

ACE (Peer) Suicide Intervention Program

James W. Cartwright, PhD



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Sergeant Major of
the Army states:

*“One suicide is one
too many!”*



*"Not all wounds are visible. If you are
feeling depressed or suicidal, seek help.
We need you on the Army team."*

SMA Kenneth O. Preston



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“ACE”

“A” = “Ask”

“C” = “Care”

“E” = “Escort”



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What Does “ACE” Training Offer?

- “ACE” teaches Soldiers how to recognize suicidal behavior in fellow Soldiers and the warning signs that accompany it
- “ACE” targets those Soldiers most at risk for suicide and the least likely to seek help due to stigma
- “ACE” increases a Soldier’s confidence to ask if a battle buddy is thinking of suicide



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What Does “ACE” Training Offer?

continued

- “ACE” teaches Soldiers skills in active listening
- “ACE” encourages Soldiers to take a battle buddy directly to the Chain of Command, Chaplain or behavioral health provider, i.e., never leave a battle buddy alone!!!



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Bottom Line

- Soldiers know each other best
- Soldiers can become a competent and confident force for preservation of life within the integrity of the unit
- Enables soldiers to become more effective at helping a battle buddy who may be at risk



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Protective Factors/Resiliency



Protective factors “enhance resilience and may serve to counter balance risk factors”.



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Protective Factors

Individual Protective Factors

1. Cultural and religious beliefs that discourage suicide and support self-preservation
2. Coping/problem solving
3. Support through ongoing health and mental health care relationships



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Protective Factors

continued

Individual Protective Factors (continued)

4. Resiliency, self esteem, direction, mission, determination, dedication, optimism, empathy support through ongoing health and mental health care relationships
5. Support through the Unit Chaplain or Unit Ministry Team



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Protective Factors

continued

Individual Protective Factors (continued)

5. Reasons for living
6. Family supports (spouse & extended family)
7. Pride and patriotism
8. Skills to recognize and respond to signs of risk



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Protective Factors

continued

Unit Protective Factors

1. Unit cohesion
2. Sense of social support and belonging in the unit
3. Staying connected with friends – Buddy system
4. Cultural values affirming life
5. Caring Leadership



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Protective Factors

continued

Military Community Protective factors

1. Access to healthcare and mental health care
2. Social support, close relationships, caring adults, participation and bond with school and church
3. Respect for help-seeking behavior



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Resiliency

- Resiliency is the ability to recover and adapt well from the face of adversity, trauma, illness, changes or misfortunes
- Soldier resiliency includes the following:
 - ✓ sense of belonging in the unit
 - ✓ Inner strength to face adversity and fears of combat



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Resiliency

continued

- ✓ Capacity to connect with buddies
- ✓ Maintaining caring and supportive relationship within and outside the family,
- ✓ Positive view of self
- ✓ Confidence in strengths and abilities to function as a Soldier
- ✓ Capacity to manage strong feelings and impulses



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Strategies for Building Resiliency

- Building resiliency is a personal journey
- Meet the challenge of building resiliency by:
 - ✓ Make connections and reach out to unit members
 - ✓ Actively engage in developing good relationships with fellow Soldiers



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Strategies for Building Resiliency

continued

- ✓ Be active in unit activities
- ✓ Join base social support groups, faith-based organizations, or other groups
- ✓ Accept and face your fears
- ✓ Nurture good relationships with family and close friends



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Strategies for Building Resiliency

continued

- ✓ Accept the help and support from them when you need someone who cares and willing to listen
- ✓ Regulate your emotions and avoid impulsive behavior. Learn to stay calm under pressure
- ✓ Maintain realistic optimism. Believe in your ability to survive and function as a good Soldier



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Strategies for Building Resiliency

continued

- ✓ Problem solve and worked toward positive outcomes.
- ✓ Commitment to physical health.
- ✓ Faith in God and the future – being connected



