

Resources from the MVFI/VHWF Lived Experiences Series: Suicidality & the Family

Date: Tuesday May 18, 2021

Disclaimer: Thank you for joining us for MVFI/VHWF Lived Experiences. Our session today, Suicidality will be recorded for both the MVFI and VHWF websites.

Please note, this event **will be recorded** for the sponsoring organizations website. We encourage interaction but do note if your camera is on your may be recorded. We ask that all participants who plan to participate with their video on to please fill out [THIS Consent Form](#). Thanks for your support in sharing our important series with others who may benefit from our discussion. Please feel free to view

MVFI Archival recordings, Available on the [MVFI Recorded Event Site](#).

Panelists:



Sarah Carter, Ph.D (she/her): *Dr. Sarah Carter earned her doctorate in Clinical Psychology from George Mason University and completed postdoctoral fellowships at the VA Puget Sound Health Care System and University of Washington School of Public Health. As a research assistant professor at the Uniformed Services University, Dr. Carter's research explores how interpersonal relationships relate to suicide and mental health among military service members, veterans, and families with the goal of preventing suicide by enhancing romantic, peer, and community relationships.*



MSG Tom Cruz: *MSG Tom Cruz is an Active-Duty Master Sergeant in the United States Army with over 25 years of service. He has deployed in support of Operation Joint Guardian, Operation Iraqi Freedom and Jordan. In 2010, he attempted to take his own life, after which he became a leading advocate of suicide awareness and prevention for Veterans. He assisted in pioneering two organizations to identify and assist Veterans with mental health issues, suicidal ideations, relationship issues, financial concerns, and other Veteran specific issues. In addition, his own personal recovery has helped to begin to break the stigma within the military on career status, family life and security clearance myths. MSG Cruz is a Master Resilience Trained Level One Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Trainer, with additional Question-Persuade-Refer and Army Suicide Intervention training. He is also the Program Director for Suicide and Awareness with Veterans Counseling Veterans, a member of the advisory board for OurDataHelps.org, a former advisor to Animal Rescue & Veteran Support Services, a former panel member of the Center of Innovation on Disability and Rehabilitation Research with University of South Florida, and a former subject matter expert for the White House and Office of the Surgeon General. In 2017, he received the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Voice Award for Consumer/Peer/Family Leadership, in recognition of his work to ensure America's military and veteran communities have access to the mental health and substance use treatment and services they deserve.*



Heather and Holden Cruz: *Heather Cruz is married to Tom Cruz, an Active Duty Army Master Sergeant. Holden is their 8-year-old son. Ms. Cruz became involved in suicide prevention for service members and Veterans when her husband attempted suicide/homicide in November 2010. She helped get them both out of their house alive and, since then, has worked with him and, in more recent years, their son to provide education, resources, and awareness to Veterans and their spouses*

across the country. Ms. Cruz has gone through Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training, "Questions, and Persuade and Refer," and Crisis Intervention / Mental Health Training through Mid-Continent University. She has also helped facilitate discussions with the Monthly Military Caregiver Virtual PEER Forum via SKYPE with the Pentagon. Holden has been part of the mental health community his entire life, attending all of his parents' talks and conferences around the world. He was the only child story-teller at the Hope Rising Event in 2020, where over 200 adults from across the world shared their personal stories.

