



---

**Upstream Solutions to Crisis**

## Learning Objectives

- ★ **LO1:** Participants will learn the mission and programming of Blue Star Families.
- ★ **LO2:** Participants will learn how activating social supports can be a key suicide prevention strategy for military and Veteran families.
- ★ **LO3:** Participants will learn how to engage both professionals and peer-based support in a cohort-based, non-clinical suicide prevention program.
- ★ **LO4:** Participants will learn about key resources related to suicide prevention such as lethal means safety, warning signs of crisis, and others.
- ★ **LO5:** Participants will learn about a pilot member awareness campaign to increase suicide prevention knowledge among military and Veteran families.



**LO1:** Participants will learn the mission and programming of Blue Star Families.



## Blue Star Families

- ★ The families of our all-volunteer military make unprecedented sacrifices these days to serve our country. Blue Star Families (BSF) was founded by military spouses in 2009 to empower these families to thrive as they serve. We're committed to strengthening military families by connecting them with their neighbors – individuals and organizations – to create vibrant communities of mutual support. We believe we're all stronger when we take care of one another.



## The Blue Star Families Mission

Building strong communities of support around military families, to improve our military readiness

### Listen

We identify the challenges our military families face through our national survey

### Share

We translate data into understanding and action by sharing with military and civilian communities

### Partner

We partner at the national and local level to support military-connected families

### Act

We deliver programming, events, and resources to address the challenges identified





