

**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Office for Suicide Prevention**

Want to support Veterans and Service members?

Just be there.

We all can play a role in preventing suicide, but many people don't know how to support a Veteran or Service member in their life who's going through a difficult time.

Join the U.S. Departments of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Defense in letting people know that preventing suicide starts with this simple act of support: ***Be There.***

Helping someone feel included and supported can make a big difference during a challenging time. And it doesn't require a grand gesture or complicated task. A simple act of kindness can help someone feel less alone.

Small actions of support — calling an old friend, checking in on a neighbor, cooking dinner for a relative, or inviting a colleague on a walk — are thoughtful ways to show you care. Similarly, encouraging Veterans and Service members to take time for themselves and to focus on their own health and wellness can have a big impact.

Then, start the conversation.

Being there for someone can be easy, but starting a conversation about your concerns for that person or broaching the subject of suicide can seem much more difficult. The most important thing is to show genuine, heartfelt support for someone going through a rough period. People may worry about what to say, fear that they will make matters worse, or think that special training is required to safely raise the subject (it's not).

When talking about a possible suicide risk or a life crisis, try to keep these best practices in mind:

- Remain calm.
- Listen more than you speak.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Act with confidence.



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- Don't argue.
- Use open body language.
- Limit questions to casual information-gathering.
- Use supportive and encouraging comments.
- Be as honest and upfront as possible.

Before you start a conversation, do some research to find out what suicide prevention and mental health resources are available. Veterans and their families can contact their local VA Medical Center, using this [Resource Locator](#), to find counseling, treatment centers, and customized support for any life challenge.

Know when a crisis needs immediate action.

Everyone also should be aware of these signs of crisis, which require **immediate** attention from a medical or mental health professional:

- Thinking about hurting or killing oneself
- Looking for ways to kill oneself
- Talking about death, dying, or suicide
- Self-destructive behavior, such as drug abuse or the dangerous use of weapons

If you notice these signs in yourself or a Veteran loved one, **call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat, or text to 838255** to get confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Whether you are expressing initial concern or responding to a suicidal crisis, let those experiencing hard times know that resources are available: Visit [VeteransCrisisLine.net/SpreadTheWord](#) to download free materials — flyers, web badges, and social media and newsletter content, and more — and visit [VeteransCrisisLine.net/BeThere](#) to learn how you and your community can ***Be There*** to prevent suicide.

