



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. [KeepItSecure.net](https://www.KeepItSecure.net)
- **Don't wait. Reach out.:** 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)
- **Caregiver Support Program:** Offers clinical services to caregivers of eligible and covered Veterans enrolled in the VA health care system through education, support, and resources. [Caregiver.VA.gov](https://www.Caregiver.VA.gov)

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

Go to learn.psycharmor.org/courses/va-s-a-v-e 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.

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

Spot the signs a Veteran might be thinking about suicide

A

Ask the critical question — "Are you thinking of killing yourself?"

V

Validate the Veteran's experience

E

Encourage and support next steps with the Veteran



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

S

Spot 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 critical question: "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 and support next steps with the Veteran

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.