**2022**

# **Military Family Lifestyle Survey**

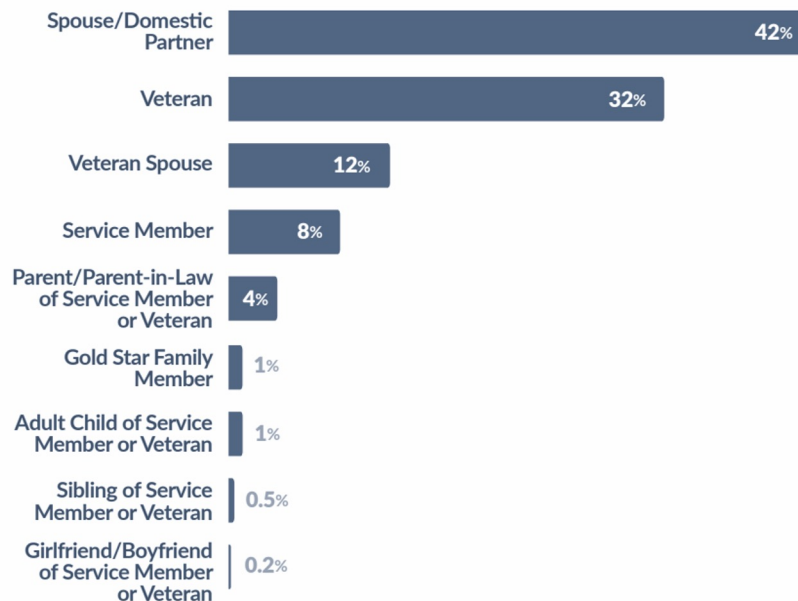
# Survey Sample

9,363  
Respondents

4,111  
*Active-Duty Family  
Respondents*

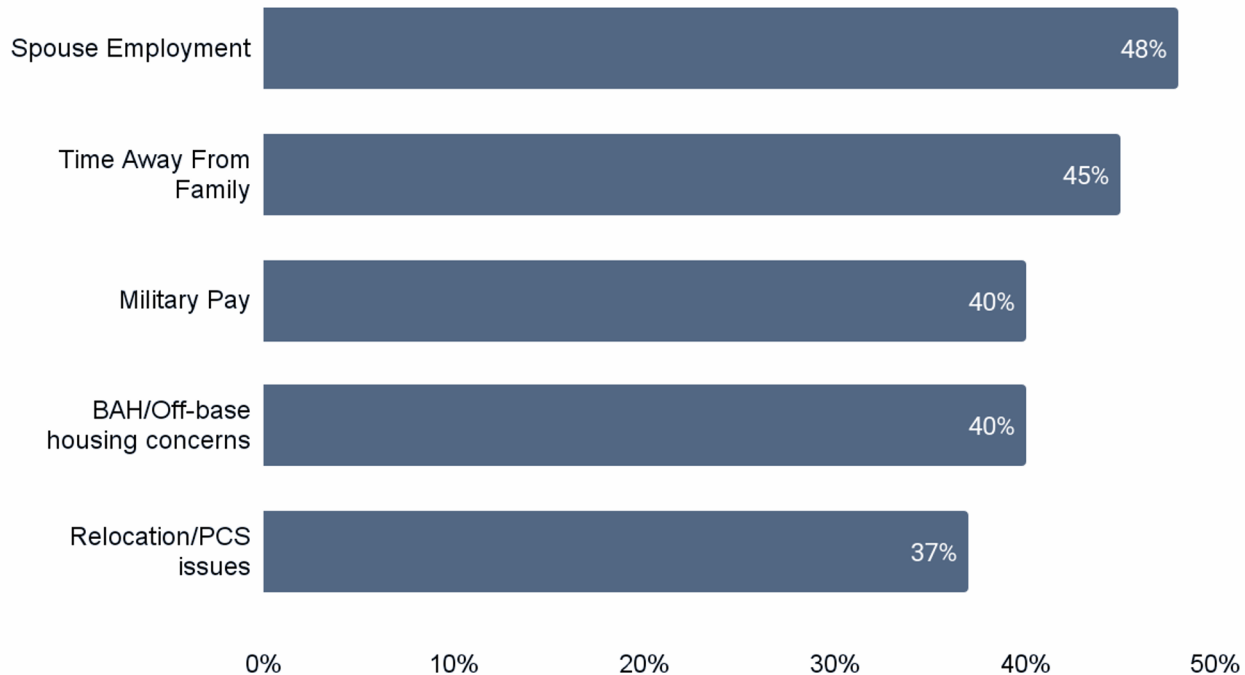
## Figure 1: Primary Relationship to Service

All respondents (n=9,363)



