




U.S. ARMY

# INSTRUCTOR GUIDE



DIRECTORATE OF PREVENTION,  
RESILIENCE AND READINESS



## *Ask, Care, Escort* *Suicide Prevention Training* *Active Listening Module* *for Circle of Support*

***ACE Base +1***

September 2023

VERSION 1.3



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## Introduction

The Army Suicide Prevention Program was instituted by CSA General John A. Wickham in 1984. Since that time, suicide prevention and awareness has evolved. In 2009, Ask, Care, Escort (ACE) training was introduced to update existing suicide prevention training and to respond to a rise in suicide rates.

ACE training introduced suicide prevention and intervention concepts that had proven successful outside of the Army. Its primary goals were to increase suicide awareness and improve the ability of Soldiers to identify team members who may be suicidal and get them to help.

In 2018, ACE training was updated to highlight its use not only during a crisis, but also before one occurs by incorporating Army team building and unit cohesion concepts. This training is aligned with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's strategic comprehensive public health approach to suicide prevention.

In 2022, the ACE suicide prevention and intervention material was updated yet again and coined ACE Base + 1. The training now consists of a base module along with a menu of “+1” modules that the unit’s command team can choose from based upon the unit’s needs. Together, the base module and the +1 module make up the mandatory one hour of annual suicide prevention and intervention training.

In addition to the tailored training approach, the training is now designed to be more interactive and conversational. In contrast to a traditional “annual briefing,” ACE Base +1 is an “annual conversation” at platoon level where Soldiers in the platoon are able to discuss how they can take care of one another on a human level as it pertains to suicide prevention and intervention.

In 2023, the Army’s suicide prevention and intervention training expanded to include a tailored curriculum for the Soldiers’ Circle of Support members and DA Civilians. A Soldier’s Circle of Support includes anyone whom the Soldier considers to be a priority within their support system, such as a spouse, significant other, parent, sibling, other family member, mentor, and friend. The intent is that offering Circle of Support members the same knowledge and skills while using the same language and strategies can enable conversation between the Circle of Support member(s) and the Soldier regarding suicide prevention and intervention. What’s more, it can promote effective communication, bolster protective factors like increased cohesion and connection, and increase suicide prevention efforts within the whole Army Family.

*Material has been reviewed by the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. There is no objection to its presentation and/or publication. The opinions or assertions contained herein are the private views of the author, and are not to be construed as official, or as reflecting true views of the Department of the Army or the Department of Defense*



## Intent

**Cohesive efforts:** This ACE module resembles the content and format of the ACE Base module for Soldiers but has been tailored for members of a Soldier's Circle of Support (e.g., spouse, significant other, parent(s), siblings, extended family, friends, mentors). It is strongly recommended that this training be offered around the same time frame that their Soldiers receive the ACE Unit Training. According to AR 600-63, ACE suicide prevention and intervention training must be offered to Circle of Support members on an annual basis.

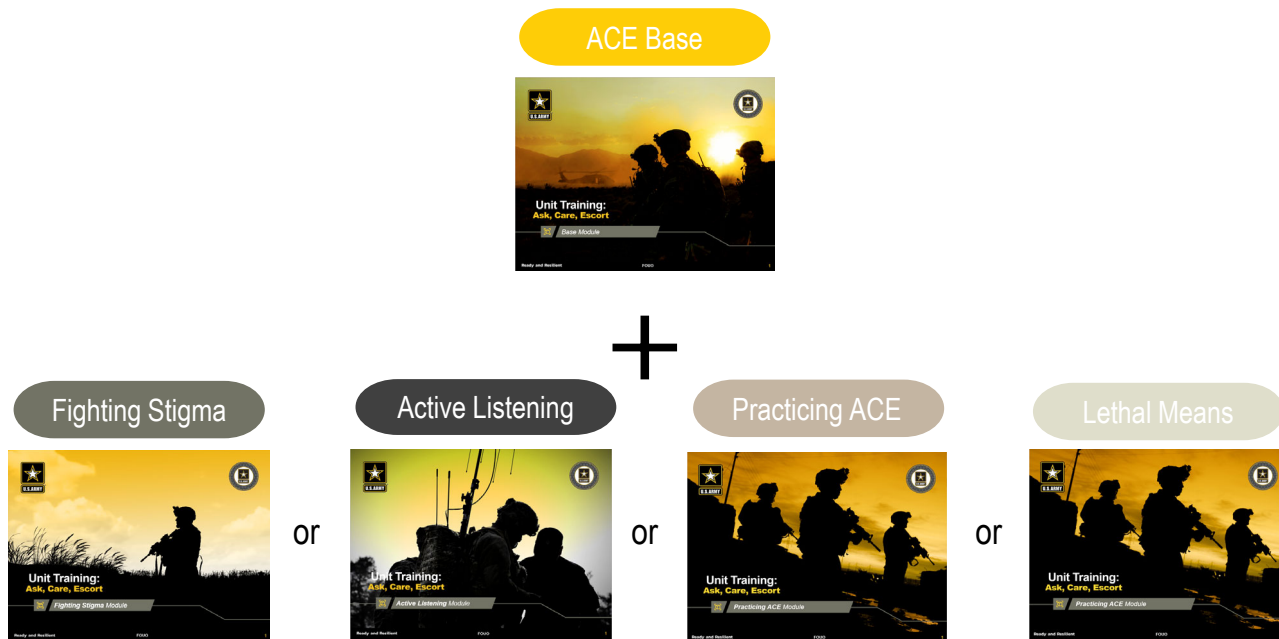
A majority of the examples, discussions, and activities are focused on how a Circle of Support member might apply ACE concepts with their Soldier. The Soldier-focused examples are not to discount the importance of other people (e.g., family members, friends) or relationships that participants have with others; instead, it is done intentionally to keep the training focused on similar learning concepts. Also, it is the most universally relevant focus given every participant attending is there due to having vested interest in a Soldier.

**Facilitated discussion and engagement:** This training is designed to be facilitated by a single instructor and delivered in an interactive, discussion-based format (rather than conventional lecture or didactic format). Because this module utilizes group interaction, it is highly recommended that it be led by an instructor who is able and willing to elicit participant engagement through facilitating meaningful discussions and practical exercises. The practical exercises are essential in allowing participants the opportunity to try out the Ask, Care, Escort process strategies in a safe, non-threatening environment and develop competence and confidence to use the strategies in real-life scenarios.

**Delivered in-person to small groups:** The ACE training for Circle of Support is intended to be delivered in person and it is highly recommended that this training be conducted with small groups (fewer than 40). In-person training allows for optimal engagement and also fosters relationship building amidst the participants. For example, new friendships and support networks may be established among those attending this class. There may be circumstances that warrant a virtual training option, however, in order to be realistic and inclusive to all Circle of Support members who wish to participate (e.g., Circle of Support members being geographically scattered, child-care constraints, work schedules). Trainers and command teams are advised to use their discretion to determine the best mode of delivery without compromising its value.



