

Speaker Notes

Title of Presentation: At Risk Service Members: A Guide for Command

Page 1 – none.

Page 2 – none.

Page 3 – none.

Page 4 – **NOTE:** Make sure to let the participants know that their job is not to try to “save” everyone. Their job is to reach out and provide support and make their service members aware of available help.

Page 5 – none.

Page 6 – none.

Page 7 – Even though the combat experience is frightening and traumatic, there is a feeling of excitement and energy. One service member reported, “There was exuberance and a massive rush. ...I never experienced anything like that before. You were scared, but never felt so alive.” (Lori Holyfield, University of Arkansas)

Page 8 – The adrenaline and accompanying release of endorphins as well as the constant need for a hyper-vigilant state, becomes a routine way of life even post combat. The service member becomes conditioned to the excitement of the combat stress response and can find life outside of combat boring. The feelings of the combat rush can be re-experienced through memories and nightmares, creating a more intense desire to engage in high risk behaviors.

Page 9 – 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

Some signs of post combat stress can include:

- Feeling nervous
- Feeling emotionally cut off
- Problems with alcohol or drug use
- Problems concentrating
- Feelings of irritability, anger or rage
- Startled responses
- Flashbacks
- Nightmares or difficulty sleeping
- No sense of future

Page 10 – It’s important to look for any recent changes in behaviors. Example: 1) They used to be outgoing and now they are quiet and withdrawn. 2) They used to seem happy most of the time, now they seem moody. If the person has always seemed quiet and a little moody, those are probably not risk factors.

Page 11 –

- **Get to know your service members and encourage them to get to know each other.** Not only is getting to know your service members important, but encouraging them to get to know each other creates a sense of community and expands the “safety net” should a need arise. Make them all aware of services that are available.

- **Offer support** – they need to know you genuinely care and want to help them get assistance.
- **Let them know that help is available through Military Community Services, Chaplains and behavioral health services, and encourage them to use these services.**
- **Challenge the stigma of seeking help** – let them know seeking help is a sign of strength: Unfortunately there is still a stigma of seeking help. Make sure you convey that strong people know when they need help and they aren't afraid to ask for it.

NOTE: In the following slides we will discuss the importance of building trust.

Page 12 - none.

Page 13 – This “state of readiness” refers to the service members feeling a comfort level with command and being ready and willing to seek assistance should the need arise.

Page 14 –

- **Exercise good listening skills:** This is the foundation of building trust. Listen attentively and let them know you hear what they say.
- **Show respect:** everyone needs to feel that they are respected and accepted for who they are.
- **Take a sincere interest in their lives:** This lets them know that you care.
- **Show empathy:** This lets the other person know that you have an understanding of their situation.
- **Be approachable:** have an open door policy.
- **Show support:** Let them know you will be there to assist if needed.
- **Don't be afraid to let them know you have faced difficulties as well:** You don't have to give details, but you can let them know you have faced difficult situations and gotten through them. Some younger service members haven't lived long enough to know that when adverse situations have occurred – they will get to the other side and learn to cope. Your life experience and coping skills can serve as a role model.

Page 15 – **Put the oxygen mask on first:** you can't help others if you are gasping for air.

Page 16 – none.

Page 17 – none.

Page 18 – none.

Page 19 – none.

Page 20 – none.