

## U.S. Army Europe and 7th Army

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### Army doctor separates truth about suicide from myths

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**VICENZA, Italy** -- Suicide is a huge problem in the Army, and it is on the rise.

Last year the number of suicides in the Army was at the highest level in three decades, exceeding the rate for our civilian counterparts.

Prior to 2008 the rate of military suicides had always been below those found outside our gates. One reason was that military service provided protective functions, such as employment, access to health care and exposure to prevention programs. But even those buffers can't guarantee a Soldier won't take his own life today.

Overall, there are certain risk factors that make some folks more prone to attempting suicide: suffering from depression or other mental illnesses; abusing drugs or alcohol; having attempted suicide in the past.

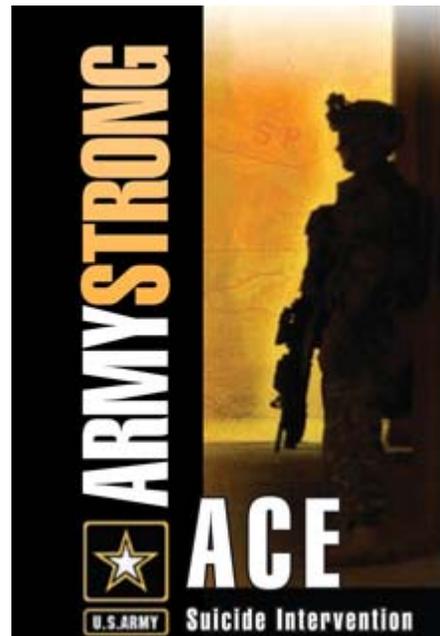
People experiencing relationship turmoil -- such as a recent break up or divorce -- are also at increased risk. People that are having significant problems at work, legal troubles, financial troubles or lack any significant social support are at an increased risk as well.

When our Soldiers, family, friends, colleagues and neighbors are having such problems, we all need to be alert.

And we need to separate fact from fiction. There are certain myths about suicide that need to be debunked.

*Myth:* People who talk about suicide are only trying to get attention.

*Fact:* People who die by suicide usually talked about it first. As many as 75 percent of people who committed suicides had alluded to others of their plans.



*Myth:* Asking someone if they are thinking about suicide will increase the risk.

*Fact:* Asking directly can lead to getting much-needed help. Talking about suicide provides the opportunity for communication.

*Myth:* Once people decide to commit suicide, there is nothing you can do to stop them.

*Fact:* People who are suicidal do not want to die; they just want the pain to stop. Suicide is a permanent solution to what is usually a temporary problem.

Suicides can be prevented. People can be helped.

| <b>Where to go for help:<br/>Army medical facilities in Europe</b> |                       |                                |
|--|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Location</b>  | <b>Military Phone</b> | <b>Civilian Phone</b>          |
| Ansbach/Katterbach Behavioral Health Clinic                        | 468-7853              | 0981-183-853                   |
| Illesheim Behavioral Health Clinic                                 | 467-4993              | 098141-83-4993                 |
| Bamberg Health Clinic  | 469-8795              | 0951-300-8795                  |
| Baumholder Health Clinic   | 485-7411              | 06783-6-7411                   |
| Grafenwoehr/Vilseck Behavioral Health Clinic                       | 476-2995              | 09662-83-2995                  |
| Hohenfels Social Work Service                                      | 466-4625<br>466-4284  | 09472-83-4625<br>09472-83-4284 |
| Heidelberg Behavioral Health Service                               | 371-2680<br>271-2534  | 06221-17-2680<br>06221-17-2534 |
| Landstuhl Behavioral Health Division                               | 486-7276<br>486-8366  | 06371-86-7276<br>06371-86-8366 |
| Mannheim Social Work Service                                       | 385-3118              | 0621-730-3118                  |
| Schweinfurt Behavioral Health Clinic                               | 354-6231              | 09721-96-6231                  |
| SHAPE Social Work Service  | 423-5801              | 065-44-5801                    |
| Stuttgart Mental Health Clinic                                     | 431-2751              | 07031-15-2751                  |
| Vicenza Behavioral Health Clinic                                   | 634-7604              | 0444-71-7404                   |
| Wiesbaden Psychological Health Clinic                              | 337-1750              | 0611-705-1750                  |

*Myth:* Young people never think about suicide.

*Fact:* Suicide is the third-leading cause of death for young people ages 15 to 24. Be aware of sudden changes in their behavior: withdrawal from friends or activities; dropping out of group plans; changes in personality; or a lack of interest in their future. If you suspect a young person is thinking about suicide, ask. Do not trivialize their words. Impulsivity is not uncommon in this age group.

What should you do if you suspect that someone is suicidal? Ask them, stay with them and get them to the experts who can help: military police, chaplains and health professionals

Another option is to tell your chain of command -- immediately.

Help is available. And don't wish you had asked or acted after it's too late. Step in now when your battle buddies, friends, family members and colleagues need you.