**Training Requirements:** The U.S. Army’s requirement for annual suicide prevention training is for Soldiers to complete one hour of training that includes the “ACE Base” module along with one of the “+1” modules, and for the Circle of Support members to be offered annual training as well.



**Note:** Each module should be trained to standard and not to time, it is most effective when time is allowed for in-depth group discussion and participation. To maximize the benefits of this training, allow for extra time for dialogue and interaction.

**Training Package Components:** The complete “ACE Base +1” training package consists of five PowerPoint® presentations (i.e., ACE Base, Active Listening, Fighting the Stigma, Practicing ACE, and Lethal Means) and a SmartGuide with key information to be discussed for each slide (see notes page iv for SmartGuide overview).

**Training Precautions:** The ACE suicide prevention and awareness training deals with sensitive information and may trigger painful memories or other issues for training participants. It is possible that someone attending the training may have experienced thoughts of suicide or may have experienced a loved one who has struggled with suicidal thoughts, ideation, or worse – died by suicide.

If you are not a chaplain or behavioral health provider, it is recommended that you have someone from the chaplain’s office or Behavioral Health Services on call during your training session. Be sure to coordinate before the training and obtain their name, title, and consent to act as an immediate resource if needed. Provide them with the date, time, and location of the training; on the day of the training, be sure to have the number(s) at which they can be reached or another plan for reaching them.

*The mention of any non-federal entity and/or its products is not to be construed or interpreted, in any manner, as federal endorsement of that non-federal entity or its products.*



### **Training Preparation:**

**Content:** ACE Training is the U.S. Army's annual suicide prevention training, which is mandatory for Soldiers (IAW AR 600-63) and to be made available to Circle of Support members. The material is based on the most current research and academic literature on suicide prevention and follows educational best practices. The training is designed to enable the instructor to successfully lead participants through suicide prevention concepts with interactive activities and discussions to prompt critical thinking. For the training to be most effective, it is advised that instructors review all content in advance.

When instructing, follow the content as written. Insert personal stories/examples as appropriate. Prompts are written into the SmartGuide to highlight times when personal stories/examples can be most valuable. There are many benefits of sharing a personal story or example. For instance, stories/examples can help a trainer to capture the audience's attention, gain common ground with the audience, and engage the audience on a deeper level. Most importantly, effective use of personal stories or examples can help participants gain better contextual understanding of the material being taught.

The following guidelines can help ensure effective use of personal stories and examples. The story/example

- serves a clear purpose, specifically it reinforces the training objective/content
- helps participants to gain a better contextual understanding about the concepts
- does not distract participants from the focus of training (e.g., be mindful of using potentially triggering or traumatizing examples/stories)
- is simple, concise, and easy to follow/understand

Remember, sharing your personal stories/examples is to benefit the participant, not yourself. The story/example should highlight the content, not you as a person (e.g., avoid the mistake of making the training about yourself). Lastly, it is highly recommended that you practice your stories/examples before using them in a training session. Rehearsing the story/example can improve effective delivery, especially if the story/example is one that could be emotional for you to share.

**Flow:** This training module is comprised of four main sections.





**Training Preparation (continued):**

**Language:** Suicide can be an uncomfortable topic to discuss, and it can be difficult to find the words to talk about it. As researchers continue to learn more about suicide and those impacted by it, the language used continues to evolve. For example, the term “committed suicide” perpetuates the idea that suicide is a criminal act, which can be stigmatizing. Instead, consider the phrase “died by suicide” or “attempted suicide.”

Participants may unintentionally use stigmatizing language, as not everyone understands the harmful impact of these words. It is recommended that during the training, participants are allowed to use the words they feel comfortable with to promote open conversation; however, it is recommended that the instructor supports participant usage of destigmatized language and use those words themselves.

**Important concepts:** When Soldiers and Circle of Support members collectively implement the ACE process, use Active Listening and intentionally Fight the Stigma, it creates a culture of trust and cohesion. Consequently, a culture of trust and cohesion encourages help-seeking behavior; Soldiers and Circle of Support members know that when they need someone, other members of the Army Family (e.g., Soldiers in the unit, Circle of Support members, DA Civilians) will have their back. As the trainer, work to present the material as a facilitated discussion so the participants are learning the material but also learning from one another and potentially growing a trusted support network.



**ACE Training Facilitation Strategies:**

Review the SmartGuide prior to the training session. Take notes on when you may use different facilitation strategies to promote an effective learning experience for participants.

Facilitation Strategies	When/How to Use
<b>Asking Quality Questions -</b> Asking quality questions is important for generating participation and group discussions, which is why scripted questions have been included within the material.	Use closed-ended questions for a check on learning or to get a group consensus. Use open-ended questions when you want to generate discussion. Restate your question when it seems unclear. Poll the audience to get a show of hands, then ask participants to provide examples or explain their rationale. Let participants know, when appropriate, if there is “no right or wrong answer for this question,” which can ease the pressure on the group.
<b>Efficient Instructions -</b> Efficient instructions for exercises are clear and concise directions resulting in participants' understanding of the intent of the exercise, what actions they need to take, and how long they have to complete the work.	Include timings in your instructions to help participants understand how in-depth their discussions should be. Provide time prompts such as “one minute left,” to keep the group on track during activities. Demonstrate lengthy instructions with another individual.
<b>Conducting Effective Discussions -</b> Discussions can sometimes get off track. It is important to be purposeful when leading a conversation about a particular topic or activity.	Effective discussions are learner-centric, keep the conversation moving forward, and include a summary with key takeaway points. If restricted in your available time, consider having partners/small groups discuss then select a few representatives to share with the larger group.
<b>Handling Challenges Effectively -</b> There can be many challenges that occur when teaching a class. Having strategies for challenges that are likely to arise can help you be more prepared.	Be prepared to handle difficult questions, manage emotionally charged contributions, and allow the participants time to process what you have just said or asked (be okay with silence). Utilize on-call resources (e.g., chaplain or Behavioral Health) if/when necessary.
<b>Be Aware of Timing -</b> Pace yourself to ensure there is sufficient time for practical exercises and group discussion.	Leave ample time to review instructions, execute exercises, and hold discussion. If restricted in your available time, consider having volunteers demonstrate an activity for the whole group rather than working in pairs.



## Instructor SmartGuide Format:


This SmartGuide has been designed to be user-friendly while containing as much information as possible to help you present this suicide prevention training module.

At the beginning of the module is a very short introduction for the trainer, which explains the intent of the material.

When notes pages are printed and the booklet is opened, you will see the format below. On Side A is an image of the slide, a statement of slide intent (i.e., the target), and then key points and sample talking points. Key points and sample talking points may continue on to Side B when necessary.

