

VETERANS SUICIDE PREVENTION PILOT PROGRAM (VSP3)

A UCHealth led community collaborative to reduce
suicide in Veterans and their family members in El Paso County.

Military & Veterans Culturally Competent Practice & Support For Providers, Peers, Volunteers, and Support Staff

Presenters:

Damian McCabe,

Dir. Behavioral Health UCHealth System,

Erin Fowler, LPC

Veteran Health and Trauma Center, UCCS

Lyda Hill Institute for Human Resilience

• CHBC 29/9/23

uchealth

Purpose: Introduce the NAMI and Silver Key and community partner teams to the VSP3, strategy, goals, and expected outcomes.

Objective: Increase the NAMI/Silver Key team members awareness and practice/support capacity by presenting key aspects military and Veteran culture and the impact of life stressors, mental illness, substance on the Veteran and Veteran family's transition after military service.

End state:

1. Participants will rate themselves as more competent in their understanding of military and Veteran culture.
2. Participants will rate themselves more competent in understanding the enduring impacts service leaves on the lives of Veterans and families who have served in the uniformed services.

Training Elements: Total Time 4 hours: In 25 minute segments. Break time 10 minutes per hour or as needed.

1. Introduction: The VSP3 and the Call to Action "Next Chapter" campaign
2. Learning: Suicide Risk/Prevention (Joiner's Model of belonging/connectedness)
 - a. [The interpersonal-psychological theory of suicidal behavior](#) (Link)
3. Learning: Provide overview of the Veteran's journey
 - a. Who serves and why? (DEI)
 - b. Military indoctrination and culture
 - c. The commitment to service and sacrifice
 - d. The military and Veteran family experience (DEI)
 - e. The military child "Brat" (DEI)
4. Learning: Service , Conflict, Combat (They're not the same thing)
5. Learning: Mental Health in Veterans and their family Members
6. Learning: The Transition
7. Applications: Setting aside assumptions, bias, and perspectives. (DEI)
8. Applications: Being present, Power presence / Power listening / Power Learning
9. Considerations: Questions.



A community wellness collaborative serving Veterans and their families.

nextchapterco.org 1-888-719- VETS (8387)

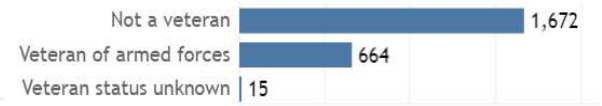
[Selected population for all charts on this page](#)

Age: All, Sex: All, Ethnicity: All, Race: All, Marital status: All, Veteran status: All, Method: All methods, County: El Paso

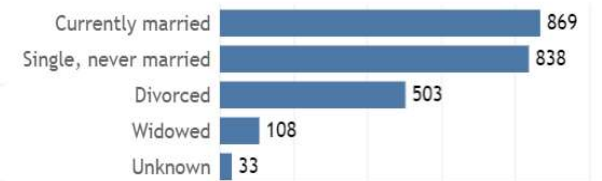
Number of suicides per year, 2004-2020



by veteran status (ever in U.S. Armed Forces)



by marital status



*Counts of less than three are suppressed

**Rates/data on this page will differ slightly from Colorado Violent Death Reporting System data, due to the inclusion of out of state resident deaths



COLORADO

**Center for Health
& Environmental Data**

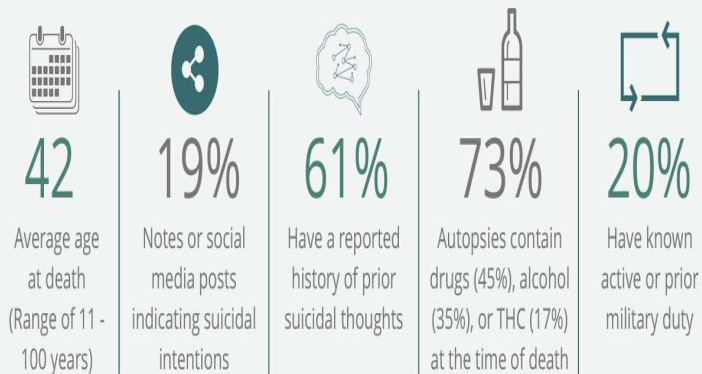
Department of Public Health & Environment

The “Why” for Next Chapter.