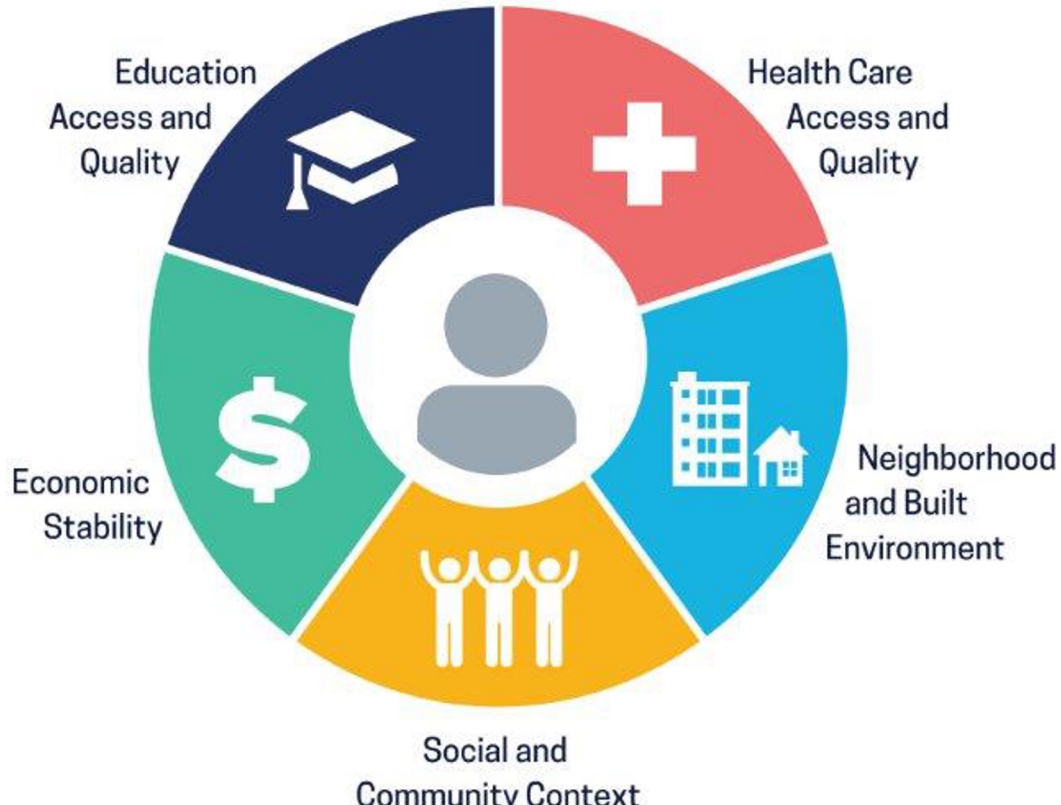
# 2022 Top 5 Issues

Active-Duty Family Respondents





# Social Determinants of Health



## Finding: Support Circles

Social support and mental health services are important to helping military families through common life stressors.

**81%** of active-duty family respondents reported they had a close friend or loved one experience one or more stressful situations.

**1 in 5** active-duty family respondents (20%) reported having an adult friend or family member who expressed suicidal thoughts, made a suicide attempt, or died by suicide in the year prior to fielding.

Just **25%** reported they feel “very confident” helping their friend or loved one through a mental health crisis.