The key points are highlighted in yellow and they briefly describe what must be covered to meet the intent of the slide. These are followed by more details or instructions.

The key points tell you what you need to do, while the bulleted notes explain how to do it.






ACE Unit Training- Base Module		ACE Unit Training- Base Module	
 <p>Record your own notes here:</p>	<p>Record your own notes here:</p>	<p>Record your own notes here:</p>	<p>Record your own notes here:</p>
<p><b>Describe protective factors and explain the importance of intentionally strengthening them for oneself and others around them.</b></p> <p><b>1. Define and describe protective factors.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protective factors are skills, strengths, or resources that help people deal more effectively with stressful events.</li> <li>Protective factors help offset or mitigate risk. Some examples of protective factors include               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using productive coping skills, like problem-solving, deep breathing, or considering another perspective on an issue</li> <li>Being willing to talk with others about the things going on in your life</li> <li>Cultivating strong personal relationships and contributing to a strong unit cohesion</li> <li>Utilizing professional resources when needing help and also when looking to be proactive with personal or professional development, and</li> <li>Connecting to a sense of purpose, like religious beliefs, your core values, or being in an influential role in another person's life.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		<p><b>2. State that it is important to consistently work to improve or strengthen the protective factors for oneself along with those of fellow Soldiers.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protective factors can be enhanced. Many military trainings such as resilience training and the "plus one" modules of ACE like, active listening, aim to bolster protective factors of Army Soldiers.</li> <li>But it requires personal ownership, too. Just like routine physical training, it is important that you work to strengthen your protective factors and those of your fellow Soldiers on a regular basis.</li> <li>Take a look at the protective factors on the slide. Consider which one or ones you could benefit from enhancing.</li> </ul> <p><i>[NOTE: Pause for a brief moment (e.g., 5 seconds). For the sake of time, this is not meant to be a question with responses, but simply a quick internal reflection.]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As a Soldier, you are part of a team. Your actions influence the protective factors of your fellow Soldiers. For example, being part of a unit that supports each other helps people feel connected. Healthy, strong connection to others is a core protective factor.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>3. Transition.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Let's look at how you can use the ACE process to bolster protective factors.</li> </ul>			

When you start preparing to train the module, you should read all of the detailed information. When you become more familiar with the material, the highlighted key points will be enough to remind you how to train each slide effectively.



**SmartGuide Symbols:**

The following symbols are used throughout the ACE Base + 1 material.

Training Module Symbol Guide		
Symbol	Represents	Explanation
	Timing	This symbol indicates the amount of time allotted for a given section of the material.
	Target / Intent	This symbol indicates the main function or rationale for a given slide.
<b>1.</b>	Key Point	Numbers are used to indicate the main points that must be addressed in order to meet a given slide's target / intent.
•	Sample Talking Point	Bullets are potential talking points that a trainer can choose to use to elaborate on key points or to review as context to the key points.
<b>[NOTE]</b>	Note to Trainer	Bracketed text indicates a note to the trainer which is not intended to be read aloud. These provide hints on how to present the material and tips to avoid potential issues that may arise within a given topic.
	Exercise	This symbol indicates the start of an exercise or activity. To avoid down-time, keep an eye out for these and plan accordingly.
<b>[?]</b>	Discussion Question(s)	This symbol identifies when there is a non-rhetorical discussion question(s) in the instructional content that follows.
	Continue	This symbol indicates that the training material for a given slide continues onto the next page.
	Stop	This symbol indicates that the training material for a given slide ends on this page.



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Record your own notes here:



**Introduce the module (and yourself, if necessary) and state the value of effective communication skills.**

## **1. Introduce the module (and yourself, if necessary).**

- Welcome to the second part of the ACE Base + 1 suicide prevention and intervention training, specifically the *Active Listening* module.

## **2. State the value of effective communication skills and how active listening contributes to it.**

- Good communication is essential. Strong, healthy relationships rely on strong effective communication. The ability to connect with one another – such as with your Soldier or other Circle of Support members – can be enhanced by strengthening your communication skills.
- Listening is essential for effective communication. Active listening helps both the listener and speaker gain a shared understanding of events, circumstances, and emotions involved in the conversation and allows the speaker to feel heard and connected.



**[NOTE: This is a natural transition to the next slide.]**






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**Training Purpose**  
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To enhance Circle of Support members' understanding of the skill of active listening and how using the skill can help build strong relationships and help with suicide prevention and intervention

DPRR2



**State the training purpose and provide a brief overview of what the module entails.**

## 1. State the training purpose.

- The purpose of this module is to enhance Circle of Support members' understanding of the skill of active listening and how using the skill can help build strong relationships and help with suicide prevention and intervention.

## 2. Provide a brief overview of what the module entails.

- We will begin by discussing what active listening is, to include four fundamentals that contribute to its effectiveness.
- Then each of you will have the opportunity to practice active listening and build on your current skill set.
- Lastly, we will discuss the application of active listening to suicide prevention and how you can leverage your personal or family values and the Army Values in the process.

Record your own notes here:





**3. State that this training uses Soldier-focused examples to ensure relevance for all participants but that ACE concepts, skills, and strategies are applicable in supporting anyone.**

*[NOTE: If the Active Listening module is trained directly after the ACE Base module, then this key point may not need to be addressed again.]*

- In today's training a majority of the examples, discussions, and activities will be focused on how a Circle of Support member might apply ACE and active listening concepts with their Soldier.
- The Soldier-focused examples are not to discount the importance of other people or relationships in your lives such as family members, friends, or colleagues.
- The Soldier-focused examples are simply the most relevant given every participant attending this training today is here because of having a vested interest in a Soldier.
- Please note that the concepts, skills, and strategies you learn today can help you provide support to anyone, not just your Soldier.


**4. Transition.**

- Let's get started.

Record your own notes here:









## What is Active Listening?

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**Active listening** is a tool that can aid the ACE process.

Recall a time when you felt you were really listened to:

- What were some behaviors that led you to feel that they were actively listening to you?
- What impact did that have on you or your relationship?

Active listening encourages open communication that can build trust, connection, and cohesive relationships.

DPRR
3



**Facilitate a group discussion about behaviors that demonstrate active listening and explain why active listening matters.**

[?]

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

**1. Connect active listening and ACE, specifically that active listening shows that you CARE.**

- The ACE Base module covered the basics of suicide awareness, prevention, and intervention, along with the Ask, Care, Escort process.
- Active listening is a tool that can aid the ACE process, especially in showing your Soldier, your family, and your friends that you CARE.

**2. Discuss behaviors that contribute to active listening and the impact that it has on relationships.**

- You likely have an idea of what active listening is. In fact, you likely have first-hand experience. So let's draw on that experience to tease out the fundamentals of active listening.
- Think about a time when you were having a conversation with someone about a topic that was important to you and you felt like the person you were talking to was truly paying attention to what you were saying.

