

SUICIDE PREVENTION TOOLKIT

together we can help prevent suicide

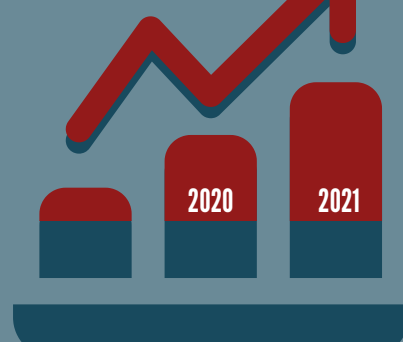
NEARLY 1 IN 4
ACTIVE DUTY MEMBERS
SHOWED SIGNS OF A MENTAL
HEALTH CONDITION.



13TH
SUICIDE REMAINS THE
13TH LEADING CAUSE
OF DEATH FOR VETERANS

**VETERAN SUICIDE
RATE INCREASED BY**

11.6%



WARNING SIGNS

These signs may indicate that a person needs help.

BEHAVIOR

- withdrawing from activities
- increased use of alcohol or drugs
- acting recklessly
- visiting or calling people to say goodbye
- sleeping too much or too little
- giving away prized possessions
- aggression
- looking for a way to kill themselves, such as searching online for materials or means
- isolating from family and friends

TALK

- having no reason to live
- experiencing unbearable pain
- killing themselves
- being a burden to others
- feeling trapped

MOOD

- irritability
- loss of interest
- depression
- rage
- anxiety
- humiliation

TAKING ACTION!

SAFETY PLAN

A safety plan is designed to guide you and the individual you're supporting through a crisis. Having a safety plan is vital for anyone who thinks about suicide. As you plan, consider and include warning signs, coping strategies, and people to ask for support.

- Ways to Support Someone at Risk**
- Schedule time to talk and get together
 - Encourage them to take a photo of the safety plan for easy access
 - Add local resources and crisis lines as contacts on your phone
 - Encourage them to reach out for support
 - Brainstorm self-help and other supportive strategies

Safety Plans Work *There is hope.*

- Write 3 warning signs that a crisis may be developing.
- Write 3 internal coping strategies that can take your mind off your problems.
- Who/What are 3 people or places that provide distraction? (Write name/place and phone numbers)
- Who can you ask for help? (Write names and phone numbers)
- Professionals or agencies you can contact during a crisis:
 - Clinician: _____ Phone: _____
 - Local Urgent Care or Emergency Department: _____ Address: _____ Phone: _____
 - Call or text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org
- Write out a plan to make your environment safer. (Write 2 things)

Modified from Stanley & Brown (2021) PEP22-08-03-007

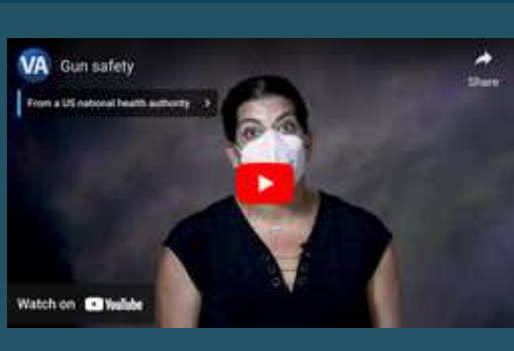
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LETHAL MEANS SAFETY

Talk about lethal means...
It's crucial to reduce access to lethal means as it can save their life. Discuss options for out-of-home or more secure in-home storage of firearms and medications.

VA Gun Safety

Watch a brief overview video from the VA on firearm safety



Safe Storage of Lethal Means

- Firearms**

Off-site Storage

 - Friends or Relatives
 - Gun Range
 - Self Storage

**Check your state laws*

In-home Safe Storage

 - Store firearms locked
 - Unloaded in a safe
 - Trigger or cable lock
 - Secure locking device with trusted person

Other Options

 - Remove essential component (e.g. fire pin)

Medication

Safe Disposal

 - Drop off disposal locations
 - Pharmacy
 - Police Station
 - Out-of-date, unused, and excess medications including, over the counter

Reduce Quantities

 - Use a lock box to secure lethal and additional medications
 - Use refill pill box

CREATE TIME AND DISTANCE

ACTION STEPS

Initiating action steps involves evaluating the risk of suicide or harm to identify potential crises or immediate crisis situations. It's important to avoid pressuring or threatening individuals to disclose their emotions. Stay receptive until they are prepared to share and seek help.

Mental Health First Aid Action Plan: ALGEE

- A** Approach, Assess for risk of suicide or harm.
- L** Listen nonjudgmental.
- G** Give reassurance and information.
- E** Encourage appropriate professional help.
- E** Encourage self-help and other support strategies.

Columbia Protocol (C-SSRS)

Use the Columbia Protocol also known as Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS) to help determine when someone is at risk for suicide and how to help.

Always ask questions 1 and 2.	Point	Month
1) Have you wished you were dead or wished you could go to sleep and not wake up?	Low	Low
2) Have you actually had any thoughts about killing yourself?	Low	Low
If YES to 2, ask questions 3, 4, 5 and 6.		
3) Have you been thinking about how you might do this?	Low	Low
4) Have you had these thoughts and worked out the details of how to kill yourself? Did you intend to carry out this plan?	High	High
Always Ask Question 5		
5) Have you prepared, started to do anything, or done to do anything to end your life?	High	High

988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

If YES to 2 or 3, seek behavioral healthcare for further evaluation. If the answer to 4, 5 or 6 is YES, get immediate help: Call or text 988, call 911 or go to the emergency room. STAY WITH THEM until they can be evaluated.

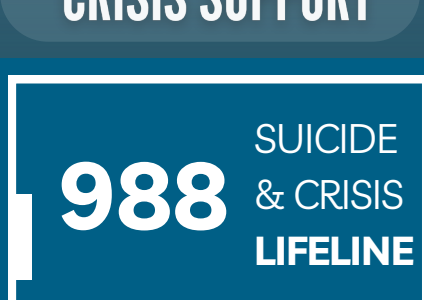
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RESOURCES

WEBSITES

- Worried About a Veteran | worriedaboutaveteran.org
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention | afsp.org
- Give an Hour | giveanhour.org/military
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center | sprc.org
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Homefront | www.nami.org/Support-Education/Mental-Health-Education/NAMI-Homefront

CRISIS SUPPORT



APPS

Click to learn more

- Got Your Back
- Family Coach
- Columbia Protocol App
- Suicide Safe by SAMHSA
- A Friend Asks
- Suicide Safety Plan

TRAINING & SUPPORT

Every month, the Veteran Spouse Network (VSN) offers suicide prevention training and support opportunities for our network. You can learn more about critical warning signs and equip yourself with tools to intervene and support someone in crisis. To learn more and view upcoming opportunities, visit the VSN [website](http://veteranspousenetwork.org).



Take part in this VSN peer-led event to connect with peers and further discuss how to implement suicide prevention strategies into your own lives and families. Join to share your experiences, concerns, strategies, and to seek support and guidance from your peers.



Conversations on Access to Lethal Means is a 90-minute suicide prevention training that provides individuals with the tools to have an important conversation about safety and reducing access to lethal means, such as firearms and medications.



Mental Health First Aid is an evidence-based early intervention training program developed for adults to learn how to assist and support members of their community who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge.

References: (1) Counseling on Access to Lethal Means, (2) 2023 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report, (3) National Council of Mental Wellbeing, (4) American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, (5) SAMHSA, (6) The Columbia Lighthouse Project