**2023**

# **Military Family Lifestyle Survey**



**SAVE THE  
LINK NOW**

**“I feel that I now have basic resources and knowledge to get them help and be a support for their upcoming journey.”**

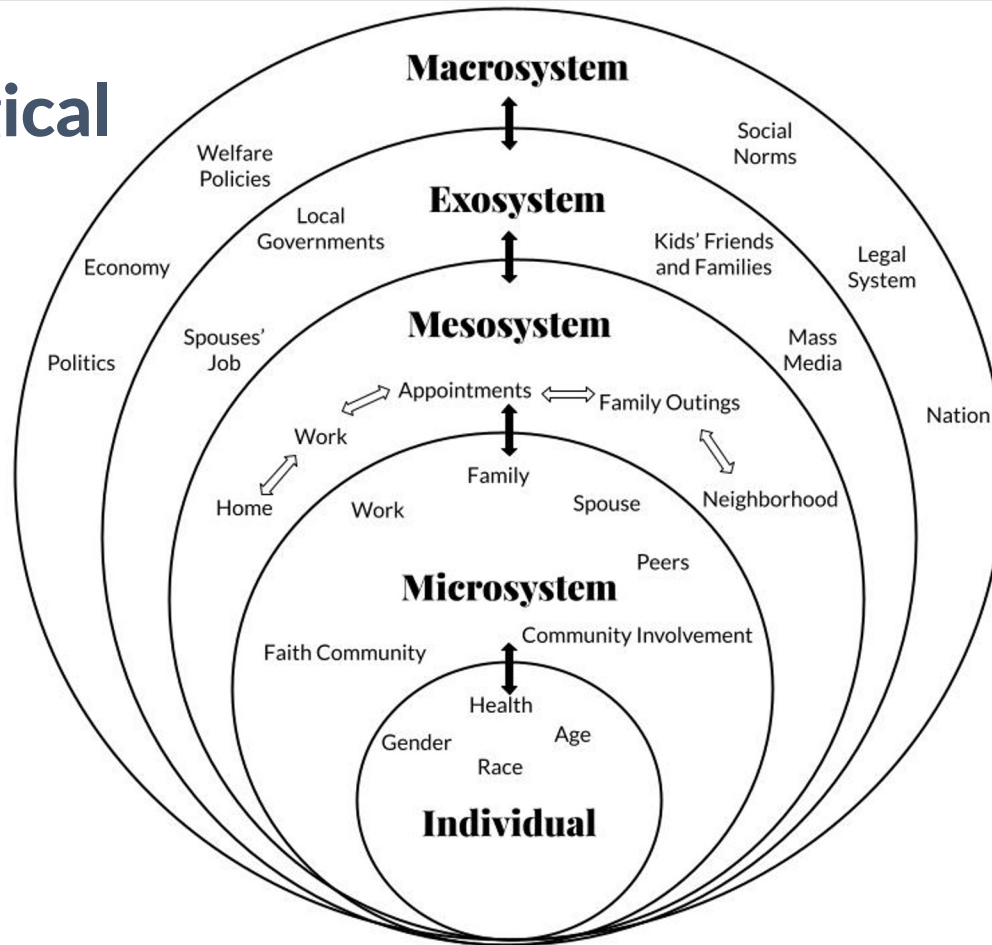
**- Support Circle Graduate**



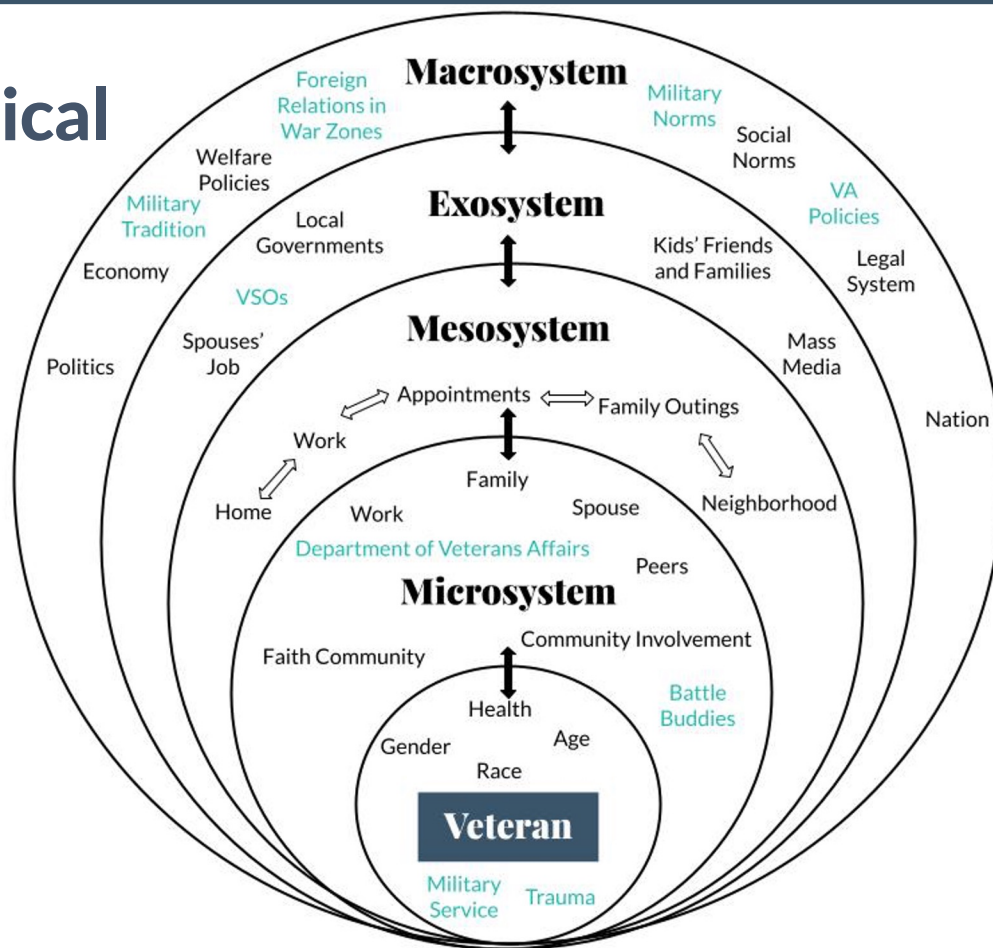
**LO2:** Participants will learn how activating social supports can be a key suicide prevention strategy for military and Veteran families.