Record your own notes here:





- **[ASK]** What were some of the other person's behaviors that led you to feel that they were actively listening to you?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses. Listen attentively and take note of participant responses that you can tie in when reviewing RASA steps in just a few moments. Examples might include

- making eye contact
- removing distractions (e.g., putting away cell phone)
- asking thoughtful questions
- acknowledging what I'm saying by nodding
- reflecting similar emotions to what I am feeling.]

- **[ASK]** What impact did that have on you or your relationship with that person?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses. Some examples might include

- felt like they cared and what I said mattered
- felt like they understood
- increased my willingness to continue to share things with them
- strengthened my trust in them.]

### 3. Explain that active listening encourages open communication that can build trust, connection, and cohesive relationships.

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- The value of active listening is that it encourages open communication and the speaker feels respected and cared for.
- In turn, this type of communication builds rapport and demonstrates your concern about the person you are conversing with and fosters trust, connection, and cohesive relationships.
- Therefore, using active listening with others provides opportunities to help prevent a person from being in crisis events by building strong relationships, which is an important part of a good suicide prevention program.

**[NOTE:** Sharing a personal example of how your use of active listening helped build rapport, trust, connection, or cohesion can be beneficial here.]

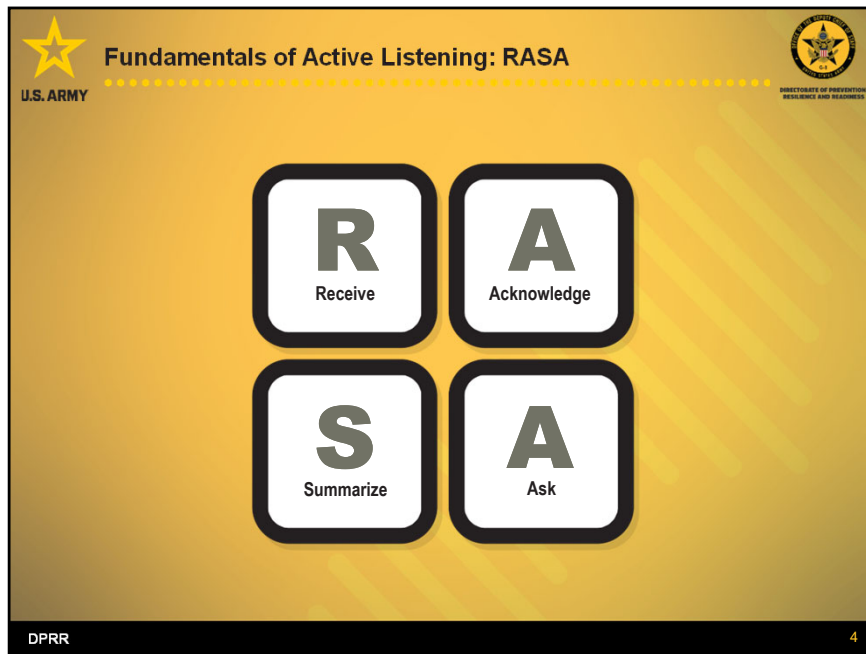
### 4. Transition.

- Next we will review how you can be more deliberate in using active listening.

Record your own notes here:







**Introduce the fundamentals of active listening using the RASA acronym.**

**1. Introduce the fundamentals of active listening using the RASA acronym.**

*[NOTE: This is meant to be an overview and introduction to the RASA components. DO NOT spend time explaining each component here; each one is discussed in greater detail in the slides to follow.]*

- There are four basic fundamentals for effective active listening, which include Receive, Acknowledge, Summarize, and Ask.
- You likely know how much the Army loves acronyms. So to help you remember the four fundamentals of active listening you can use the acronym RASA.

**2. Explain the importance of reflecting understanding throughout the process.**

- Throughout the active listening process, it is important to provide intentional feedback to the speaker that assures them that you are understanding the meaning of what has been said.
- This can be done by mirroring the content and the emotion of what was said through both verbal and non-verbal cues. For example, when you summarize, you not only summarize the content but also restate the speaker's tone of emotion while doing so with respect.



Record your own notes here:



### 3. Explain the value of having a process to rely upon and intentionally train.

- There are parts of active listening that may be intuitive or may come naturally to you or others. Sometimes when stress increases, however, it is helpful to have a process to rely upon. With more deliberate awareness of the fundamentals, you can be more intentional in training your effectiveness at using them.
- Although we use the acronym RASA to remember the fundamentals of the skill, you do not have to use them in any specific order.

### 4. Set participants up for an active review of the RASA fundamentals and for the practical exercise ahead.

- A few moments ago, I asked you to share about a personal experience of being actively listened to. You will likely find that many of your responses align with the RASA fundamentals.
- As we work through each fundamental, you'll have the opportunity to connect your earlier responses to the respective fundamental you believe it best aligns with.
- Following the review, you will practice the RASA fundamentals with one another in a practical exercise.

**[NOTE: This is a natural transition to the next slide.]**

**[NOTE: The four RASA fundamental slides follow a general battle rhythm:**

1. Describe the fundamental.
2. Pose a question for quick engagement.
3. Get a couple of responses (most responses were generated in the discussion of 'What is active listening?' Here you are helping participants to match those behaviors with the respective RASA fundamental).
4. Build the slide [click to advance] to show additional examples to supplement participant responses if/when necessary.
5. Move on to the next slide.]

Record your own notes here:









**RASA: Receive**

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**RECEIVE:** Give full attention  
and defer judgment

**How can you show the speaker that you are effectively receiving the message?**

- Squaring up body position and making good eye contact
- Resisting mentally preparing what you will say in response
- Allowing the speaker to finish before asking any questions or offering your perspective
- Trying to empathize with the speaker and put yourself into their shoes
- Resisting interrupting with counter arguments or offering quick solutions

DPRR

5

Record your own notes here:



**Review the “Receive” fundamental of active listening.**

**[?]**

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

**1. Describe the “Receive” fundamental of active listening.**

- R stands for Receive. You receive information by giving your full attention to the person and to what they are saying while also deferring judgment.
- Showing the speaker that the intended message is received helps to ensure a shared understanding and concern for what is being said.

**2. Ask for example behaviors that demonstrate a person is effectively receiving the message being sent.**

- [ASK]** How can you show the speaker that you are effectively receiving the message?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses. Help participants recall some examples that were given during the initial group discussion that relate to “receiving.”]





***[CLICK TO ADVANCE]***

***[NOTE: Only review examples here that supplement the responses already given by participants, no need to belabor the point if initial discussion covered it adequately.]***


- Here are some additional examples of behaviors that demonstrate you are in receive mode:
  - squaring up body position and making good eye contact
  - resisting mentally preparing what you will say in response
  - allowing the speaker to finish before asking any questions or offering your perspective
  - trying to empathize with the speaker and putting yourself into their shoes
  - resisting interrupting with counter arguments or offering quick solutions

***[NOTE: This is a natural transition to the next slide.]***

Record your own notes here:










**RASA: Acknowledge**

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**ACKNOWLEDGE:** Demonstrate you are listening by using verbal and nonverbal cues

 What are some behaviors that demonstrate you acknowledge what is being said?

