

## The DoD Times (Redacted)



### *The Unwittingly Deliberate Minimization of Suicidal Ideations – The Military Medical “Health Care” System*

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**Did You Know:** Military health care providers, inclusive of Behavioral Health providers, will often explain to a Service Member that their suicidal ideations are “not a serious cause for concern” if the ideations were greater than two weeks prior to the discussion with the health provider, and if the Service Member confirms to the provider that they did not “have a plan” for following through with their ideations.

Here are some potential implications of this fact:

1. Military health providers risk making Service Members – a group of people rightly expected to embody power, discipline, and self-control – feel foolish for expressing an emotional vulnerability to a stranger.
2. Due to potentially making the Service Member feel foolish, military health providers squander the opportunity to learn the true nature of the Service Member’s past and present emotional health.
3. Military health providers risk inadvertently encouraging the Service Member to *make that plan* to commit suicide – “Maybe now they will take me seriously!”
4. Military health providers risk making Service Members feel even more reluctant to let anyone, including friends and family, know when they are experiencing emotional distress.
5. Military health providers risk making the Service Member feel even more alone.
6. Service Members will lose confidence in their ability to discern the true nature of their environment – “maybe they are right, and I **am** just overreacting.” This is likely particularly true for those Service Members whose suicidal ideation was brought on by an emotionally and/or physically abusive and manipulative ([gaslighting](#)) work and/or personal life.

A question to ask yourself is whether military medical health providers are under unnecessary institutional pressures to treat an initial discussion regarding suicidal ideations as a black and white question of “do I need to intervene and send this Service Member to the psych ward now or not.” It is likely that for the Service Member, these discussions

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are never so black and white and their potential mishandling within both the military medical community and at the unit level will lead to [catastrophic outcomes](#). We must do better.

If you feel that you have been a victim of this "Did You Know" highlight, feel free to reach out privately or share your story in the comments. [Friends - Do Your Buddy Checks - Save A Life](#)