



OIF TIPS – HELPING A SOLDIER/ BUDDY IN DISTRESS



In Operation Iraqi Freedom, any Soldier can run into rough times.

Examples of hard things include: seeing destroyed homes; dead bodies; hostile reactions from civilians; being ambushed; small arms fire; IEDs; knowing someone seriously injured or killed; long deployment; lack of privacy and personal space; separation from family; difficult communication back home.

The fact is that all of us can sometimes feel down, hurt, or angry. **If you see a buddy upset, fuming or brooding alone, you can help your buddy** through what may be for him a painful and sometimes risky time. Emotionally distracted soldiers can endanger the mission, the unit, and themselves. **Often**, just talking, listening, and focusing on their strengths, is all that people need to find their own answers. The following things you can say and do:

1. **Be a good friend.** For example, say, "Something seems to be bothering you. How can I help? I can listen without being upset."
2. **Listen and encourage** your buddy to talk about what is bothering him or her. **Stay calm and objective.**
3. **Don't criticize or argue with the Soldier's ideas and feelings.** Encourage your buddy to continue tell you what's wrong. **Allow time for your buddy to find words.**
4. **Acknowledge your buddy's grievances** against others, but don't make it worse by agreeing too strongly.
5. **Ask questions to understand** the problem and the feelings. If the talking stalls, **summarize what has been said** and ask if you have it right.
6. **Don't give a lot of advice.** It is okay to plant the seeds of new ideas but don't drive them in with a hammer. Remember you don't need to have all the answers for the Soldier's problems.
7. **Praise your buddy's** work he/she has been doing under such difficult circumstances, and for talking with you.

Card 1 - front



OIF TIPS – HELPING A SOLDIER/ BUDDY IN DISTRESS



In Operation Iraqi Freedom, any Soldier can run into rough times.

Examples of hard things include: seeing destroyed homes; dead bodies; hostile reactions from civilians; being ambushed; small arms fire; IEDs; knowing someone seriously injured or killed; long deployment; lack of privacy and personal space; separation from family; difficult communication back home.

The fact is that all of us can sometimes feel down, hurt, or angry. **If you see a buddy upset, fuming or brooding alone, you can help your buddy** through what may be for him a painful and sometimes risky time. Emotionally distracted soldiers can endanger the mission, the unit, and themselves. **Often**, just talking, listening, and focusing on their strengths, is all that people need to find their own answers. The following things you can say and do:

1. **Be a good friend.** For example, say, "Something seems to be bothering you. How can I help? I can listen without being upset."
2. **Listen and encourage** your buddy to talk about what is bothering him or her. **Stay calm and objective.**
3. **Don't criticize or argue with the Soldier's ideas and feelings.** Encourage your buddy to continue tell you what's wrong. **Allow time for your buddy to find words.**
4. **Acknowledge your buddy's grievances** against others, but don't make it worse by agreeing too strongly.
5. **Ask questions to understand** the problem and the feelings. If the talking stalls, **summarize what has been said** and ask if you have it right.
6. **Don't give a lot of advice.** It is okay to plant the seeds of new ideas but don't drive them in with a hammer. Remember you don't need to have all the answers for the Soldier's problems.
7. **Praise your buddy's** work he/she has been doing under such difficult circumstances, and for talking with you.

Card 1 - front

Sometimes the problems are too big to resolve after one talk or help. In OIF, the Army has fielded additional helpers for Soldiers with such problems. Beyond the **immediate sergeant and officer leaders**, you can encourage the Soldier to go and talk about problems with the following:

- **Unit Medic**
- **A Chaplain** or chaplain assistant
- **BN Aid Station or medical companies' medical care providers.** These and the Chaplain should know where the Mental Health helpers are and how to contact them, as well as being helpers, too.
- **Mental Health officers, NCOs, and Specialists at the medical companies** or in **Combat Stress Control teams** in your area.

If your buddy gives any hints or clues of thinking about suicide, or seriously harming or killing someone else, remember your Suicide Prevention Training!

- Ask your buddy questions that will give you a better idea of what he/she is thinking, such as:
 - "I see how distressed you are. Are you thinking about hurting yourself or someone else?"
 - "Do you wish you were dead?"
 - "Have you thought of how you would kill yourself?"
- **Don't act shocked or alarmed.** Encourage your buddy to talk by using the techniques on this card.
- **If your buddy is armed**, say, "Let me unload your weapon and keep it safe for you while we talk."
- **After your buddy has talked as much as he or she wants**, say, "I need to get you help for this. People here can help you."
- **Don't leave your buddy alone! Secure any weapons. Take your buddy immediately to your chain of command or to medical care!**

A suicidal person needs immediate attention by helpers.

TC#01 March 2004



For more information access: www.armyonesource.com

Card 1 - back

Sometimes the problems are too big to resolve after one talk or help. In OIF, the Army has fielded additional helpers for Soldiers with such problems. Beyond the **immediate sergeant and officer leaders**, you can encourage the Soldier to go and talk about problems with the following:

- **Unit Medic**
- **A Chaplain** or chaplain assistant
- **BN Aid Station or medical companies' medical care providers.** These and the Chaplain should know where the Mental Health helpers are and how to contact them, as well as being helpers, too.
- **Mental Health officers, NCOs, and Specialists at the medical companies** or in **Combat Stress Control teams** in your area.

If your buddy gives any hints or clues of thinking about suicide, or seriously harming or killing someone else, remember your Suicide Prevention Training!

- Ask your buddy questions that will give you a better idea of what he/she is thinking, such as:
 - "I see how distressed you are. Are you thinking about hurting yourself or someone else?"
 - "Do you wish you were dead?"
 - "Have you thought of how you would kill yourself?"
- **Don't act shocked or alarmed.** Encourage your buddy to talk by using the techniques on this card.
- **If your buddy is armed**, say, "Let me unload your weapon and keep it safe for you while we talk."
- **After your buddy has talked as much as he or she wants**, say, "I need to get you help for this. People here can help you."
- **Don't leave your buddy alone! Secure any weapons. Take your buddy immediately to your chain of command or to medical care!**

A suicidal person needs immediate attention by helpers.

TC#01 March 2004



For more information access: www.armyonesource.com

Card 1 - back