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# CFAY

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## This Week at Fleet Activities, Yokosuka



Photos by Taylor Ardito and MC2 Conner Houghtaling, CFAY Public Affairs

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# AROUND CFAY

## Suicide Prevention Month Takes Center Stage at CFAY



**Story by Garrett Cole, CFAY Public Affairs**

*"For over 30 years, I have been honored to serve alongside many outstanding shipmates – together, we were forged by the sea into better Sailors and a cohesive combat team. One thing that sets the Naval Profession apart from just a job is our commitment to care for a shipmate in time of need. Our shipmates and others are never more in need than when contemplating suicide. I recognize that this is an uncomfortable subject for many – however, it is imperative that we all learn how to be alert for the risk of suicide. As a team, we must understand how to respond quickly when someone may be at risk of harming themselves. Using the steps taught in this training, you could save a life. Care for your shipmates cannot be outsourced. It must come from all shipmates."*

*– Rear Adm. Carl Lahti  
Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Japan  
Commander, Navy Region Japan*

The stark reality of suicide within the military touches not only those who serve but also leaves indelible marks on families, friends, and entire communities. The U.S. Navy is not just a military force but a community that shares the joys of triumph and the burdens of loss. Tragically, that loss is immeasurable and hauntingly persistent.

In 2022, the Navy lost 72 active-duty members and 7 reservists to suicide. Already in 2023, we've mourned the loss of 14 active duty personnel and four reservists. Though statistics enumerate these losses, they fail to capture the voids left behind or the ripple effects of such tragedies.

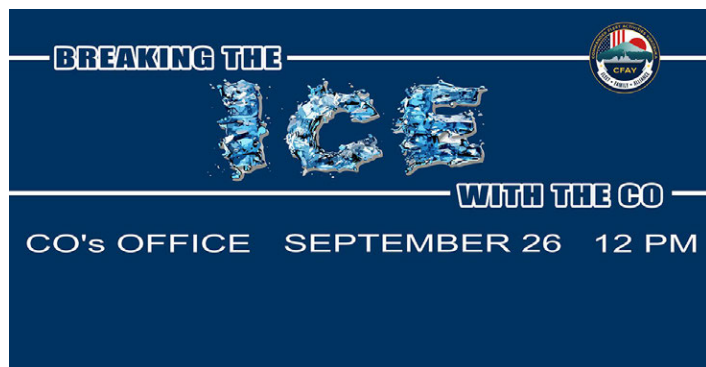
In response to this crisis, Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka is organizing several events throughout the month to raise awareness and foster a culture of proactive care. On 22 September, CFAY will host 'Walking for Awareness' from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at Berkey Field, followed by 'A Walk to Remember' at 4 p.m. from Berkey Field to Kosano Park. The walk will be followed by an open mic, fellowship, and resource booths. The CFAY Chapel of Hope is also hosting an Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) workshop from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sept. 27-28. The workshop teaches "suicide first-aid" which equips participants to act as "first responders", increasing their confidence and competence in helping prevent the immediate risk of suicide.

Military services have long wrestled with the double-edged sword of stoicism – a culture of resilience can sometimes morph into harmful silence. Lt. Cmdr. Miguel Magsaysay Alampay, the Installation Director for Psychological Health, challenges this notion head-on. "Stigmas are born from human nature, where reliability and mental health often stand in perceived opposition. The military community isn't immune to this social issue. We must first confront our own biases before we can collectively move forward."

Cmdr. Daniel Clark, Chaplains Religious Enrichment Development Operation (CREDO) Director, delineates his role in suicide prevention, mainly through programs like SafeTalk and ASIST. "Suicide is not a seasonal issue; it's a year-round epidemic," Clark urges. "It's a misnomer to think we're merely educating those who struggle. We're equipping entire communities to understand the subtleties and intervene effectively."

One of the critical tools in the suicide prevention arsenal is SafeTALK. This half-day training program teaches participants to recognize and engage persons who might be having thoughts of suicide. It connects them with community resources trained in suicide intervention. "SafeTALK stresses safety while challenging taboos that inhibit open talk about suicide," says Clark.

The 'safe' in SafeTALK stands for 'suicide alertness for everyone,' and the 'TALK' letters are an acronym for the



practice actions that help those with thoughts of suicide: Tell, Ask, Listen, and Keep Safe.

The highly structured program offers participants a graduated exposure to practice actions. It helps them move past societal beliefs that may cause them to miss, dismiss, or avoid suicide alerts. This training includes six brief video scenarios strategically used to provide experiential learning for the participants.

Developed by LivingWorks Education, SafeTALK was designed to complement more extended suicide intervention training programs. The objectives include challenging attitudes that inhibit open discussions about suicide, recognizing persons who might have suicidal thoughts, and most importantly, equipping individuals to engage in direct and open talk about suicide.

Lt. Samuel Cho, Chaplain for the USS Dewey, reveals the unique pressures of military life, long deployments, isolation, and operational stress – that exacerbate mental health challenges. “Our service members are more than just warriors; they are human beings carrying their struggles in silence. This is why programs like SafeTalk aren’t optional but essential,” says Cho.

But training alone won’t solve the problem. A paradigm shift in attitudes toward mental health is critical. Resources are available, with emergency numbers and crisis lines

well-publicized but underutilized. The actual battle lies in normalizing these conversations, dismantling stigmas, and creating a culture where mental health is regarded as inseparable from physical health.

Beyond institutional programs and campaigns, there is a call for individual accountability. Rear Adm. Lahti’s assertion, “care cannot be outsourced,” is especially poignant. It summons a call to action that moves beyond formal roles and asks each member to take personal responsibility for their shipmates. While complex and multifaceted, the solution begins with individual awareness and concern.

As Suicide Prevention Month takes center stage, we are reminded to not just sit in the audience section and watch but to step into the spotlight and take action. This is more than a monthly observance; it’s a lifetime commitment to safeguard the well-being of our shipmates. Being a spectator is not an option; we must be vigilant stewards of each other’s lives. Let’s look beyond the armor of ranks and uniforms, recognizing the shared vulnerabilities that make us profoundly human. We must be proactive, responsive, and a lifeline for one another. There is no room for passive bystanders in this mission. This is a collective battle – one that requires our relentless engagement. Each life saved is a shared victory. It’s a ceaseless war; in this fight for life, even a single loss is one too many.

CNBJ FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES  
**IKEGO OPEN HOUSE**

Sunday, October 8  
11 a.m. – 2 p.m.  
Ikego Fire Station

11:00 a.m. Parade  
11:30 a.m. Demonstration  
12:00 p.m. Open House

Hot Dogs & Chips

For more, call the Fire Prevention Office at 243-5170.



CNBJ FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES  
**OPEN HOUSE**

Sunday, October 1  
11 a.m. – 2 p.m.  
Main Base Fire Station

11:00 a.m. Parade  
11:40 a.m. Demonstration  
12:00 p.m. Open House

For more information, call the Fire Prevention Office at 243-5170.

Weather permitting  
No rain date.