- Be sure to nod occasionally and/or provide a thumbs up
- Use facial expressions to show interest and/or concern
- Be sure your posture is open and attentive
- Occasionally say "I see" or "go on" to encourage conversation

DPRR

6



**Review the "Acknowledge" fundamental of active listening.**

**[?]**

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

**1. Describe the "Acknowledge" fundamental of active listening.**

- A stands for Acknowledge. Acknowledging what is being said includes using both verbal and nonverbal responses to confirm delivery of the information.
- There are many ways in which you can demonstrate that you are listening.

**2. Ask for example behaviors that demonstrate a person is acknowledging what is being said.**

- [ASK]** What are some behaviors that demonstrate you acknowledge what is being said?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses. Help participants recall some examples that were given during the initial group discussion that relate to "acknowledging."]

Record your own notes here:





**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- Here are some additional examples of behaviors that demonstrate you are acknowledging the person and what is being communicated:

**[NOTE:** *Only review examples here that supplement the responses already given by participants, no need to belabor the point if initial discussion covered it adequately.]*


- nodding occasionally and/or providing a thumbs up
- using facial expressions to show interest and/or concern
- ensuring your posture is open and attentive rather than closed off (e.g., crossed arms, shoulders turned another direction, looking down at your phone or papers)
- occasionally providing affirming responses such as “I see” or “go on” to encourage conversation

**[NOTE:** *This is a natural transition to the next slide.]*

Record your own notes here:









**RASA: Summarize**

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**SUMMARIZE:** Taking a moment to pause and summarize what has been said by the speaker

**Paraphrase concisely what has been said:**

- Periodically summarize the speaker's comments to show you are listening
- Focus on what is being said by making mental or written notes

**Confirm your understanding of what has been said by repeating it back in your own words**

- "What I'm hearing you say is..."
- "Sounds like you are saying..."
- "To clarify, I heard you say... is that correct?"

DPRR

7



**Review the "Summarize" fundamental of active listening. [?]**

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

**1. Describe the "Summarize" fundamental of active listening.**

- S stands for Summarize. Throughout the conversation, taking a moment to pause and summarize what has been said by the speaker can help check for understanding.
- Summarizing intermittently also provides an opportunity for the speaker to correct any misunderstandings along the way.

**2. Review two ways that a person might summarize: (1) paraphrasing and (2) repeating the message back in one's own words.**

- One way to summarize is to paraphrase concisely what has been said:
  - periodically summarize the speaker's comments to show you are listening
  - focus on what is being said by making mental or written notes

Record your own notes here:





- Another way to summarize is to confirm your understanding of what has been said by repeating it back in your own words:
  - “What I'm hearing you say is...”
  - “Sounds like you are saying...”
  - “To clarify, I heard you say... is that correct?”
- At first, your efforts to summarize may sound or feel forced, robotic, or patronizing. Just like learning any skill, it takes time and practice before becoming natural and effective at summarizing.
- The key is to summarize only as necessary because overworking the skill is when it may come across as patronizing.

### 3. **Encourage closing a conversation with a summative reflection.**

#### ***[CLICK TO ADVANCE]***


- Remember, there is no specific order of using the RASA fundamentals.
- At the conclusion of the conversation, it can be helpful to mirror back what you've just heard. This is known as a summative reflection.
- With regard to active listening, summarizing periodically and at the conclusion of the conversation helps to reduce miscommunication of content or meaning of what was said and confirm a shared understanding.

***[NOTE: This is a natural transition to the next slide.]***

Record your own notes here:









**RASA: Ask**

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**ASK: Ask clarifying questions to check for understanding**

**What are some advantages of asking open-ended questions rather than closed-ended questions?**

**Ask questions to clarify the meaning of what is being said:**

- "What do you mean when you say...?"
- "Help me better understand what you are saying."
- "I don't want to misunderstand; can you restate what you just said?"

**Ask for more information:**

- "I am not sure I fully understand, can you give me more information?"
- "I believe I understand what you are saying, but I need a little more information."

DPRR

8



**Review the "Ask" fundamental of active listening.**

**[?]**

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

**1. Describe the "Ask" fundamental of active listening.**

- A stands for Ask. It is a natural human desire to be heard and understood. Asking intentional questions shows that you, the listener, care to fully understand what is being said and what more the person has to say about the topic.
- The type of questions you ask will determine the type and quality of responses you get.

**2. Ask participants what the advantage might be in asking open-ended questions rather than closed-ended questions.**

- [ASK]** What are some advantages of asking open-ended questions rather than closed-ended questions?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses. If necessary, explain that closed-ended questions are satisfied with a simple yes/no or other quick answer whereas open-ended questions require more explanation and detail.]

- Open-ended questions help to deepen understanding, encourage further discussion, and create a constructive conversation. Ideally, better conversations will foster stronger connections.

Record your own notes here:





**3. Review some examples of open-ended questions that can be used to clarify the meaning of what is said or to gain more information.**

- Let's review some examples of open-ended questions.

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- To clarify the meaning of what is being said, you might choose to ask questions like
  - "What do you mean when you say...?"
  - "Help me better understand what you are saying."
  - "I don't want to misunderstand, can you restate what you just said?"
- You can also ask questions in order to get more information. Those questions might sound like
  - "I am not sure I fully understand, can you give me more information?"
  - "I believe I understand what you are saying, but I need a little more information."


**4. Transition.**

- Asking intentional and well-posed questions is a skill and the more you practice, the better you get.
- In fact, let's get in some practice right now. Next we will do a practical exercise where each of you will get to practice the RASA fundamentals and strengthen your active listening skills.

Record your own notes here:








**Fundamentals of Active Listening: RASA**

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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

R

Receive

A

Acknowledge

S

Summarize

A

Ask

**KEY CONSIDERATIONS when using RASA:**

- 1. Be agile.** Do your best to use each step of RASA but know that you do not have to follow a specific order.
- 2. Practice makes progress.** Some parts may feel natural while others may feel uncomfortable at first. Make an effort to practice each one.

DPRR

9



**Prepare participants for the practical exercise by sharing key considerations to keep in mind when practicing active listening using the RASA fundamentals.**

# 1. Share key considerations to keep in mind for effectively using RASA in the practical exercise.

- Before we begin the practical exercise, there are a few considerations to keep in mind when aiming to use the RASA fundamentals to support your active listening ability.
- When having an organic conversation, the RASA fundamentals may not always occur in their respective order. You may find yourself moving back and forth; that is part of authentic conversation. Just do your best to practice each component.
- Also, some components may come naturally and feel comfortable while other components may take more concentrated effort and feel awkward at first.
- I encourage you to take advantage of this safe training environment and the opportunity to practice a skill that can support you in building strong connections and support your role in suicide prevention. Be comfortable being uncomfortable for the sake of improving your skills.

