

SIMmersion Joins Effort to Save Veterans with Groundbreaking Suicide Prevention Simulation

*Twenty veterans in the US take their lives every day, a trend that the [Veterans Crisis Line](#) and [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) are fighting to reverse. [SIMmersion's](#) state-of-the-art *Suicide Prevention Training system allows responders on these crisis hotlines to get the realistic practice they need to save lives.**

Columbia, MD ([PRWEB](#)) November 11, 2013 -- “I’m...” Tyler, the young veteran on the other end of the phone, sighs heavily before continuing. “I’m seeing things that aren’t there. Faces. Voices... I hear voices from overseas. I can’t trust my own eyes. My own mind.”

“I can’t live like this,” he finishes in a quiet voice.

Tyler is not alone. This Veterans Day, as we celebrate the successes and sacrifices of the people who have kept our country safe, it’s important to remember that hundreds of thousands of veterans struggle with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), mental illness, physical disability, and the challenges of returning to civilian life after military service. Some, like Tyler, wrestle with thoughts of suicide because of all their stress factors. Every time a veteran takes his or her own life, it’s a painful reminder of how far the nation still has to go to provide servicemen and women with the help they need, when they need it.

When a veteran like Tyler turns to a crisis hotline, it puts a heavy responsibility on the responder who answers the phone. Saying the right things could help Tyler stay safe. Saying the wrong things, however, might end in tragedy. The responder must be trained to a very high standard for this work, where job performance is literally a matter of life and death.

Fortunately for this responder, Tyler is not a real person in crisis, but a simulated character developed by [SIMmersion](#) for the Suicide Prevention Training system, a state-of-the art training experience for the responders on the [Veterans Crisis Line](#) and [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#).

Tyler was designed to stand in for a whole range of real-life callers with whom responders might actually engage on the Veterans Crisis Line. A panel of responders and subject matter experts from the VA and the Mental Health Association of New York City worked closely with SIMmersion’s developers at every step of the way to make the training as real and effective as possible. Real responders who helped SIMmersion test the simulation were thrilled by its authenticity, commenting, “It really is feeling like a real call,” and “This is so good... I think you’re nailing it.”

As with all of SIMmersion’s simulated characters, Tyler is designed to provide a different experience with each new call. The crisis that has prompted him to call the hotline varies from play to play, as does his risk level for acting on thoughts of suicide. His reasons for wanting to die and wanting to live vary, as does his way of relating to the caller—sometimes desperate for connection, sometimes suspicious, sometimes withdrawn. As the player listens to his story and builds his trust, he becomes more and more willing to cooperate and take steps to keep himself safe.

[SIMmersion’s PeopleSim conversation engine](#) allows them to create characters so vivid and real that talking with them is like having a real conversation. These characters remember what is said to them throughout a

conversation, and they have an emotional model that lets a player build trust with good statements or damage it with bad ones. Characters have hundreds or thousands of possible responses they can access during the conversation, captured in video or voice-over by professional actors, so the conversation always feels authentic and unpredictable. At every turn, players have a wide range of statements to choose from, so they can say what they want, when they want to say it, the way they want to say it, and see how their simulated conversation partner responds.

Responders get feedback from an on-screen coach and from a comprehensive after-action review, so no teachable moments are missed. Responders can try different approaches and make mistakes in their conversations with Tyler, thus building their skills without fear of the consequences of real-world failure. Best of all, responders can play through a call with Tyler anytime, on any computer with an internet connection, getting the repeat practice that makes skills second nature.

“There’s more to living...” Tyler says, thoughtfully, as his call draws down. “In living, there’s more than I thought.” SIMmersion, the Veterans Crisis Line, and the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline are united in believing that this simulation can give crisis line responders the training they need to help even more veterans make the choice to live.

SIMmersion’s PeopleSim® [level 4](#) interactive training systems can now be delivered as a SCORM-compliant web-based application, on DVDs, and through mobile platforms. These systems can be made [508 compliant](#). For more information, contact [SIMmersion](#) online or call at 443-283-2555.



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Online Web 2.0 Version

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