



Just Pick Up During the Holidays

15 years ago, Ranger School's Winter Mountain Phase nearly broke me. I slipped and fell, couldn't get up, and the cold crushed me. I was done in that moment. But my Ranger Buddies *picked me up* and helped me start moving again. That was an inflection point for me: I realized no one can go through life alone, we all break eventually, and we need each other.

At some point, all of us need a battle buddy to share the load. In that moment, you need someone to pick you up with grace and compassion. But, last year, we lost 260 Soldiers to suicide. Soldiers aren't getting the help they need. Signing those letters of condolence—and knowing we could have helped—is heart-breaking. I wish we never had to write another one.

The Holidays can be a high-risk period for self-harm. We know it's a problem, it happens every year, so we'll address it head-on—like 11th Airborne in Alaska who haven't lost a Soldier to suicide in 14 months. They systematically prioritize Soldier checks to offer help, make sure they are ok, and address risk factor root causes. We will do this across the Army.

This isn't performative – it's real for me. The Army is literally my family: my grandfather and father were Soldiers, my nephew is serving now, and I hope my children serve in the future. My Army buddies are my family too: I still lean on my Platoon Sergeant and driver from my 2009 Iraq deployment and convinced them to work for me in this office. When I make decisions, I do it fully knowing that my friends and our sons and daughters will bear the consequences. This is personal for me, I know it is for you too, so let's change it together.

Effective now through 15 January, an officer or NCO will deliberately check in on every Soldier daily to see if they need help. Just pick up your phone or car keys—call, text, or visit your buddy—and pick them up too. *Just pick up so we can provide help.*

For those who need help: when your phone rings during daily check-up, ***just pick up***, and ask for help. Seeking help is not weakness—it takes courage, faith, and trust that your family, friends, and community will accept you and help you. We want to pick you up, share your load, and get you moving forward again. There is light beyond the darkness that surrounds you. Just keep fighting through this moment, pick up your phone, and let us help you.

So, just pick up your phone, scan these QR codes, and learn about the resources available.

If you or someone you know needs help now, dial 988 and press 1 for the Military Crisis Line.

Every life is sacred, we're all in this together, and just picking up can *save Soldiers' lives*.



988 Lifeline


Dan Driscoll
Secretary of the Army



Army Suicide Prevention Program