



Operating in High-Stress Contexts: The Role of Peers in Responding to an Acute Stress Reaction

And

Using New Technologies to Advance the Understanding, Prediction, and Prevention of Suicidal Behavior

Service members operating in high-stress contexts like combat may experience an acute stress reaction, or a set of intense physiological and cognitive symptoms of anxiety in response to an overwhelming stressor. This “amygdala hijack” is primarily characterized by disrupted functioning, potentially placing the individual and team in danger. In one study, approximately 40-50% of Soldiers with combat experience reported witnessing an acute stress reaction in teammates. While the acute stress reaction may be brief and resolve itself over time, given the potential threat posed to the entire team, it is valuable to consider ways that peers can rapidly intervene. Recently, the US adapted an Israeli Defense Forces technique to address acute stress reaction. This intervention, called “iCOVER” in the US military, has been tested in small teams training in realistic environments and with troops preparing to deploy to combat. In both cases, the training has been well accepted and has helped shift attitudes and increase confidence in the team and in leadership. This presentation will review recent study findings and discuss ways that acute stress reaction differs from acute stress disorder.

Suicide is a leading cause of death in the US and worldwide. Whereas the mortality rate associated with many leading causes of death (cancer, pneumonia, HIV/AIDS) has declined dramatically over the past decades, the suicide rate is the same now as it was 100 years ago. Recent advances in technology and computing are providing tools that have been used to advance the understanding, prediction, and prevention of suicidal behaviors in recent years. This presentation will review some of these advances and the ways in which they could be incorporated into clinical practice in a range of different hospital- and community-based settings.

Target Audience: Health care professionals who work with civilian and military trauma-exposed populations.

Instructional Level: Intermediate

Learning Objectives:

Attendees will be able to:



- Differentiate between acute stress reaction and acute stress disorder
- Analyze actions that peers can take to mitigate acute stress reaction in team members
- Evaluate key risk factors for suicide
- Measure suicidal thoughts using objective tests
- Analyze the different profiles of suicidal thinking that have been identified in ecological momentary assessment studies
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Agenda:

9:15 – 10:00 AM ET: Operating in High-Stress Contexts: The Role of Peers in Responding to an Acute Stress Reaction

10:00 – 10:45 AM ET: Using New Technologies to Advance the Understanding, Prediction, and Prevention of Suicidal Behavior

Location Information

Address:

Online via Zoom

4/19/2022, 9:15 – 10:45 AM ET

Participate

Registration Information:

To register for this training, please visit:

https://usuhs.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_jSR65M6yQwyzEaTY1TBksQ

Cost/Refunds: Free

Special Accommodations:

If you require special accommodations due to a disability, please contact Julia Petrini at julia.petrini.ctr@usuhs.edu FOUR weeks prior to the training so that we may provide you with appropriate service.

Presenter

Amy Adler, Ph.D., is a clinical research psychologist and senior scientist with the Center for Military Psychiatry and Neuroscience at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR). She obtained a B.A. in economics from Brown University, and an M.A. and



Ph.D. in clinical psychology from the University of Kansas. She completed her clinical internship and fellowship at Chicago-area medical centers.

Dr. Adler then served as a clinical psychologist in military health clinics in Frankfurt and Darmstadt, Germany, as an instructor with the University of Maryland-European Division, and as a research psychologist in an overseas unit of WRAIR located in Heidelberg, Germany. She later transitioned to WRAIR in Silver Spring, MD.

Besides conducting randomized trials with training and operational units, Dr. Adler has authored more than 160 articles and chapters, and co-edited seven books, including *Anger at Work* (2021) and *Deployment Psychology* (2011). She also served as an associate editor of *Military Psychology* and the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*. Her current roles include capability area manager with the Army's Psychological Health, Resilience, and Wellbeing research program and senior advisor to the WRAIR's Research Transition Office.

Dr. Adler received the Department of the Army Meritorious Civilian Service Award (2014, 2020) and the Commander's Award for Civilian Service (2008, 2018). She is a member of the Order of Military Medical Merit (OM3), is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association, received a Distinguished Mentor Award from the American Psychological Association (2017) and is a recipient of the Distinguished Service Award from The Military Health Systems Research Symposium (2019).

Dr. Adler's current research interests include emotion regulation strategies, small-team adaptability, behavioral health leadership, and rapid peer-based interventions to reduce acute stress.

Matthew K. Nock, Ph.D., is the Edgar Pierce Professor of Psychology, Harvard College Professor (2019–2024), and Chair of the Department of Psychology at Harvard University. Dr. Nock received his Ph.D. in psychology from Yale University (2003) and completed his clinical internship at Bellevue Hospital and the New York University Child Study Center (2003).

Dr. Nock's research is aimed at advancing the understanding why people behave in ways that are harmful to themselves, with an emphasis on suicide and other forms of self-harm. His research is multidisciplinary in nature and uses a range of methodological approaches (e.g., epidemiologic surveys, laboratory-based experiments, clinic-based studies, digital monitoring via smartphones and biosensors, and web- and social-media-based experiments) to better understand how these behaviors develop, how to predict them, and how to prevent their occurrence. This work is funded by grants from the US National Institutes of Health, US Department of Defense, US Army, and private foundations and has been published in over 300 scientific papers.

Dr. Nock's work has been recognized through the receipt of career awards from the American Psychological Association, the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies, and the American Association of Suicidology; and in 2011 he received a MacArthur Fellowship (aka "Genius Grant"). At Harvard, Dr. Nock teaches courses on statistics, research methods, self-destructive behaviors, developmental psychopathology, and cultural diversity — for which he has received teaching and mentoring awards including the Roslyn Abramson Teaching Award, the Petra Shattuck Prize, and the Lawrence H. Cohen Outstanding Mentor Award.



**There is no commercial support or conflict of interest to report for these presenters.

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