



Release No. 23-01-25

January 25, 2023

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Suicide Prevention Podcast, “Brain Hijack” Launched by USU Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress

Bethesda, Md. – To support a culture shift around the topic of suicide prevention, a new podcast was launched Jan. 25 by the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress (CSTS). Through a series of interviews and stories, the podcast, “Brain Hijack,” intends to encourage support-seeking behaviors and connectedness through expert interviews, debunking myths, and normalizing topics in mental health.

The podcast will be available on CSTS’s website, Apple podcast, Spotify, Stitcher, and the Mental Health News Radio Network. When flooded with radically new information or intense emotions, the brain is “hijacked” – as the podcast intends to do. Each episode will focus on various aspects of suicide prevention. The Suicide Prevention Program series is hosted by Drs. Brooke Heintz Morrissey, operations director, and Adam Walsh, senior scientist, who are both Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine employees working in support of CSTS.

The podcast is also designed to reach communities at large or those uniquely at risk, aiming to bridge the gap between science and practice by translating expert recommendations into vernacular understood by scientists as well as non-scientists, military personnel and civilians.

“Building this podcast provides a new medium to connect with people and a chance to build a new listening community for the Center to share helpful information about how to help yourself and others,” said U.S. Public Health Capt. (Dr.) Joshua Morganstein, assistant director of USU’s CSTS.

The first episode focuses on suicide prevention training programs with expert advice from Dr. Peter Gutierrez, executive vice president of LivingWorks, which collaborates on research designed to advance the science of suicide prevention. Future episodes will discuss the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, featuring Dr. April Naturale, the hotline’s interim executive director, as well as personal stories from an individual living in recovery with post-traumatic stress disorder and a traumatic brain injury, who has navigated the behavioral health system.

“What excites me most about this project is the opportunity to connect with a range of people in a new way. As a reservist, military spouse and mom, clinician, and scientist-educator, it can be difficult to find ways to have conversation across the groups I identify with. I hope this podcast is informative with practical takeaways for everyone,” Heintz Morrissey said.

The new CSTS podcast is part of the Center’s efforts to understand and prevent suicide, and is informed by the Army STARRS study (Study to Address Risk and Resilience in Service Members). To learn more about STARRS, led by CSTS[BH3] , visit <https://starrs-ls.org/#?>. To learn more about CSTS’s podcast and the Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress, visit, <https://www.cstsonline.org/suicide-prevention-program/podcasts>.

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About the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences: The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, founded by an act of Congress in 1972, is the nation's federal health sciences university and the academic heart of the Military Health System. USU students are primarily active-duty uniformed officers in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Public Health Service who receive specialized education in tropical and infectious diseases, TBI and PTSD, disaster response and humanitarian assistance, global health, and acute trauma care. USU also has graduate programs in oral biology, biomedical sciences and public health committed to excellence in research. The University's research program covers a wide range of areas important to both the military and public health. For more information about USU and its programs, visit www.usuhs.edu.