



AT RISK SERVICE MEMBERS: A GUIDE FOR COMMAND

Presented by Military & Family Life Counselors

OBJECTIVES

Participants will learn:

- Ways to recognize possible risk factors
- How to assist those at risk
- The importance of building trust and how to accomplish this



AGENDA

- Introduction
- The at-risk service member
- Possible risk factors
- Risk factors for domestic violence
- Risk-taking behaviors
- How to help
- The importance of trust
- Building trust
- Self-care



INTRODUCTION

- Many service members adjust well to the difficult situations they face
- Some have more difficulty adjusting and may become at risk for engaging in potentially dangerous behaviors
- When command reaches out to service members who appear to be at risk, they increase the possibility that these service members may seek the help they need
- Not all service members will be responsive to the outreach you make, but for others, it can have a powerful impact

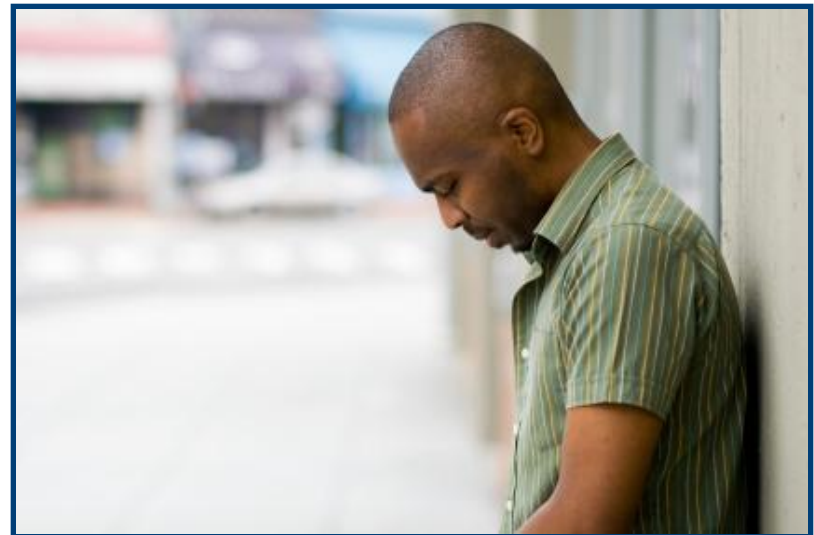


THE AT RISK SERVICE MEMBER

The following slides address the different risk factors that can indicate the service member may be having difficulty

Different types of risk areas can include:

- Harm to self or others
- Domestic violence



RISK-TAKING BEHAVIORS

Definition: Any voluntary behaviors that put an individual in danger of potentially serious injuries or death.

Risk-taking behaviors include:

- Riding a motorcycle at high speeds with or without a helmet
- Driving any vehicle at very high speeds
- Abusing alcohol or drugs
- Driving while intoxicated
- Various Extreme Sports



RISK-TAKING BEHAVIORS

CONTINUED

Invincibility and the “combat rush”

- A conditioned emotional response to trauma
- Feelings of power and excitement during combat
- Creates a feeling of invincibility – “I survived combat, therefore I can survive anything in civilian life.”



RISK-TAKING BEHAVIORS

CONTINUED

Post combat invincibility:

- Life outside of combat may seem boring
- A desire to recreate the combat rush (this can intensify with multiple deployments and exposure to violence and death)
- The desire to recreate the combat rush can lead to risk-taking behaviors
- The sense of brotherhood disappears as units reorganize and adjust after a return from deployment; i.e. – assignment and unit changes



POTENTIAL RISK FACTORS

Life Events:

- End of a relationship with spouse or significant other
- Recent loss of a buddy, close friend or family member
- Any recent crisis or life trauma
- Financial problems
- Multiple deployments
- Post combat stress



POTENTIAL RISK FACTORS

CONTINUED

Behaviors:

- Tendency toward violent or impulsive behavior
- A change in personality or appearance
- Excessive sadness or moodiness
- Withdrawal from other people and social activities
- Engaging in risk-taking behaviors
- Previous attempts to inflict self-harm or harm to others
- Alcohol and drug abuse



HOW TO HELP

- Get to know your service members and encourage them to get to know each other
- Offer support – let them know if you have noticed a change, and offer referrals to military resources
- Let them know that help is available through Military Community Services, Chaplains and behavioral health services, and encourage them to use these resources
- Challenge the stigma of seeking help – let them know seeking help is a sign of strength



THE IMPORTANCE OF TRUST

Trusting someone requires taking a risk:

- Trusting the other person means what they say
- Trusting they will follow through on what they say they will do
- Trusting they will maintain your confidence



THE IMPORTANCE OF TRUST

CONTINUED

- People are more likely to reach out for help to someone they trust
- Building a level of trust provides a “state of readiness” should your service members need to seek your help



BUILDING TRUST

- Exercise good listening skills
- Show respect
- Take a sincere interest in their lives
- Show empathy
- Be approachable
- Show support
- Don't be afraid to let them know you have faced difficulties as well



