



How to Support a Veteran in Crisis

Keep these tips in mind when talking with a Veteran who may be at risk for suicide:

- Remain calm
- Listen more than you speak
- Maintain eye contact
- Act with confidence
- Do not argue
- Use open body language
- Limit questions—Let the Veteran do the talking
- Use supportive, hopeful comments
- Be honest—There are no quick solutions, but help is available

Additional Resources

- **VA Mental Health Services:** Get information about inpatient and outpatient services available through VA at [MentalHealth.VA.gov](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov).
- **Online Resource Locator:** Find VA facilities, Vet Centers, suicide prevention coordinators, and other VA resources at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/LocalResources](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/LocalResources).
- **Keep It Secure:** Promotes awareness about the simple steps you can take to protect yourself and your family. It focuses on sharing information about secure gun and medication storage, the warning signs of suicide, and how to find the support you or a Veteran loved one needs. [KeepItSecure.net](https://www.KeepItSecure.net)
- **Don't wait. Reach out.:** Use this site to find support and resources designed specifically for Veterans. If you're a family member or a friend, you can also find resources for the Veteran in your life. [VA.gov/REACH](https://www.VA.gov/REACH)

VA S.A.V.E. TRAINING

FOUR WAYS YOU CAN HELP A VETERAN IN CRISIS

What is VA S.A.V.E. Training?

VA S.A.V.E. Training is a free, brief online or in-person course that will help you act with care and compassion if you come across a Veteran who is in crisis or having thoughts of suicide. The acronym S.A.V.E. helps you remember the important steps involved in suicide prevention:

S

Know the Signs that indicate a Veteran might be thinking about suicide

A

Ask the most important question of all — "Are you thinking of killing yourself?"

V

Validate the Veteran's experience

E

Encourage treatment and Expedite getting help

Do you want to take VA S.A.V.E. Training?

Go to [learn.psycharmor.org/courses/va-save](https://www.learn.psycharmor.org/courses/va-save) to take the course online or contact your local suicide prevention coordinator to schedule in-person training: [VeteransCrisisLine.net/LocalResources](https://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/LocalResources).

You don't have to be enrolled in VA benefits or health care to take VA S.A.V.E. Training.



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

S Know the *Signs* that indicate a Veteran may be thinking about suicide

The signs below may indicate that a Veteran needs help. If you or a Veteran you know is experiencing any of these, contact the Veterans Crisis Line:

- Hopelessness, feeling like there's no way out
- Anxiety, agitation, sleeplessness, or mood swings
- Feeling like there's no reason to live
- Rage or anger
- Engaging in risky activities without thinking
- Increasing alcohol or drug use
- Withdrawing from family and friends

The signs below require immediate attention. If you or a Veteran you know is experiencing any of these and needs medical attention, call 911 now:

- When asked, they express a desire to hurt or kill themselves
- When prompted, they reveal they're looking for ways to die by suicide
- They talk about death, dying, or suicide
- They begin to exhibit self-destructive behavior, such as increased drug or alcohol use, talking about obtaining/using weapons for self-harm, or saving up medication

A Ask the most important question of all: "Are you thinking of killing yourself?"

Other ways to ask the question include: "Are you thinking of suicide?" or "Have you had thoughts about taking your own life?"

When asking the question, remember:

- **DO** ask the question if you've identified warning signs
- **DO** ask the question in such a way that's natural and flows with the conversation
- **DON'T** ask the question as though you're looking for a "no" answer ("You're not thinking of killing yourself, are you?")
- **DON'T** wait to ask the question until they're halfway out the door

V Validate the Veteran's experience

Use the following steps to let the Veteran know you're listening and acknowledge their experience:

- Talk openly about suicide. Be willing to listen, allow the Veteran to express their feelings, and make supportive, encouraging comments.
- Recognize the situation is serious
- Don't pass judgement

E Encourage treatment and Expedite getting help

If a Veteran is having thoughts of suicide, remain calm and reassure them help is available:

- **DON'T** keep the Veteran's suicidal behavior a secret
- **DON'T** leave them alone
- Try to get the Veteran to seek immediate help from their doctor or the nearest hospital or emergency room
- Call 911

Safety is Important

Never negotiate with someone who has a gun. Get to safety and **call 911**. If the Veteran has taken pills, cut themselves, or has done harm to themselves in some way, **call 911**.



Chat at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](https://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat) • Text 838255

The Veterans Crisis Line isn't just for Veterans. Our responders can connect Veterans' families and friends with helpful resources.