**[NOTE: This is a natural transition to the next slide.]**

Record your own notes here:





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**Set up and execute Round 1 of the practical exercise.**



**1. Instruct the participants to partner up and determine roles for Round 1.**

*[NOTE: Conduct this practical exercise in paired groups so that each and every participant is given the opportunity to practice active listening within the training time.]*

- For this practical exercise you will work with a partner. There will be two rounds so each person has an opportunity to be in the Active Listener role.
- After Round 1 is complete, I will guide you to switch roles for Round 2.
- Right now please take a moment to pair up with someone sitting close to you and determine your roles for Round 1. Decide who will start in the Speaker role and who will start in the Active Listener role.

Record your own notes here:

*[NOTE: If the training has an odd number of participants, then a group of 3 will be necessary. In this case, give clear direction for the third person to assume the role as Observer and take notes of sustains and improves to offer valuable feedback to the group.]*





## 2. Explain the roles and responsibilities of the Speaker and of the Active Listener.

- This exercise will mimic the ASK and CARE steps in using ACE to bolster protective factors.
- The Active Listener will start off the conversation by ASKing the Speaker, "What is a 'fun fact' about you that I might not already know?"
- As the Speaker, you will respond with your answer.

*[NOTE: You might need to describe what a "fun fact" means. For example, a 'fun fact' can be something seemingly simple like your favorite food or favorite duty station or it could be something more grandiose like having ridden a camel in the Egyptian desert.]*

- Then continue in conversation to allow the Active Listener to practice using the four fundamentals of active listening: Receive, Acknowledge, Summarize, and Ask.

## 3. Execute the practical exercise, Round 1.

*[NOTE: Ask if there are any questions. Then begin the exercise.]*

*Allow and encourage conversations to flow.*

*After discussions have finished, ask participants to close out their conversations to complete Round 1.*

*You might choose to allow participants to share initial reactions or thoughts about the exercise, but save deeper discussion for the debrief after Round 2.]*

## 4. Execute the practical exercise, Round 2.

*[NOTE: Instruct participants to switch roles and begin Round 2 of the practical exercise.]*

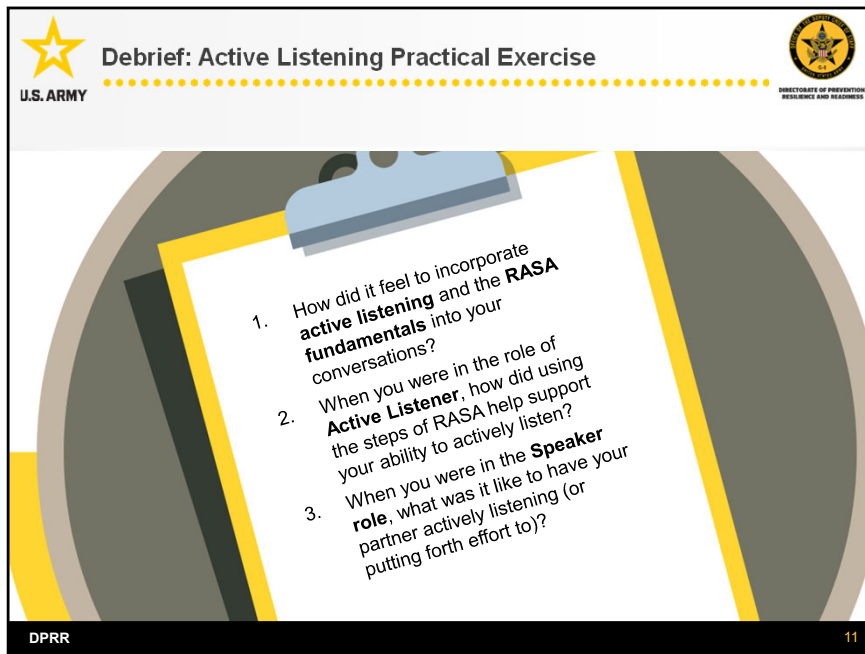
*After discussions have finished, ask participants to close out their conversations to complete Round 2.*

*Then transition to the debrief on the next slide.]*

Record your own notes here:







Record your own notes here:



**Debrief the practical exercise  
(Rounds 1 and 2).**

[?]



### 1. Debrief the practical exercise.

- **[ASK]** How did it feel to use active listening and the RASA fundamentals in your conversations?

**[NOTE:** This question serves to get discussion flowing by asking for initial impressions. Allow simple responses, such as 'awkward,' 'scripted,' 'helpful,' and then move on to the next debrief question.]

- If some of the steps felt awkward or the conversation felt scripted, that is okay. Whenever we are learning a new skill or perfecting the fundamentals, it can feel mechanical or awkward at first. The more you practice, however, the more comfortable you become.
- **[ASK]** When you were in the role of Active Listener, how did using the RASA fundamentals help support your ability to actively listen?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses. Possible responses include: using the steps kept me focused on learning more and kept me out of problem-solving mode; it helped me be more aware of the emotions and tone I was reflecting back.]





- **[ASK]** When you were in the Speaker role, what was it like to have your partner actively listening (or putting forth effort to)?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses. Possible responses include: *felt respected, felt like I mattered, it made me comfortable to open up and wanted to share more.*]

**2. Acknowledge that when “practicing” active listening it not only improves the skill but also positively impacts the relationship with the other person.**

- The good news is that when you practice active listening, it is not only helping you improve your skill but it is simultaneously impacting the relationship and strength of connection with the other person in the conversation.
- Now that you have a feel for what it is like to use active listening to bolster protective factors, let's consider how active listening, specifically the RASA fundamentals, apply to conversations when you detect yellow light risk factors.

**[NOTE:** This is a natural transition to the next slide.]

Record your own notes here:







## Active Listening to Show you CARE: Mitigate Risk

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 **RISK FACTORS**

**Scenario**

You notice that a close friend of yours has stopped engaging with friends and has been unresponsive your phone calls and text messages. When they do reply, they give you short answers and/or make the excuse that they "have to go".

**R**  
Receive

**A**  
Acknowledge

**S**  
Summarize

**A**  
Ask

DPRR

12



**Set up the vignette to demonstrate using the RASA fundamentals in a conversation to help mitigate risk.**

**1. Share a scenario where a Circle of Support member identifies yellow light risk factors in a close friend and initiates the ACE process.**

- Let's walk through a possible scenario. You notice that a close friend of yours has stopped engaging with friends and has been unresponsive to your phone calls and text messages. When they do reply, they give you short answers and/or make the excuse that they "have to go."
- From your observations you have identified yellow light risk factors like withdrawing from social activities and isolating themselves so you decide to act on your responsibility of using ACE.
- Next time you initiate conversation with your friend, you make a pointed effort to ASK, "How are things going?"
- Your friend responds, "I don't know. I've just got a lot going on right now."
- Some people might stop there, while others may offer information more freely. Sometimes it may require you to ASK another question right off the bat, like, "What does 'a lot' mean?"