2020/ 178 total / 36

2021/ 176 total / 53

2020 Suicide Facts

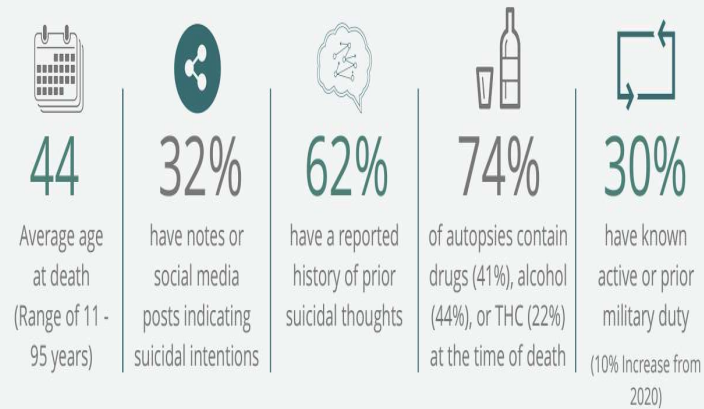


79% of completed suicides were male



Investigation revealed 18 Cases where COVID-19 associated grief or stress was a driving factor in the suicide.

2021 Suicide Facts



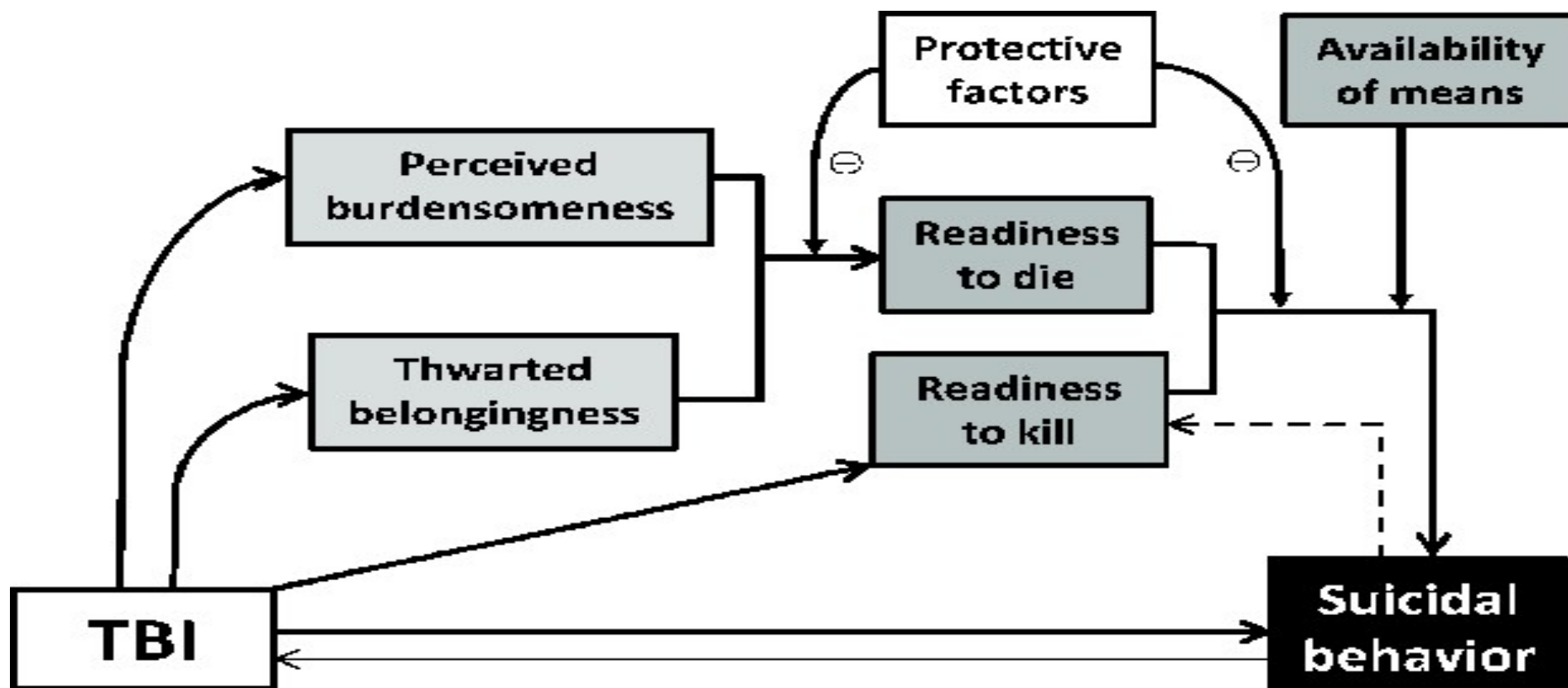
81% of completed suicides were male



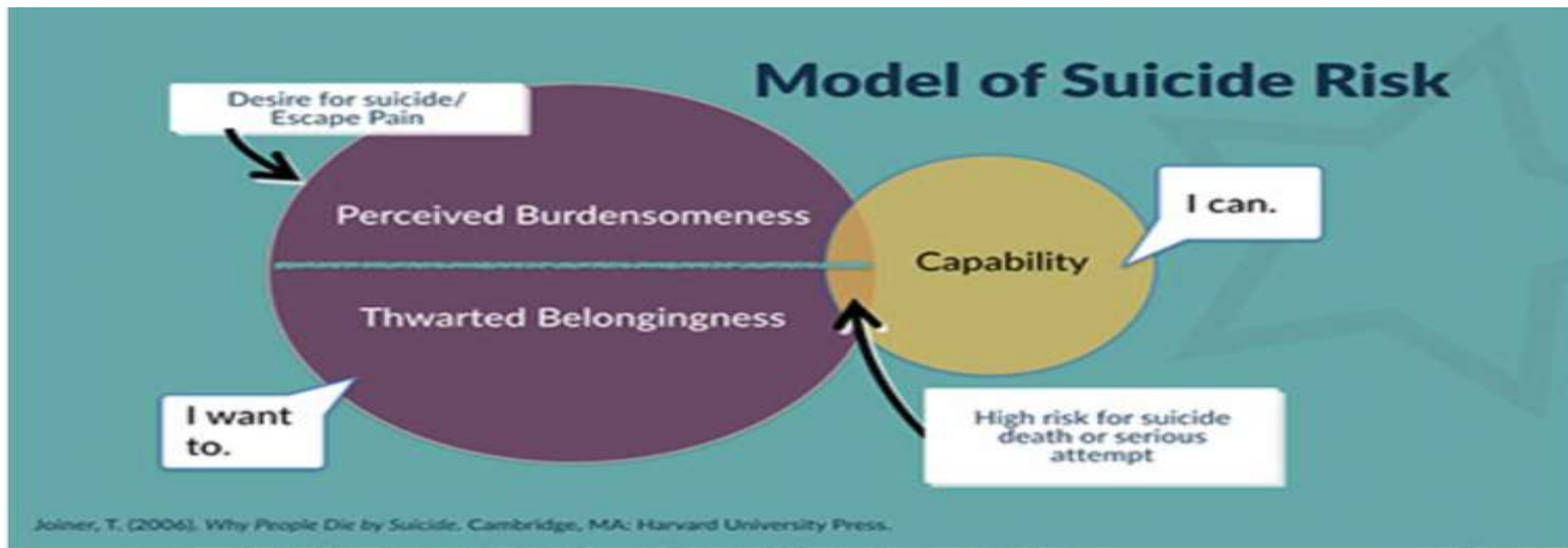
The most common risk factors present are relationship issues, financial struggles, substance abuse, chronic health problems, grief and legal issues.

17 more deaths in 2021 form 2020.

That is half as much again or an increase of 50% in identified Veteran or military deaths year over year.



Wadhawan, Abhishek & Stiller, John & Potocki, Eileen & Okusaga, Olaoluwa & Dagdag, Aline & Lowry, Christopher & Benros, Michael & Postolache, Teodor. (2019). Traumatic Brain Injury and Suicidal Behavior: A Review. *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*. 68. 1-32. 10.3233/JAD-181055.