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ACE Skill Development



Ask your buddy

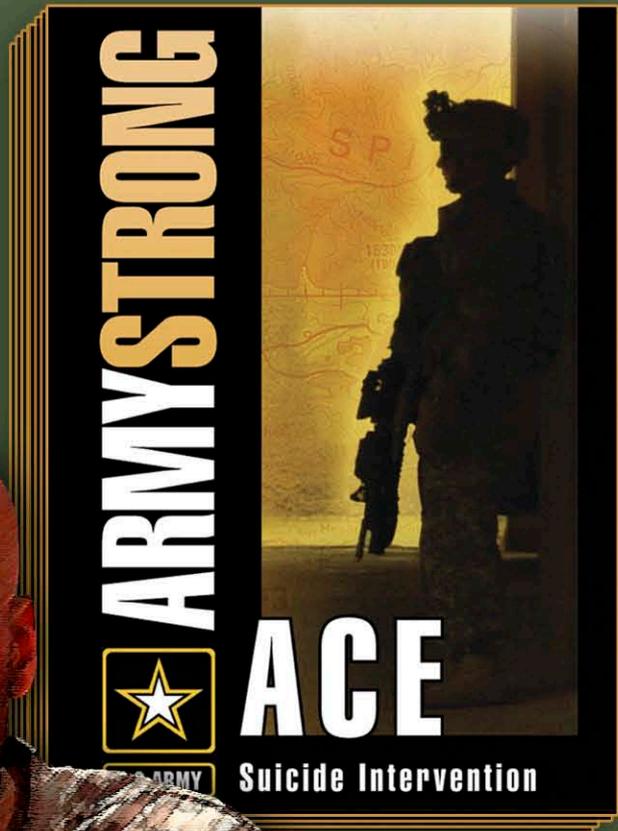
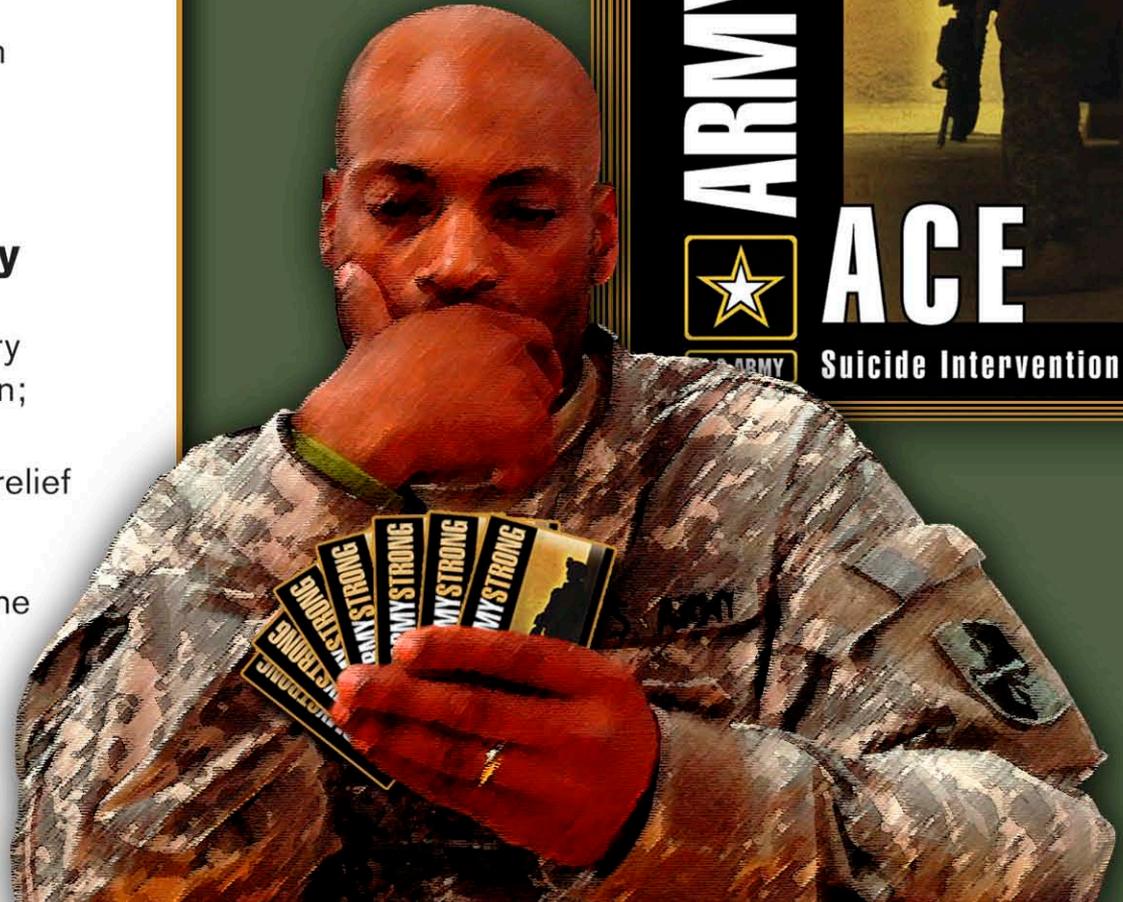
- Have the courage to ask the question, but stay calm
- Ask the question directly, e.g. Are you thinking of killing yourself?

