



BATTLE BUDDY CHECKS

TASK: Recognize warning signs, being aware of the suicide risk factors and how to help/speak up about helping battle buddies in crisis.

CONDITIONS: Discussion – Question based.

STANDARDS: Soldiers will understand how to help and assist their battle buddies when warning signs and risk factors are present.



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Warning Signs:

DISCUSSION: Ask Soldiers what the warning signs are.

- Losing interest in things they used to care about.
- Saying things like "it would be better if I wasn't here" or "I want out".
- Talking about suicide or killing one's self.
- Putting affairs in order, tying up loose ends, changing a will.
- Always talking or thinking about death.
- Clinical depression -- deep sadness, loss of interest, trouble sleeping and eating -- that gets worse.



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Risk Factors:

DISCUSSION: Ask Soldiers about risk factors. Risk factors vary between any age and gender, not just battle buddies.

Certain Risk Factors Are:

- One or more prior suicide attempts.
- Family history of mental disorder or substance abuse.
- Family history of suicide.
- Family violence.
- Physical or sexual abuse.
- Keeping firearms in the home.
- Chronic physical illness, including chronic pain.
- Exposure to the suicidal behavior of others.



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How to Help & Assist:

DISCUSSION: Ask Soldiers how to help. There are many ways to help in understanding and offering assistance to the person whether a battle buddy or family member.

- Speak up if you're worried: You can't make a person suicidal by showing that you care. Giving a suicidal person the opportunity to express his or her feelings can provide relief from loneliness and pent-up negative feelings, and may prevent a suicide attempt.
- Respond quickly in a crisis: If a suicide attempt seems imminent, call a local crisis center, dial 911, or take the person to an emergency room. Remove guns, drugs, knives, and other potentially lethal objects from the vicinity but **do not, under any circumstances, leave a suicidal person alone.**
- Offer help and support: If a friend or family member is suicidal, the best way to help is by offering an empathetic, listening ear. Let your loved one know that he or she is not alone and that you care. Don't take responsibility, however, for making your loved one well. You can offer support, but you can't get better for a suicidal person. He or she has to make a personal commitment to recovery.



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How to Talk and Help:

DISCUSSION: Ask Soldiers how they should help a battle buddy in distress.

- Be yourself. Let the person know you care, that he/she is not alone.
- Listen. Let the suicidal person unload despair, ventilate anger. No matter how negative the conversation seems, the fact that it exists is a positive sign.
- Be sympathetic, non-judgmental, patient, calm, accepting.
- Offer hope. Reassure the person that help is available and that the suicidal feelings are temporary.
- If the person says things like, “I’m so depressed, I can’t go on,” ask the question: “Are you having thoughts of suicide?” You are not putting ideas in their head, you are showing that you are concerned.



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What Not To Do:

DISCUSSION: Ask Soldiers what should not do or say when helping a battle buddy in distress.

- Argue with the suicidal person. Avoid saying things like: "You have so much to live for," "Your suicide will hurt your family," or "Look on the bright side."
- Act shocked, lecture on the value of life, or say that suicide is wrong.
- Promise confidentiality. Refuse to be sworn to secrecy.
- Offer ways to fix their problems, or give advice, or make them feel like they have to justify their suicidal feelings. It is not about how bad the problem is, but how badly it's hurting your friend or loved one.
- Blame yourself. You can't "fix" someone's depression.