Joiner argues that a series of painful and provocative experiences over the course of a lifetime can disinhibit a person from the fear of pain and death associated with suicide. These experiences may be related to trauma and abuse, but they may also involve high risk behaviors, injuries from contact sports, and a knowledge of and comfort with deadly means of suicide (e.g., firearms or lethal drugs).

This factor also explains why a previous suicide attempt is the strongest predictor of a future attempt. Still, on the capability side of the model, having painful and provocative experiences or an attraction to death defying behavior does not in and of itself predict suicide. The risk is elevated where the two factors overlap – when a desire for suicide is met with the ability to carry it out.

The Terms of Art/Tribal Language/Jargon

- Acronyms
- Military lifestyle or Veteran lifestyle, interchangeable or not?
- Mental Health/Behavioral Health
- Readiness
- Combat & Operational Stress
- Trauma
- Traumatic Head Injury (TBI)
- Injured/Wounded

Navigating Military Culture and Community

(Finding your way when working with Military Veterans and their families).



Military & Veteran Culture and Community

- Cultures are marked by common linguistics and artifacts

- Symbols
- Words
- Tone
- Structure
- Tools

The IVY DIV
4 ID
IV DIV
IVY Eagles



BAH-Basic Allowance for Housing
DFAC-Dining Facility
DZ-Drop Zone
FOB-Forward Operating Base
G.I.-General Issue
IED-Improvised Explosive Device
JAG-Judge Advocate General
KIA-Killed in Action
MEDEVAC-MEDical EVACuation
MIA-Missing in Action
RECON-Reconnaissance
SOP-Standard Operating Procedures
OIF-Operation Iraqi Freedom
OEF-Operation Enduring Freedom
Operation New Dawn
GWOT-Global War on Terrorism

VA-Veterans Administration
NCO-Non-Commissioned Officer
ROTC-Reserve Officer Training Corps
DoD-Department of Defense
MRE-Meal, Ready to Eat
OPSEC-Operation Security
EAP-Emergency Action Plan
ROE-Rules of Engagement
RUF-Rules of the Use of Force
OPORD-Operations Order
FRAGO-Fragmentary Order
Dependent-Spouse, child, or other person who is dependent of the service member for support
AT-Annual Training
MUTA-Military Unit Training Assembly

Who serves and why? (DEI)

- Military indoctrination and culture
- The commitment to service and sacrifice
- The military and Veteran family experience (DEI)
- The military child “Brat” (DEI)



THE SOLDIER'S CREED

I am an American Soldier.
I am a Warrior and a member of a team.
I serve the people of the United States and live the Army Values.

I will always place the mission first.
I will never accept defeat.
I will never quit.
I will never leave a fallen comrade.

I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient in my Warrior tasks and drills.

I always maintain my arms, my equipment and myself.

I am an expert and I am a professional.

I stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy the enemies of the United States of America in close combat.

I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life.

I am an American Soldier.



