOTE: The information below is provided so that you, as a discussion leader, can steer the discussion in a direction that is consistent with Marine Corps guidance. You should be familiar with these talking points but should not read them during discussions. There are multiple right answers, and the leaders in your class may have some good ideas that are not addressed below. Use your judgment about which of those ideas you endorse.



DISCUSSION GUIDANCE

Effective leaders:

- Talk about our own experiences with stressful events and how we got past them.
- Allow Marines to express their emotions.
- Encourage Marines to talk about what they have learned from previous stressful experiences.
- Reinforce the concept that looking out for each other does not just apply to combat.
- Understand that being connected to other people—part of a team—is a factor in resilience.
- Are available and approachable during downtime, and are willing to share our thoughts on how to overcome adversity.
- Prepare Marines ahead of time for hardships.

Effective leaders do not:

- Suggest that Marines should suck it up when there is evidence of a serious problem and not just malingering.
- Allow Marines to dwell on negative experiences for an extended period of time.
- Assume that Marines who struggle with stress are weak.

Suicide Prevention Is Every Marine's Responsibility



21



TALKING POINTS:

- ✓ We all have a role to play.
 - ✓ Junior Marines, Staff NCOs, and Officers are also getting suicide prevention training.
 - ✓ We are all Marines and we look out for each.
-

Play video.

- ✓ We can win this fight.
-

Slide 21 | Suicide Prevention Is Every Marine's Responsibility



SCRIPT:

- **We all have a role** to play.
- Junior Marines, Staff NCOs, and Officers are also getting suicide prevention training.
- **We are all Marines and we look out for each other.**



Play video.



SCRIPT:

- We are all in this fight together, and **we can win it.**
- That's what Marines do.
- Get out there and be leaders of Marines.

What We Have Learned



- Resilience is the key, and we must provide guidance on building and maintaining resilience.
- NCOs have the responsibility to be focused and engaged leaders, to look out for their fellow Marines, and to take action when any Marine is in trouble.
- We must recognize risk factors and warning signs that a Marine is in distress; must ask if that Marine is thinking of killing himself/herself; must care for that Marine; and must escort that Marine to the appropriate resource.
- Stress is normal and asking for help is a sign of strength that will not automatically hurt one's career.



22



TALKING POINTS:

- ✓ We must understand the RACE method of intervention: Recognize, Ask, Care, and Escort.
- ✓ We have to make sure Marines get help when they need it.
- ✓ We have to learn how to have a personal as well as a professional relationship with our Marines, but also know where the boundaries are.
- ✓ We have to help our Marines be more resilient.

Slide 22 | What We Have Learned



SCRIPT:

- Here is a **recap of the objectives** of the course.
- First, our job as NCOs is tough because **we have to be leaders, but sometimes we have to get more personal.**
- Another one of our main goals is to **make sure that Marines seek help** when they need it.
- We must **understand the RACE method: Recognize, Ask, Care, and Escort.**
- We talk a lot about **resilience** today; that's because it's an **essential quality** for all Marines.
- As leaders, **we have to help build that resilience in our Marines.**

For More Information



www.usmc-mccs.org/suicideprevent



23



TALKING POINTS:

- ✓ More information is available on this web page.

Slide 23 | For More Information



SCRIPT:

- For statistics on suicide in the Marine Corps or for more information about resources, consult the Suicide Prevention Program web page.