Record your own notes here:





**2. Describe how a Circle of Support member might demonstrate active listening in conversation with their friend, specifically Receiving and Acknowledging.**


- You are committed to actively listening to your friend as they are talking.
- You demonstrate you are *receiving* what is said by putting your phone away, making eye contact, and resisting the urge to offer quick solutions.
- You *acknowledge* what they are saying by nodding along and letting your facial expressions mirror the emotions and tone that your friend is expressing.

**[NOTE:** *This is a natural transition to the next slide.*]

Record your own notes here:









## Active Listening to Show you CARE: Mitigate Risk

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"Things have just been really hard lately. A lot has fallen on my shoulders, and it's been a bit overwhelming. Some days it's just hard to face the day."



**?** What is an example of an open-ended question that you might ask to get more information?

"What are some of the things that causing you to feel so overwhelmed?"

"We just had a baby last month and she's not sleeping well at night, so neither am I. I'm enrolled in a college class and it's a lot more work than I thought it was going to be. It's really hard to concentrate on my homework and balance everything else too. I'm sucking at everything...even at being a friend."

DPRR

13



**Work through the vignette as a group to discuss how a Circle of Support member could use Active Listening (RASA) to mitigate risk. [?]**

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

### 1. **Reveal the transcript that the friend has said in response to the question asked.**

- Here is what your friend continues to share with you.
- "Things have just been really hard lately. A lot has fallen on my shoulders, and it's been a bit overwhelming. Some days it's just hard to face the day."

### 2. **Ask the participants to practice their skill of asking open-ended questions to clarify your understanding or get more information.**

- **[ASK]** What is an example of an open-ended question that you might ask to clarify your understanding or to get more information?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses.]

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- A possible question you might ask is, "What are some of the things that causing you to feel so overwhelmed?"

Record your own notes here:





- Your friend responds, “We just had a baby last month and she’s not sleeping well at night, so neither am I. I’m enrolled in a college class and it’s a lot more work than I thought it was going to be. It’s really hard to concentrate on my homework and balance everything else too. I’m sucking at everything...even at being a friend.”

### 3. Ask the participants to practice their skill of summarizing.

- **[ASK]** How might you summarize what has just been shared with you?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses. Possible examples include

- “So, the increased responsibilities at home and the class you’re taking has added a lot of stress.”
- “What I hear you saying is that you really do have a lot of things going on right now with the baby, not sleeping, and having an extra workload.”]

### 4. Explain how a person might continue the ACE process by transitioning to the Escort step.

- Based on the information you receive during the conversation, you might move to the Escort step of the ACE process.
- For example, you might transition from actively listening to having a discussion about possible solutions, such as trying out specific strategies or resources. It is important that you give your friend the opportunity to share fully before offering solutions (e.g., helping resources).

### 5. Transition.

- Now that you have had the opportunity to practice actively listening with a partner and as a group, the goal is to put it into practice in real life.
- Active listening is something that seems simple and easy, but it takes effort.
- Because it is an active process, it also requires you to have the motivation.

Record your own notes here:







## The Army Values and Active Listening

U.S. ARMY



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**R**  
Receive

**A**  
Acknowledge

**S**  
Summarize

**A**  
Ask

### Army Values

**LOYALTY**  
Bear true faith and allegiance to the U.S. Constitution, the Army, your unit, and other Soldiers.

**DUTY**  
Fulfill your obligations.

**RESPECT**  
Treat people as they should be treated.

**PERSONAL COURAGE**  
Face fear, danger, or adversity (physical or moral).

**HONOR**  
Live up to the Army Values.

**SELFLESS SERVICE**  
Put the welfare of the Nation, the Army, and subordinates before your own.


**INTEGRITY**  
Do what's right, legally and morally.

**?** How could your personal or family values or the Army Values help motivate you to engage in active listening and the RASA fundamentals as it pertains to suicide prevention and intervention?

DPRR

14

Record your own notes here:

 **Encourage participants to draw on their values or the Army Values to direct active listening behavior especially in more challenging situations. [?]**

**1. Ask participants how they could draw on their values or the Army Values to motivate them to engage in active listening as it pertains to suicide prevention and intervention.**

- In the ACE Base module, we established that our values drive our behavior.
- **[ASK]** How could your personal or family values or the Army Values help motivate you to engage in active listening and the RASA fundamentals as it pertains to suicide prevention and intervention?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses. Possible examples may include

- *Respect: make eye contact, give someone full attention, acknowledge what is said (Receive & Acknowledge)*
- *Personal Courage: sometimes summarizing what was said or asking questions to get more information can feel awkward or uncomfortable (Ask & Summarize)*
- *Loyalty: putting forth the effort and energy even when you don't feel like it or don't like the person (Receive & Acknowledge).]*





**2. Encourage participants to draw on their values and the Army Values to direct active listening behavior especially in more challenging situations.**

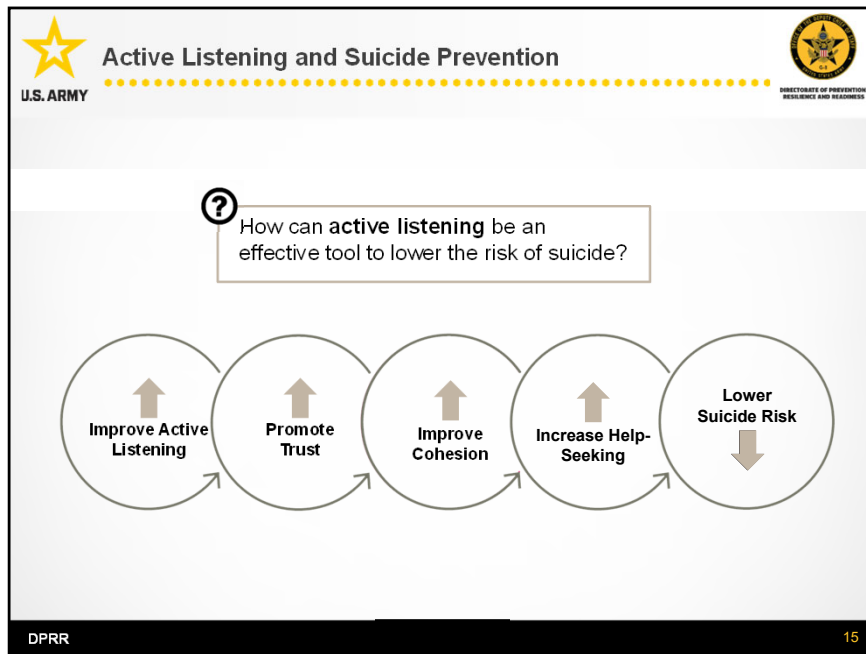
- Listening and responding to a fun fact in a low-stress environment like this training session was likely easy and fun.
- There will be times when the situation seems difficult or uncomfortable, when stress is higher, and when the stakes are greater.
- During these more challenging times you have your values and the Army Values to draw upon for motivation to engage in active listening and in the ACE process.