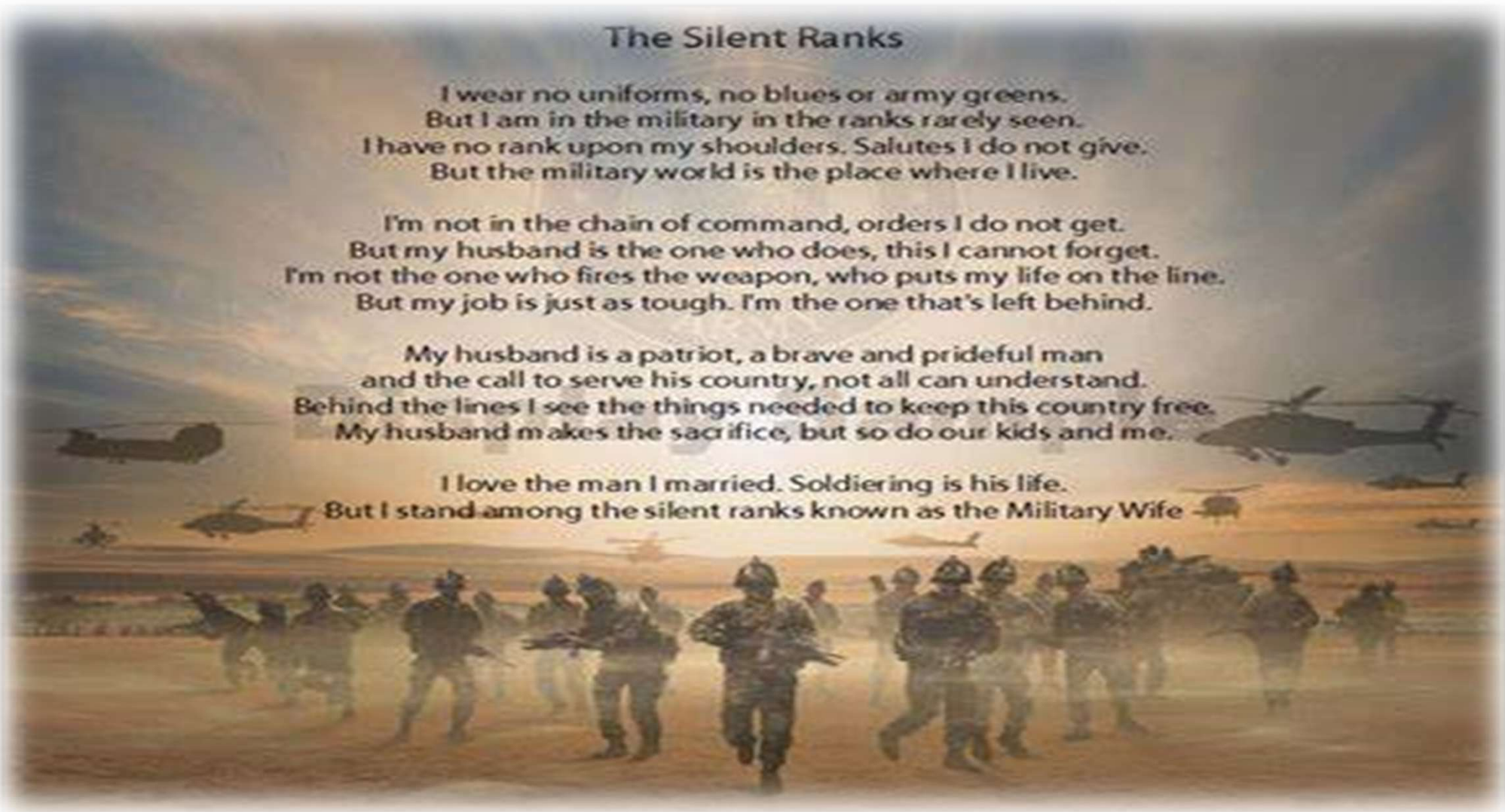
The Silent Ranks

I wear no uniforms, no blues or army greens.
But I am in the military in the ranks rarely seen.
I have no rank upon my shoulders. Salutes I do not give.
But the military world is the place where I live.

I'm not in the chain of command, orders I do not get.
But my husband is the one who does, this I cannot forget.
I'm not the one who fires the weapon, who puts my life on the line.
But my job is just as tough. I'm the one that's left behind.

My husband is a patriot, a brave and prideful man
and the call to serve his country, not all can understand.
Behind the lines I see the things needed to keep this country free.
My husband makes the sacrifice, but so do our kids and me.

I love the man I married. Soldiering is his life.
But I stand among the silent ranks known as the Military Wife



WHY DO PEOPLE SERVE?

- Serving one's country/Patriotism
- Family tradition/Expectations
- Opportunity to travel/Adventure
- Assistance with pursuing a college education
- Job/Financial security
- Gain independence /Occupational & Professional development/ Leadership
- Test one's physical and mental limits/Risk taking
- Support their family /Socio-economic Improvement

The Military Veteran's Family Serves Too!

Who?

- Mothers
- Fathers
- Brothers
- Sisters
- Partners
- Children (Military Brat!)