Care for your buddy

- Remove any means that could be used for self-injury
- Calmly control the situation; do not use force
- Actively listen to produce relief

Escort your buddy

- Never leave your buddy alone
- Escort to the chain of command, a Chaplain, a behavioral health professional, or a primary care provider



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ACE for Soldiers: “Ask”

- **Ask** your battle buddy about his or her suicidal thoughts
- Know the warning signs you might see in yourself or battle buddy if he or she is suicidal. Look for any outward sign that shows a deviation from your battle buddy’s usual self
- When the warning signs are present, it is imperative to ask your battle buddy directly; “Are you thinking about killing yourself”?



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ACE for Soldiers: “Ask”

(continued)

Ask your battle buddy directly about thoughts or plans for suicide

1. Say something like, “I can see that you feel distressed.” “Have you thought of hurting yourself or someone else?” or, “Do you wish you were dead?”
2. Then “Have you thought of how you could kill yourself?”



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ACE for Soldiers: “Ask”

(continued)

Ask your battle buddy directly about thoughts or plans for suicide

3. Talk openly about suicide. Be willing to listen and allow your battle buddy to express his or her feelings



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ACE for Soldiers: “Care”

- **Care** for your battle buddy by understanding that your battle buddy may be in pain. Active listening may produce relief. Calmly control the situation: do not use force. Take action by removing any lethal means, such as weapons or pills
- Important to understand with what, where, and when the battle buddy plans to kill himself or herself. The fact your battle buddy acknowledges his or her plans generally suggests that they are accepting help



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ACE for Soldiers: “Care”

(continued)

- If your battle buddy tells you his plan, try to determine what steps he or she planned to take in order to carry out the event
- What were his or her preparations for dying (e.g., giving away personal possessions)?
- Find out the timing and location of the suicidal plan and the lethality of method
- Ask about rehearsal behaviors (e.g., tying noose, loading gun)



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ACE for Soldiers: “Care”

(continued)

- Explore ambivalence; ask your battle buddy, specifically, about his reasons to die versus the reasons to live
- Determine your battle buddy’s access to lethal methods, including firearms
- Disarm your battle buddy (lethal means). If your battle buddy is armed, say, “Let me unload your weapon and keep it safe for you while we talk”



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ACE for Soldiers: “Care”

(continued)

Now it is time to take your battle buddy for help.

1. Talking to your battle buddy
2. Encouraging your battle buddy to see a helping professional, now
3. Identifying support systems that can help your battle buddy



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ACE for Soldiers: “Escort”

- **Escort** your battle buddy immediately to your chain of command, Chaplain, or behavioral health profession
- Don't keep your battle buddy's suicidal behavior a secret. Adopting an attitude that you are going to help your battle buddy will save his or her life
- Stay with your buddy until he or she receives appropriate help. Don't leave your battle buddy alone
- Being there for your battle buddy will make the difference



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ACE for Soldiers: “Escort”

(continued)

- Be available and supportive
- Reassure your battle buddy that you will be by his or her side no matter what
- Locate help for your battle buddy. Know where to get professional help from resources in the military and civilian community
- Whatever you do, be sure to secure help and support for your battle buddy



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Active Listening

- Look your battle buddy in the eyes; suspend other things you are doing
- Listen not merely to the words, but the feeling content
- Be sincerely interested in what your battle buddy is talking about
- Talk to your battle buddy alone in a private setting



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Active Listening

(continued)

- Allow your battle buddy to talk freely
- Restate what your battle buddy said
- Ask clarification questions once in a while
- Be aware of your own feelings and strong opinion



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Active Listening

(continued)

- When talking to your battle buddy, give him and yourself plenty of time
- Stay calm and objective
- Don't criticize or argue with your battle buddy's thoughts and feelings, but listen and allow time for him/her to find words
- Have your resources handy (i.e., know how to locate your chain of command, chaplain, or behavioral health)



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Resources

The following are generally available either in garrison or in all tactical environments:

A. In Garrison:

1. Unit Chaplain; Unit Ministry Teams
2. Family Life Chaplains
3. Army Community Services
4. Medical Services (Behavioral Health or Primary Care)
5. Marriage and Family Counselors
6. Post Deployment Centers



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Resources

(continued)

The following are generally available either in garrison or in all tactical environments:

B. During Deployment:

1. Combat Stress Control Teams
2. Medics
3. Battalion Aid Station
4. Chaplain & Unit Ministry Teams



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Resources

(continued)

All Soldiers/ Family members can contact the
Military One Source for free confidential help
@ <https://www.militaryonesource.com>



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