Evelyn L. Lewis M.D., M.A., FAAFP, DABDA Dr.: *Lewis earned her medical degree from the University of the Health Sciences, the Chicago Medical School and completed a residency in family medicine at Naval Hospital Jacksonville, Jacksonville, FL. She completed a faculty development fellowship at Madigan Army Medical Center and Pacific Lutheran University and earned a Masters degree in the Social and Behavioral Sciences. In June 2003, Dr. Lewis retired from the United States Navy after 25 years of service. During the next seven years, Dr. Lewis was Director Medical Policy World Wide Public Affairs and Policy for Pfizer, Inc. Currently, she serves as Chief Medical Officer for Warrior Centric Health, LLC; President and Chair, Veteran Health And Wellness Foundation; Adjunct Associate Professor, Department of Family and Community Health, Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School; Clinical Instructor, Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science (RFUMS); appointee to the Department of Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee on Disability Compensation; Engagement Panel Member, Department of Veteran Affairs, Health Services Research and Development's Pain/Opioid Consortia of Research and serves as the American Academy Family Physician's Delegate to the American Medical Association House of Delegates. Dr. Lewis is nationally recognized for her expertise in the areas of community outreach, engagement and enablement; public private partnerships; Veteran health and healthcare Issues; content/program development and evaluation; cultural competency; health and healthcare disparities; women's health, health impact of military service on Veterans and their families; PTSD/TBI and clinical trials and minority participation. She is also a Fellow of the National Association of Corporate Directors and the American Academy Family Physicians. And her most recent awards include: the RFUMS 2018 Distinguished Alumnus Award, and State of Maryland House of Representatives Proclamation.*

Keith D. Renshaw, Ph.D.: *Renshaw is Professor & Department Chair of Psychology at George Mason University. He received his doctoral degree in clinical psychology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2003 and was an Assistant Professor position in the Department of Psychology at the University of Utah from 2005-2009 before moving to George Mason University in 2009. At Mason, he was promoted to Associate Professor in 2013 and Professor in 2019. Dr. Renshaw's overall research focus is on the interpersonal context of anxiety, stress, and trauma, with a particular emphasis on the experience of combat veterans and their spouses. He has received over \$3 million in extramural funding, published more than 80 peer-reviewed publications, given more than 150 conference presentations, and given numerous invited talks*

on these and other topics. Dr. Renshaw has also won multiple teaching awards, including the George Mason University Teaching Excellence Award (2015). In addition to classroom teaching, he is heavily devoted to the mentorship of doctoral students. Under his supervision, his students have received over \$200,000 in extramural funding, published over 30 peer-reviewed publications, and made over 50 presentations at national conferences. From 2016-2019, Dr. Renshaw also served as Chair of George Mason's Faculty Senate and the faculty representative to the University's governing Board of Visitors (BOV). In 2019, he started a 2-year term as the faculty representative to the George Mason University Foundation's Board of Trustees. In 2020, Dr. Renshaw led the creation of George Mason's Military, Veterans, & Families Initiative. As the Director, he is overseeing the formation of community partnerships, creation of new virtual programming, development of new programs, and fundraising efforts.

Additional Information:

For more information on the presenters and to find out about upcoming events, please visit their websites:

Presenters/Guest Panelist Sites:

- [The Military, Veterans, & Families Initiative](#)
 - [Newsletter Sign up](#)
- [Veterans Health and Wellness Foundation:](#)

Additional Resources:

Non-VA Resources

- [American Association of Suicidology – Suicide Prevention is Everyone's Business](#) - Great resources, training, information across the U.S.
- [Tragedy Assistance Program For Survivors \(TAPS\) Is Here For You!](#)- Loss Survivors and Children Resource
- [Psych Hub Learning Solutions](#) - Great training course
- [Suicide Prevention Training Centre | LivingWorks](#) - Great Training
- [QPR Institute | Practical and Proven Suicide Prevention Training QPR Institute \(en-US\)](#) - Great Training
- [US Department of Veterans Affairs \(MIRECC/CoE\)](#) - a coach that can support partners, family members, or peers get their loved one into care
- [Make the Connection](#) - VA resources
- [Give an Hour](#) - For free care outside of VA system
- [Defense Health Agency's inTransition Program](#) – free, confidential, coaching into behavioral health care for ALL services members, Guard, reservists, and veterans.
 - 1-800-424-7877
- [National Suicide Hotline](#)
 - 1-800-273-8255; text 838255
- [Center for Deployment Psychology](#) – Military cultural competency trainings
- [Hylton Center Veterans in the Arts Program](#)
- [Mayo Clinic Suicide Resource](#)
- [Coaching into Care, VA Program](#)
- [Psychological Health Center of Excellence \(Brenda Campbell\)](#)
- [Cohen Veterans Network](#)