Impacts

- Mobility, Training, Deployment
- Disruption to Social, academic, professional Development
- Social Adaptability, Adventures, Opportunity
- Loss of Friends, Grieving, Isolation

Military Life

- Who joins the military?
 - A reflection of society
 - Identity, Mission, and Purpose
 - Sacrifice as a way of life
 - Institutionalized behavior
 - Challenges and Growth
 - Cognitive overload, Routine exposure to stress, Hormones/Cortisol
- Exposure to diversity of thought, experience, and motivation

So,

It's a community with shared cultural elements with a variety of reasons to be.

And, it acts and looks like any other sub-culture or group formed by common ties, mission and identity.

Except, the members of this community have agreed to endure the worst of what humans can do to each other and, to do so for the benefit of others they may never know. and for an ideology anchored in the their personal core beliefs and, an oath of commitment to serve others.



The Nature of Armed Conflicts (War)

- Occurs within a social and political context
- Planned and Unplanned
- Rapid adaptations
- Hyper Arousal
- Hyper Vigilance
- Physiological and Psychological excitement
- Fight, Flight, Freeze

Service, Conflict, Combat (They're not the same!)

- What is Service?
 - Service time
 - Service connected
 - Service benefits
 - Who/What is a service member
Service member
- What is Conflict?
 - Where is Conflict
 - Conflict recognition
- What is Combat?
 - Hard!
 - Lawfully designated
 - Names Campaign
 - Comes with additional benefits/entitlements
 - Not always declared "war"
 - Priority for the Veterans Administration

What is Combat cont'd

- Boredom and Chaos
- Daily routines interrupted by a toxic blend of Terror and Excitement
- Hyper aroused and Hyper vigilant: Situational Assets
 - Body summons all resources
 - Normal
 - Purposeful
 - Sharpens and Readies your expertise
- AND THEN....

The Let Down!

- Decompression
- Avoidance
- Anger
- Frustration
- Grief / Humor / Coping
- And... PERSISTENT READINESS TO GO AGAIN!
 - “INCOMING” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpMu3xgio9o>

The Transition (the many transitions)

- DEP/Indoc
- PCS, PCA
- TDY
- Deployment
- Schools
- Discharges/Separations
- ETS
- Retirements

Mental Health in the Military/Veteran & the Military/Veteran Family

- Defense Health Agency (DHA)
- Inclusive of family members
- Pathology/Impairment driven model
- It is always about readiness
- Range of Diagnosis

- Veterans Healthcare Administration (VHA)
 - Rarely for family members
 - Should look like civilian Healthcare
 - Should be accessible to all eligible enrollee
 - Should provide emergent /urgent BH care
 - Should be no –cost
 - Should be wellness/recovery and long term symptom management based



Interacting with MIL & VET Families

- How then do we respect and interact in a way that will generate a successful encounter with the MILVETS and Family members.
 - Compassion: Display empathy and invite them to share all of their challenges
 - Be you: Authenticity in words and deeds
 - Respect their human dignity as you would have them respect yours
 - Allow them the time to invite you into their world
 - Be curious, not nosey
 - Invite them to fill-in your information and experience gaps
 - Share some of your experiences with them
 - Acknowledge your ignorance and openness to learn.

Engage!

- While they represent a tiny fraction of our population at any given time in history, military veterans have a disproportion impact on our society.
- Move-out with an attitude of wanting to learn and share you experience with another human being, albeit one with some unique cultural codes and morés that might make no sense to you at first.
- Join with Veterans in discovery and allow *them* to determine *their* purpose in experiencing you and your services and expertise.

What comes next?

- Know your cultural contexts (DEI)
- Know your contributing neuroscience
- Value the protective/prophylactic power of social connectedness
- Engage multifaceted approaches to wellness
- Consider this... PTS and an Injury or Disorder?
 - In will inform how we research and treat those who experience the trauma of armed conflicts/warfare

Maybe it's not always "Just in your head"

Applications 1

- Setting aside assumptions, bias, and perspectives. (DEI)
- 3 x 5 card Exercise and Review of responses

Applications 2

- Power Listening
- Power presence
- Power Learning

Role Play Time (everyone's favorite ;-)

We need a ~~victim~~ Volunteer!

Questions, Thoughts, or Reflections

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