



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
2 NAVY ANNEX
WASHINGTON, DC 20380-1775

IN REPLY REFER TO:
CMC-MHH
18 Aug 95

WHITE LETTER NO. 14-95

From: Commandant of the Marine Corps
To: All General Officers
All Commanding Officers
All Officers in Charge
All Sergeants Major

Subj: SUICIDE PREVENTION

1. So far this year, the Marine Corps has experienced 21 confirmed or possible suicides and 127 suicide attempts. We are killing ourselves at an alarming rate and seem to be incapable of coming up with effective solutions. People consider suicide when they experience situations in their lives that cause so much psychological pain that the only relief seems to be ending their life. Marines will not kill themselves if they feel there is "another way out" of their situation. As the leaders of the Corps, we need to take action to ensure our Marines find another way out.

2. Leadership is the cornerstone of suicide prevention! Effective leadership means knowing your Marines and taking care of them. Small unit leaders must know their Marines well enough to realize when they need help, not only in their military lives, but in their personal lives as well. We would not hesitate to make sure they get help if they have problems with their job or suffer from an injury. We must also ensure they get help for personal problems.

3. If a Marine exhibits suicide warning signs, that Marine needs help now, before it's too late. We must remove whatever barriers or stigmas, real and imagined, which stand in their way. All too often Marines won't get help for personal problems out of fear of retribution from the command or because they have a "do or die" attitude. We need to ensure that all Marines understand this: getting help and fixing their problems is the right path to follow.

4. Here's what I want you to do:

a. If your Marines are experiencing significant family or personal problems, first, talk to them "father to son/daughter," "teacher to scholar" and understand their problem, then get them to the Chaplain or the Family Service Center. Don't simply recommend they go, get them there! Then follow up!

b. If they have alcohol problems, get them to the Substance Abuse Counseling Center. Don't wait until there's a DUI or some other negative incident. Get them help before it's too late.

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c. If they are constantly depressed, make sure they see a Medical Officer, a Chaplain, or a Family Service Center counselor.

d. If they have severe financial problems, get them to Navy-Marine Corps Relief or the Family Service Center for financial counseling.

5. ALMAR 340/94 and White Letter 15-94 contain the suicide warning signs. Make sure your Marines know them--if these signs are displayed, then make doubly sure your Marines take action as I've outlined above.

6. Get this message down to the lowest level of leadership in the Corps--and that means to all Marines. Remember that where there are two Marines together, one is a leader. All Marines are responsible for their fellow Marines. Any Marine who thinks suicide is the answer to a problem or situation needs professional help. We must ensure they get that help. Marines are our most precious asset. We will take care of them.

C. G. ABILAK
