



## III MEF Support Battalion Commanding Officer's Policy Statement on *Suicide Prevention*



Suicide remains the second leading cause of death and is an irreversible reaction to life's problems. It is a tragic and preventable loss, causing untold grief to loved ones and units, and is of highest concern to the public, legislators, the Commandant, and all Marines. Even one death by suicide is too many.

Suicide causes are varied: disruption of family and individual relationships, environmental influences, high risk behavior, medical conditions, or a combination of these. Regardless, they clearly reflect stressors associated with a decade of persistent conflict and an unprecedented operational tempo. Suicide and suicidal behavior at all levels can take a tremendous toll on readiness and resources of the unit involved. Tragedy can be averted if leaders and peers begin to identify potential risk factors and take appropriate action. Early recognition, prevention and intervention to assist at risk Marines and Sailors is key to preventing suicide and must be one of our highest priorities.

Suicide is a permanent 'solution' to a temporary problem. It must be emphasized to anyone at-risk there are people who care about them and will be left behind if they act on a passing impulse. The people who care about you will have all of the associated guilt and doubt as to what they missed or did wrong. We must further discard some of our misconceptions regarding those who contemplate suicide, even in jest -- particularly that people who joke about suicide are not serious about acting. The exact opposite is true! Almost everyone who attempts suicide has given some sort of indication in the past.

Make no mistake, preventing suicide is a challenge that will require a serious intellectual, individual, organizational, and leadership commitment. Do not hesitate to help someone who is in a downward spiral. Get involved – an upset friend is better than a dead friend. If you are the one experiencing depression or thoughts of suicide – do not hesitate to talk to someone. Do NOT keep a problem that is eating away at you to yourself.

The MSB Chaplain is always available and is an integral part of the battalion with unique trust and confidence. Being outside the chain of command and having 100% confidentiality make them especially valuable as an adviser if you are unsure on what course of action to take. The Suicide Awareness and Prevention Coordinator can be reached at 090-6861-5117 or DSN 623-7137. For further help or additional information, contact him or anyone else in the chain of command, or visit the MCCS Suicide Prevention website at <https://www.usmc-mccs.org/services/support/suicide-prevention/>

I am committed to ensuring every Marine or Sailor is taken care of, and I ask for your commitment in this effort as well. You must know your Marines and Sailors! Vigilance is critical to the early detection of those at risk for suicide. **Observe, listen, empathize and act!** I challenge every member of this battalion to do their part to remove the lingering stigma attached to seeking behavioral health assistance. I expect leaders to ensure all those who need assistance get it promptly. Each life lost to suicide is one life too many. Each one of us has a role to play in preventing suicides. This battalion needs every single Marine, Sailor and civilian to achieve balanced excellence.

Semper Fidelis,

**Douglas J Cobb Jr**  
Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps  
Commanding Officer  
III MEF Support Battalion