



HOLISTIC WELLNESS CHALLENGE



TIPS FOR CULTIVATING CONNECTEDNESS



Connecting with friends, family members, and fellow Guardsmen provides a sense of belonging, purpose, and hope. The strength derived from that support forms a protective barrier that can keep us safe from harm. To enhance resiliency:

- **Build protective environments.** Create positive command climates that encourage open dialogue.
- **Nurture healthy relationships.** Invest in people that offer mutual respect, support, and encouragement.
- **Promote help-seeking behaviors.** Share resources and praise the strength it takes to ask for help.
- **Use safe messaging.** Choose words that inspire hope and reduce the stigma associated with mental health.

CHALLENGE your Service members to adopt at least one of the recommended resources this month to protect them from harm.

FACTS & FIGURES: DID YOU KNOW?

Suicide is a complex issue that impacts us all. However, some National Guard members are more vulnerable, and some methods of injury are more common. Reports from 2021, indicated:¹

- 93% - Men
- 79% - White/Caucasian
- 48% - E1-E4 Rank
- 72% - Firearm

PROTECTIVE & RISK FACTORS

The presence or absence of protective and risk factors influences overall health. Strengthening protective factors buffers against risk and helps us avoid harm. Protective factors include:²

- Connectedness and sense of belonging
- Coping and problem-solving skills
- Access to care and support services
- Lethal means reduction and safety planning

CONTACT US

For more information on suicide prevention or other topics, email us at: ng.ncr.ngb.mbx.resiliency-branch@army.mil

24/7 CONFIDENTIAL SUPPORT





HOLISTIC APPROACH TO SUICIDE PREVENTION

What does it mean?

- A holistic approach to suicide prevention focuses on enhancing protective factors and mitigating risk factors.

Why does it matter?

- Protective factors improve coping skills, which reduces the impact of risk factors and helps break the cycle of crisis and response.

What can you do?

- Use and recommend resources, like the Columbia Protocol, to quickly identify Service members at risk and know when to intervene.
- Create a culture of trust that connects Service members with the resources needed to improve their health and well-being.
- Prioritize opportunities to interact with Service members, like sharing meals together.
- Encourage open and honest dialogue.
- Familiarize yourself with safe messaging and choose your words wisely.
- Urge Service members to participate in the DEOCS and WGR and remind them that their voice matters.

FORCE-WIDE CLIMATE ASSESSMENT

It's up to all of us to support and look out for one another. Our Soldiers, Airmen, civilians, and families must all play a part in creating a supportive and resilient environment. It starts with you - and it starts now.

All National Guard members are strongly encouraged to participate in the 2023 Defense Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS) and the Workplace and Gender Relations (WGR) Survey. Findings will provide an in-depth understanding of command culture and inform future prevention efforts.



RESOURCES TO RECOMMEND



The Holistic Wellness Challenge includes valuable tips and resources on a variety of topics (e.g., healthy relationships, workplace wellness, financial fitness, and lethal means safety) to promote healthy behaviors and prevent harm <http://www.nationalguard.mil/Resources/Holistic-Wellness-Challenge>



The Columbia Protocol is a risk assessment tool that consists of simple yes/no questions to identify if someone is at risk for suicide and inform the level of support needed <https://cssrs.columbia.edu/the-columbia-scale-c-ssrs/about-the-scale> (also available for download via Apple App Store or Google Play)



Military OneSource offers free, confidential, non-crisis counseling via phone, online chat, or video to help Service members and their families stay well and thrive <http://www.militaryonesource.mil>



Give an Hour provides free in-person and virtual mental health counseling, peer support, and resources for National Guard members <https://giveanhour.org>



Your Words Matter is a fact sheet that offers recommendations on what to say, what not to say, and why to help reduce stigma <https://www.dspo.mil/Portals/113/DSPO-Your-Words-Matter-Factsheet.pdf>



SPOTLIGHT: GUAM NATIONAL GUARD (GUNG)

- DoD is recognizing GUNG for its outstanding efforts to promote suicide prevention education and awareness among Service members and their families.
- From 2021-2022, GUNG hosted awareness campaigns, conducted prevention and intervention trainings, and participated in community events to enhance connectedness and encourage help-seeking behaviors.
- GUNG also operates Counseling on Access to Lethal Means (CALM) and Collect, which is an initiative to train Leaders on strategies to promote lethal means safety among Service members.

REFERENCES:

1. DoD Annual Report on Suicide in the Military 2021 [www.dspo.mil/Portals/113/Documents/2022 ASR/Annual Report on Suicide in the Military CY 2021 with CY21 DoDSER \(1\).pdf?ver=tat8FRrUhh2IIndFrCGbsA%3d%3d](http://www.dspo.mil/Portals/113/Documents/2022%20ASR/Annual%20Report%20on%20Suicide%20in%20the%20Military%20CY%202021%20with%20CY21%20DoDSER%20(1).pdf?ver=tat8FRrUhh2IIndFrCGbsA%3d%3d)
2. Risks & Warning Signs, Defense Suicide Prevention Office [www.dspo.mil/Portals/113/Documents/Risks and Warning Signs.pdf](http://www.dspo.mil/Portals/113/Documents/Risks%20and%20Warning%20Signs.pdf)