S.A.V.E.

S.A.V.E. will help you act with care and compassion if you encounter a Veteran who is in crisis. Familiarize yourself with the S.A.V.E. steps below.

Signs of Suicidal Thinking
Consider if warning signs are present.

Ask the Question
"Are you thinking of killing yourself?"
"Are you thinking of suicide?"

Validate the Veteran's Experience
Listen without judgment or giving advice.
Offer reassurance that help is available.

Encourage Treatment and **Expedite** Getting Help
In an emergency: Do not leave the Veteran alone. Call 911. Seek care from the nearest hospital, or call the Veterans Crisis Line at **1-800-273-8255**, and **Press 1**.

Most importantly, don't wait. Seek help when needed.

VA Resources

Veterans Crisis Line

Veterans and their loved ones can call **1-800-273-8255** and **Press 1**, chat online, or send a text message to **838255** to receive confidential support.

#BeThere

Learn how you can #BeThere for Service members and Veterans:
VeteransCrisisLine.net/BeThere

MAKE THE CONNECTION

Hear stories of recovery at
MakeTheConnection.net

VA Geriatrics and Extended Care
www.va.gov/geriatrics

VA Caregiver Support
www.caregiver.va.gov

Preventing Suicide Among Older Veterans

Resources and tips for Veterans, family members, caregivers, and friends

VA
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

Aging and Suicide Prevention

Veterans ages 55 and older have great strength, resilience, and wisdom. At the same time, many older Veterans experience changes in health, memory, independence, or relationships that may lead to distress or isolation.

In some cases, these challenges can lead to hopelessness and even a wish to die or to take one's life. VA is dedicated to supporting older Veterans and preventing suicide.

Warning Signs

Recognize suicide warning signs:

- Expressing hopelessness (feeling that things will never get better)
- Becoming extremely anxious, upset, or unable to calm down
- Talking about suicide or wanting to die
- Saying they feel like a burden
- Saying that others would be better off without them
- Planning for suicide (when, where, or how they might do it)
- Taking actions such as giving things away or buying ammunition

What Can Veterans Do?

To maintain meaning, purpose, and interpersonal connection:

- Stay connected to your family, friends, and community.
- If you can't do all the things you used to enjoy, focus on activities you still can do.
- Remember how much you have contributed to others in your lifetime.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- Get involved in volunteer opportunities through VA. Visit ***volunteer.va.gov*** to learn more.

What Can Families, Caregivers, and Friends Do?

- Remember that older Veterans may be reluctant to seek help.
- Check in with the Veteran regularly; do not wait for him or her to reach out.
- Join the Veteran at health care appointments. Take notes, voice concerns, and follow up if necessary.
- Help connect him or her with mental health care, if needed.
- Help make the home safe (see right panel).

Seeking Support and Care

VA offers a broad range of mental health treatment options, social work services, specialty care (such as pain management), and geriatrics and extended care programs to support the well-being of older Veterans. Contact your primary care physician to learn more.

Making the Home Safe

A safe home can decrease suicide risk.

Firearms

Firearms are the most commonly used method of suicide among older Veterans. Follow these firearm safety tips:

- Consider temporary off-site storage of firearms during a period of increased risk.
- Store firearms unloaded and locked. Storage options include locked gun safes, cabinets, or storage cases.
- Get free gunlocks from your local VA medical center.

Medications

Do not keep extra or expired medications in the home. Use hospital or pharmacy take-back programs for unused medications.

Alcohol

Drinking alcohol may increase suicide risk during a crisis. Consider removing it from the home.