**[NOTE:** *This is a natural transition to the next slide.*]

Record your own notes here:







**Discuss the connection between active listening and suicide prevention.**

**[?]**

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

**1. Discuss the connection between active listening and suicide prevention and intervention.**

- Now that we have spent considerable time deepening our understanding of suicide prevention and active listening, it is worth the time to put it all together and clearly connect the dots.
- **[ASK]** How can active listening be an effective tool to lower the risk of suicide?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses.]

- Active listening is a tool to effectively engage in the ACE process. The skill involves ASKing critical questions, showing you CARE, and gathering information that is important to ESCORT the person to the best resources.
- Furthermore, active listening helps to build relationships, allowing you to detect problems earlier, reducing the risk for adverse outcomes, thereby contributing to suicide prevention.

Record your own notes here:





**2. Use the image to demonstrate the logical connection between active listening and suicide prevention.**

***[CLICK TO ADVANCE]***

- Throughout this module, we have demonstrated that engaging in active listening can promote trust.
- When trust exists within a relationship or a family, this trust will naturally help to improve cohesion.
- Studies have shown that cohesion within a unit relates to an increase in help-seeking behavior in the unit.
- It would seem to follow suit, then, that cohesion within a Circle of Support would help to increase help-seeking behavior too.
- Furthermore, having strong relationships that involve trust and cohesion enhances the ability of a person to successfully Ask, Care, Escort and take action, all crucial steps in the ACE process.
- By increasing your active listening abilities, you are increasing your ability to positively affect the suicide prevention and intervention efforts within your Circle of Support and within the Army as a whole, and help to lower the risk of suicide.

***[NOTE: The diagram on the slide simply demonstrates the basic logic that if A leads to B and B leads to C then A can impact C.]***

**3. Transition.**

- Now that we've covered active listening, let's talk about your next steps.

Record your own notes here:








## Next Steps: Plan to Implement

U.S. ARMY



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**?** What is **one thing** you plan to do within the next week or two **that can help lower the risk of suicide** with those in your Circle of Support?



Preventing suicide requires taking **proactive steps**

DPRR

16



**Ask participants to consider their next steps in implementing what they've gained from today's training and encourage them to talk about suicide prevention with others.** [?]

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

- 1. Ask participants to identify one thing to implement from today's training in the next week or two that can help lower the risk of suicide.**

- Throughout a typical day or week, you have many opportunities to apply what you've learned in today's training.
- **[ASK]** Based on what we've covered today, what is one thing you plan to do within the next week or two that can help lower the risk of suicide with those in your Circle of Support?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses. Encourage participants to consider specific, tangible actions. Examples may include

- *identify a specific person in my Circle of Support and check in to see how they are doing*
- *draw on one of my personal values when tempted to avoid uncomfortable conversations*
- *invite a friend or family member over for dinner*
- *make an effort to ask more open-ended questions to improve active listening skills*
- *remind myself to just listen (receive and acknowledge) when others are sharing their problems with me rather than being quick to offer solutions or ways to fix the situation.]*



Record your own notes here:



**2. Encourage participants to talk to their Soldier and to members of their Circle of Support about effective strategies to prevent suicide.**

***[CLICK TO ADVANCE]***

- Preventing suicide requires taking proactive steps.
- In addition to the plans you all have just shared, here are some proactive steps you might consider taking with your Soldier and other members within your Circle of Support:
  - look for opportunities to use active listening to enhance communication and connection and to build trust
  - ask who they feel most comfortable talking with if there is ever a concern or moment of crisis, and share that same information with them about you
  - talk about which resources you and they might find most helpful and put the contact information in your phones
  - when they are facing a challenge, encourage them to use resources proactively such as when there is even a hint of concern rather than waiting until it's a crisis situation, and you yourself seek help early and proactively to role model this proactive and preventative behavior

***[NOTE: This is a natural transition to the next slide.]***

Record your own notes here:







## Active Listening Makes an Impact

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Active listening enhances communication.

Take advantage of opportunities to practice active listening and to apply a tool that can strengthen relationships at work and at home.

Active listening is a tool to effectively engage in the ACE process.



DIRECTORATE OF PREVENTION, RESILIENCE AND READINESS

DPRR

17



**Empower participants to take an active role in the Army's integrated and comprehensive approach to prevent suicide, and thank participants for attending.**

1.

**Empower participants to take an active role in the Army's integrated and comprehensive approach to prevent suicide, and thank Circle of Support members for their participation.**

- Remember, you are part of the Army's comprehensive and integrated approach to preventing suicide and protecting others from its devastating impacts.
- The Army and its people need you to concentrate your efforts in the prevention strategies within your control and influence, which you have gained from today's training.
- ACE can save a life. Remember to Ask, Care, and Escort.

**2. Thank participants for attending.**

- Lastly, thank you for attending today's training. Your participation is evidence of your support and care for your Soldier and others in your Circle of Support.


Record your own notes here:






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**U.S. ARMY**  
BE ALL YOU CAN BE.

**Post-Training Survey**





[https://wrair.gov1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_aXFrN0d3WYotliu](https://wrair.gov1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_aXFrN0d3WYotliu)

**Participants: You have just completed the ACE Active Listening module.**  
Completing the survey will assist the DPRR in determining the effectiveness of training and will inform curriculum revisions during the next update cycle.  
If you received the Base module prior to this module, please select the Base + Active Listening option on the survey.



## Introduce Post-Training Survey

### 1. Introduce survey.

- Before we dismiss, please take a few moments to complete the ACE Post-Training Survey.
- The survey was developed by the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research on behalf of the DPRR.

**[NOTE: Emphasize the importance of the survey.]**

- Completing the survey will assist the DPRR in determining the effectiveness of training and will inform curriculum revisions.
- Participation is optional and responses are anonymous.
- You can access the survey by either scanning the QR code with your phone or by going to the website URL, which is shown in blue.
- Please note the module you are surveying and select the matching bubble on your survey.

**[NOTE: Participants should only take survey at the end of the base module if it is the only module trained. If a second module is trained, check the box that represents the ACE Base + (appropriate subsequent module) Example: ACE Base + Active Listening.]**

**[NOTE: For survey issues, contact CPT John Eric M. Novosel-Lingat at [johneric.m.novosel-lingat.mil@health.mil](mailto:johneric.m.novosel-lingat.mil@health.mil)]**

Record your own notes here:



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