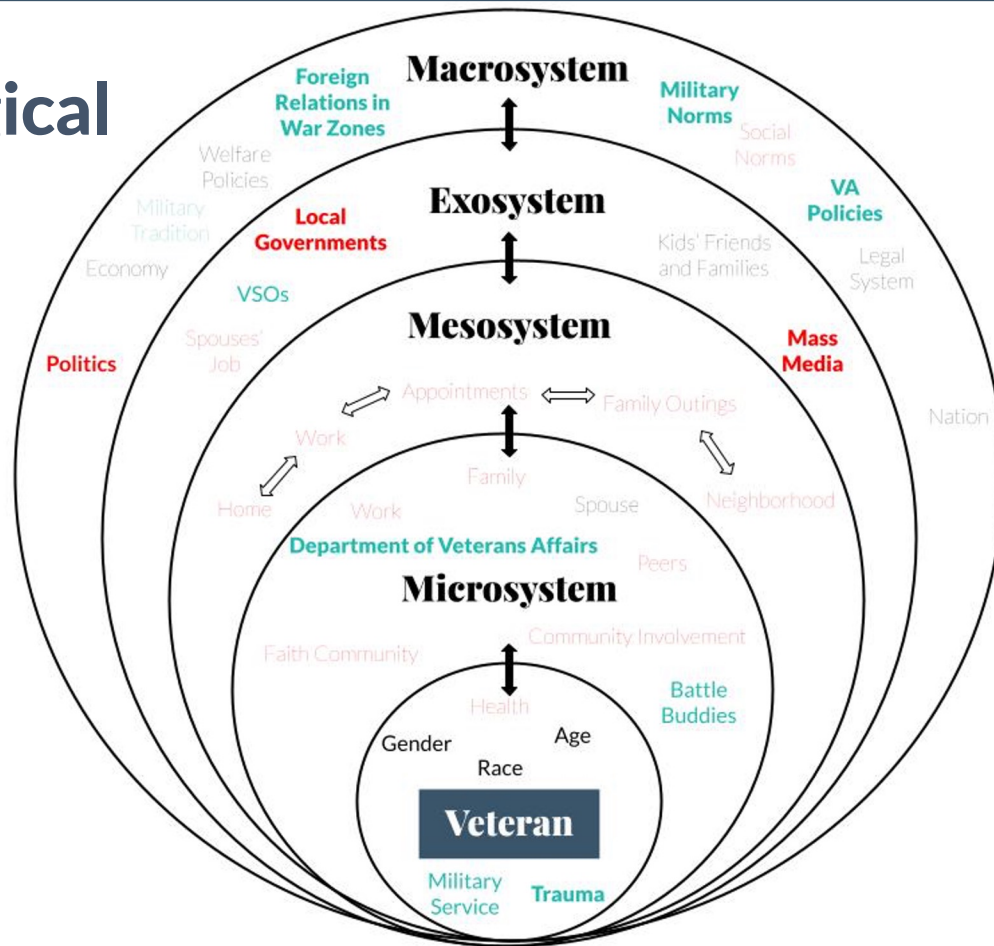
# Social-Ecological Model



# Social-Ecological Model for a Veteran

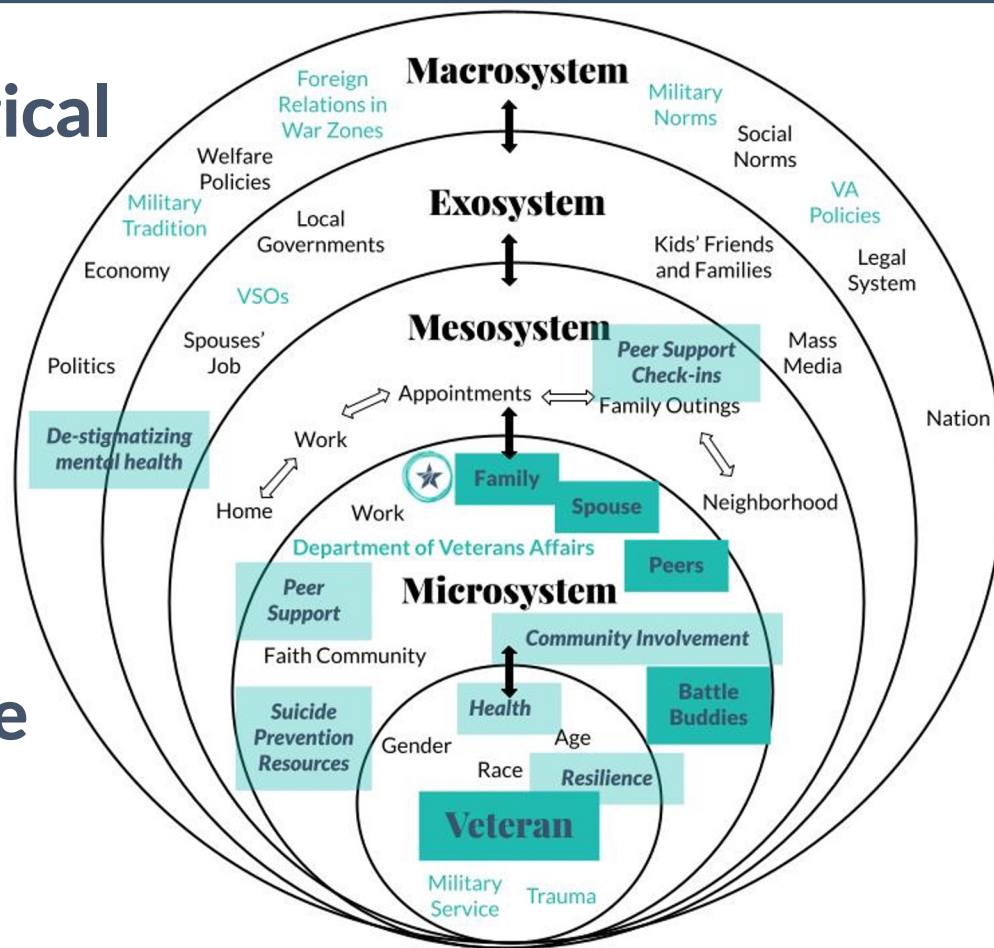


# Social-Ecological Model for a Veteran who has a Trauma History





# Social-Ecological Model for a Veteran after They or a Loved One Does a Blue Star Support Circle



**LO3:** Participants will learn how to engage both professionals and peer-based support in a cohort-based, non-clinical suicide prevention program.



## Blue Star Support Circles: *Upstream Solutions to Crisis*

### ★ SSG Fox Suicide Prevention Grant

- “SSG Fox SPGP honors Veteran Parker Gordon Fox, who joined the Army in 2014 and was a sniper instructor at the U.S. Army Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia. Known for a life of generosity and kindness to others in need, Fox died by suicide on July 21, 2020, at the age of 25.”

