



Too often these days, it appears some of our Soldiers believe suicide is the only answer to life's problems. These Soldiers wrongly believe that taking their own lives is the best way to cope with the problem at hand, and that their death affects only themselves.

As Vice Chief of Staff of the Army GEN Peter Chiarelli noted in his 21 August 2009 memo, "...suicide continues to plague our Army and we must remain cognizant of the problem and proactive in planning and executing our programs to reach our goals. Since January 1, 2009, the Army has experienced 155 suicide cases, which include Active Duty (107) and Not on Active Duty (48) suicides. Forever, lives are changed of those who remain behind."

"Forever, lives are changed for those who remain behind." Some people who commit or attempt to commit suicide do so with the intent of trying to hurt those they feel have hurt them. Others commit suicide rationalizing that their friends and loved ones will be better off when they are gone. Most, I suspect, needlessly take their own lives without thinking about the lasting impact their death will have on those they leave behind.

What about the spouse who will never again know the warm embrace of the husband or wife, or the children who will never again know the love and guidance of a father or mother, who abandoned them through suicide? Or the parents who will never again see the child they nurtured and loved, or the friends and fellow soldiers who lost someone they trusted and depended upon? Do all those left behind after a Soldier commits suicide really count for so little compared to demons the Soldier is battling and ultimately surrendering to?

Most are so deeply enmeshed within the dark cloud of depression and hopelessness to even consider those left behind, or to realize that they are quitting... giving up... losing the battle that with help they could ultimately win. That's why it's up to the rest of us, the first line supervisors, the battle-buddies, the friends and loved ones to continue to be the first line of defense against suicide.

We must continue to use the skills that the Army has given us through the Army Campaign Plan for Health Promotion, Risk Reduction, and Suicide Prevention (ACPHP) to identify people at risk and to support them as they are given the medical attention they need to fight and win this most important battle. We are at war with suicide.

As we prepare to observe National Suicide Prevention Week (September 6 - 12, 2009), I would like to ask each of you to rededicate yourselves toward reducing suicides in our Army and to urge you to remain ever vigilant. Without our constant vigilance and proactive actions, the needless loss of our Soldiers will continue to rise.

I'll close by echoing the words of GEN Chiarelli, "I challenge you to make suicide prevention a daily occurrence on your Camp, Post and Station... I encourage you to actively take advantage of honest open communication, mutual support, the different programs and resources that are available to Soldiers, Families and units to learn more about reducing and managing the different contributing factors that lead to suicide. As we band together to face our physical enemies on the battlefield, we also must band together in confronting the enemy from within our ranks that is suicide."

To read GEN Chiarelli's memo visit <http://www.armyg1.army.mil/hr/suicide/default.asp>.

*SECURE THE HIGH GROUND!*