



## MARINE AVIATION LOGISTICS SQUADRON 31

### CO's Policy on Suicide Prevention

March 2012



Marines, Sailors, and Families of MALS-31,

I owe it to you to share my thoughts and policy the topic of suicide and suicide prevention. In recent years, this topic has rightly gained the attention it deserves. As you read on, I hope you will find that my policy on the topic echoes my commitment to taking care of the Stinger Family I outlined in my command philosophy.

Let me start by saying that it's OK, even normal, to experience depression or thoughts of sadness from time to time. There have been plenty of times in my life when stress seemed to be flooding in and I wished I was not in the situation I was at the time. Fortunately, I never lost sight of hope. Hope comes in many forms. It can come from their Creator for those of faith. It can come from parents, spouses, or children for those with close families. It can come with the promise of better times ahead. Regardless of the source of one's hope, I am reminded of something my mother told me when I was a teenager after learning of the suicide of someone our family knew:

**“Suicide is a PERMANENT solution for a TEMPORARY problem.”**

Also, suicide devastates those left behind. Despite how some may feel, everyone is loved...loved by parents, children, spouses, and in the case of the Marine Corps, by fellow Marines and Sailors.

If you are a Marine, Sailor, or family member who is considering harming yourself, please know that asking for help is **NOT** a sign of weakness. Also **you have my word that asking for help will not negatively affect your career in the Marine Corps or Navy**. Please utilize one of the contacts below if you need someone to listen:

- Someone in your chain of command you trust
- Chaplain
- Military OneSource 24/7 (800-342-9647)
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800-273-8255)

Realize that YOU are important to other members of the Stinger Family. If you are having thoughts of harming or killing yourself, please ask for help. You **will** get the help you need!

If you are reading this and know someone who seems depressed or has recently become distant and detached, do not be afraid to ask them how they are doing and **“have you had thoughts of hurting or killing yourself?”** It should not matter if that person is a family member, peer, junior, or senior. Taking care of each other sometimes requires those questions up the chain, down the chain, and laterally. If they reply “yes,” treat them with compassion, get additional help from the sources above, and do not leave them alone until additional help is there.

There are numerous stories of people who were close to someone who committed suicide, thought they were acting odd prior to killing themselves, and did not ask the individual about it. They have enormous “survivor’s guilt” and almost always believe they could have done something to prevent the suicide. Please don’t become one of these people because you chose not to ask a question to someone you care about.

I ask each individual in the Stinger Family to renew their commitment to taking care of each other. For those going through dark days, I promise there are brighter days ahead and there is help to get you there.

Semper Fidelis,

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