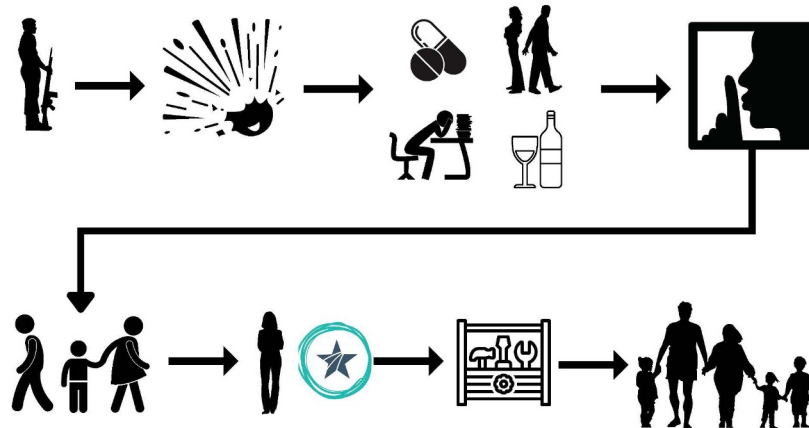
### ★ **Impact for the Community**

- A pilot program focused on the audience of veteran and servicemember **supporters**. Upstream Solutions to Crisis entails educated family and community members to intervene prior to a crisis ever happening.
- Participants in this program will leave with tangible (and emotional) resources to support others in their family and community to strengthen their mental health.



## Blue Star Support Circles Overview

- ★ Blue Star Families has a unique model for our SSG Fox Grant suicide prevention program.
- ★ We target the supporters of at-risk Veterans and Service Members.
- ★ Through education, resources, and peer support, we empower supporters to feel confident to intervene before or while their loved one is experiencing a mental health crisis.



**LO4:** Participants will learn about key resources related to suicide prevention such as lethal means safety, warning signs of crisis, and others.



## Programming & Partners

- ★ Session 1: Welcome & Community Guidelines
- ★ Session 2: Having Hard Conversations about Mental Health
  - The American Red Cross → resiliency workshop → Effective Communication
- ★ Session 3: Self-Care and Music Therapy
  - Jamie Pabst, CEO of Spiritune
- ★ Session 4: Safe Storage & Safety Plans
  - Dr. Heidi Kraft of PsychArmor
- ★ Session 5: Accepting, Embracing, and Coping with Stress
  - The American Red Cross → resiliency workshop → Stress Solutions
- ★ Session 6: Safe Messaging and Best Practices on Suicide Reporting
  - Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)
- ★ Session 7: Asking for Help for YOU
- ★ Session 8: The Way Ahead

★ *Participants also receive 24/7 access to our online platform, The Neighborhood, to connect with group outside of virtual meetings to share resources and receive support (remains active even after live programming)*



<p><u>My Warning Signs</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Heart rate increases</li> <li>● Can't think straight</li> </ul>	<p><u>Coping Skills</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Listen to music</li> <li>● Walk the dog</li> <li>● Take a shower</li> </ul>	<p><u>Social Supports</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mom: 555-732-4321</li> <li>● Best friend: 555-858-0044</li> </ul>
<p><u>Reasons for Living</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● So I can see my sister get married</li> <li>● I want to travel to Paris</li> <li>● My pets</li> </ul>	<p><u>Reasons for Living</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I want to finish my degree</li> <li>● My siblings</li> </ul>	<p><u>Resources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● crisis hotline: 988</li> <li>● Veterans hotline: 988+1</li> <li>● 911</li> </ul>



“Learning from other participants about their experiences and the skills built on communication and stress.”

“The amount of information and programs out there to help.”

“Remembering I’m not alone in these situations.”

**“What was the most impactful experience from this program?”**

“Its OK to not be OK! ....there is absolutely nothing wrong with asking for help.”

“Learning what to do to actually help someone. That there are things to do. One speaker, Heidi Kraft, was very influential for me. She had 2 key points - it's safer to ask someone if they're planning to kill themselves and limiting access to lethal means will lower a person's risk of dying by suicide.”

“Meeting others who also want to help end suicide”





**LO5:** Participants will learn about a pilot member awareness campaign to increase suicide prevention knowledge among military and Veteran families.





Our National Mental Health Awareness Campaign launched at the end of May. This campaign ('Combat the Silence') aims to raise awareness about suicide prevention among military spouses, service members, and veterans. The desired outcomes include:

- increased engagement with mental health resources
- a reduction in the stigma surrounding mental health
- a decrease in suicide rates within the target audience.

There are two prongs to this campaign: national media engagement (op-eds and articles) and a social strategy.

Our aim for social is to reach at least 100,000 military spouses, service members, and veterans on social platforms (Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram) through targeted ads and organic reach.





# Q & A