SELF-CARE

- Make sure to take care of yourself as well
- Compassion fatigue can occur when you are paying attention to the needs of others and ignoring your own needs
- Put the oxygen mask on yourself first
 - Seek support from others when needed
 - Exercise
 - Eat well
 - Get plenty of rest
 - Take some down time and do something enjoyable from time to time



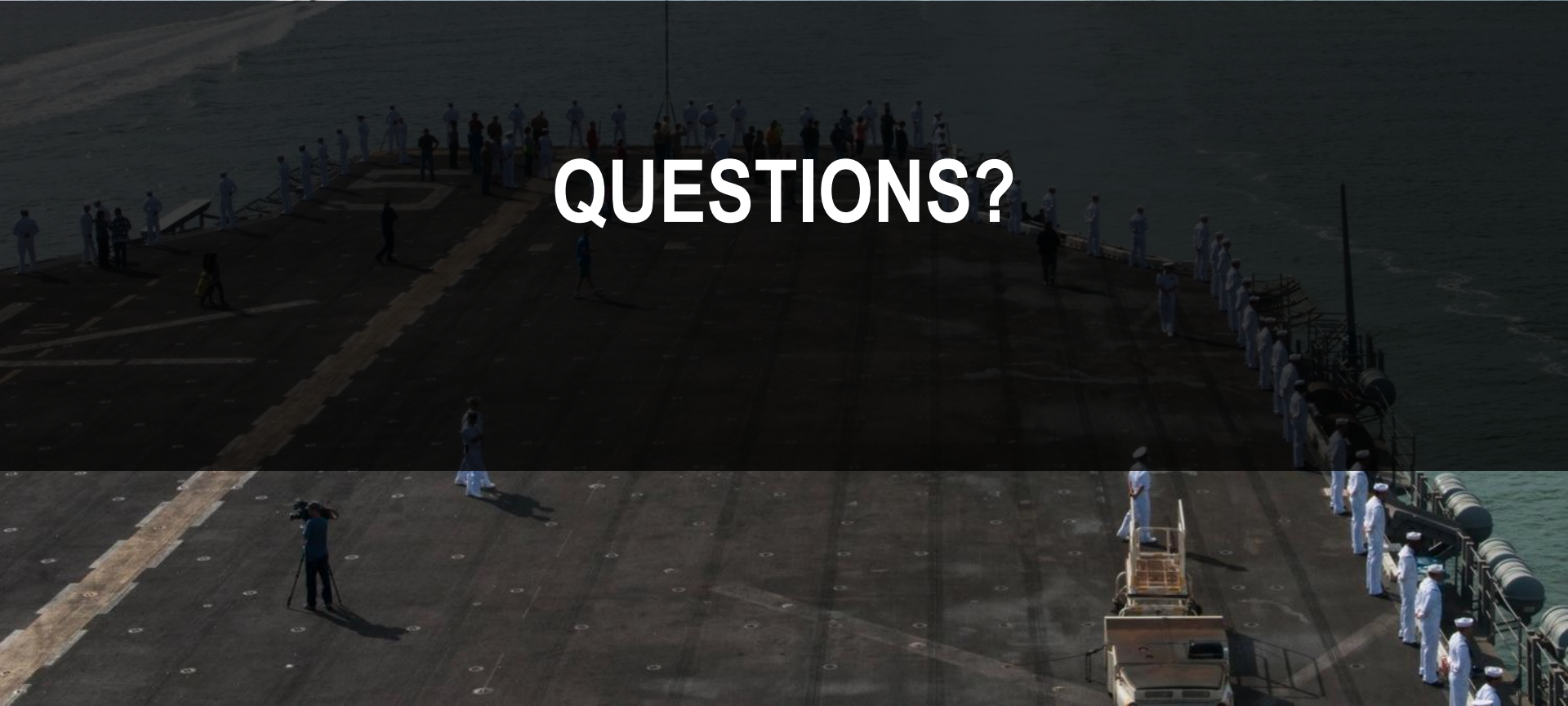
SUMMARY

- Reaching out to service members who appear to be at risk can increase the likelihood that they seek help
- Learning to recognize risk factors can assist in identifying those at risk
- Building trust is an important part of increasing the possibility that your service members will seek your assistance if needed
- Practicing self-care increases your ability to assist others and sets an example





QUESTIONS?



RESOURCES

- Military Community Services
- Chaplain and Local Clergy
- Military OneSource (800) 342-9647
- TRICARE
- Behavioral Health Services



REFERENCES

- Building Trust: The Key to Influencing People,
- Trust Rules: The Most Important Secret About Trust, Susan M. Heathfield,
- Suicide Prevention in the Military, Kevin Caruso, suicide.org,
- *Survivor's Guilt*, Dawn Turpin, Vancouver Island, BC
- National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, "Domestic Violence Facts."
- Post-combat Invincibility, *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, Vol. 42, Issue 13, October 2008





THANK YOU