VA ACE

SUICIDE PREVENTION

Veterans Crisis Line - 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
press "1" for Veterans

TEXT to 838255

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http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov

TEXT to 838255

Ask the Veteran

- Ask the question:
  - Are you thinking about killing yourself?
  - Do you think you might try to hurt yourself?
- Ask directly

Care for the Veteran

- Remove any means that could be used for self-injury
- Stay calm and safe
- Actively listen to show understanding and produce relief

Escort the Veteran

- Never leave the Veteran alone
- Escort to emergency room or medical clinic
- Call Veterans Crisis Line

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Tips Regarding How to Use the ACE Card

Ask the Veteran

- To determine if a Veteran is suicidal it is helpful to
  - Interact in a manner that communicates concern
  - Know how to manage your own discomfort in order to directly address the issue
- The most difficult ACE step is asking
  - You look upset. Have you thought of hurting yourself?
  - Do you wish you were dead?
- When to ask the question
  - Ask the question anytime you think the Veteran may be a danger to themselves

Care for the Veteran

- Show the Veteran that you care about what they are saying and that you are not passing judgment on what they think or feel
  - Actively listen to their story
  - Nod your head and encourage them to tell you more
- Accept that their situation is serious and deserving of attention

Escort the Veteran

- Do everything you can to encourage and expedite the Veteran getting help
- Explain that there are trained professionals available to help
- Suggest that treatment might help
- If the Veteran tells you that they have had treatment before and it has not worked, try asking: "What if this is the time it does work?"

Safety Guidelines

Call 911 or take the Veteran to the emergency room if

You are not in face-to-face contact but are speaking over the phone or computer with a Veteran who expresses intent to harm self or others

A Veteran is displaying threatening behavior with a weapon or object that can be used as a weapon

A Veteran tells you that they have overdosed on pills or other drugs or there are signs of physical injury

Resources for Families and Friends

Veterans Crisis Line

1-800-273-TALK (8255) and press "1" for Veterans
Chat URL: http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/
or TEXT: 838255

VA Mental Health Home Web Page

http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov

Information and Support after a Suicide Attempt:

A Department of Veterans Affairs Resource Guide for Family Members of Veterans Who are Coping with Suicidality

http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn19/docs/ResourceGuideFamilyMembers.pdf

Nearest Local Emergency Room: _____

_____

Contact Information for Local VA Provider:

_____

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ACE

Suicide Prevention for Veterans and Their Families and Friends

Goal of ACE

The purpose of ACE is to help Veterans, their family members and friends learn that they can take the necessary steps to get help.

The acronym ACE (Ask, Care, Escort) summarizes the steps needed to take an active and valuable role in suicide prevention.

Ask your VA provider for an ACE card to carry with you

Recognizing Suicide Warning Signs

Warning signs are early indicators of heightened risk

These signs require immediate attention

- Thinking about hurting or killing self
- Looking for ways to kill self
- Seeking access to pills, weapons or other means
- Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide

What Veterans and Their Family Members and Friends Should Know about Suicide

- Asking a Veteran about suicide does not create suicidal thoughts any more than asking about chest pain causes a heart attack
  - The act of asking may give the Veteran permission to talk about thoughts or feelings
- Many people who die by suicide have communicated some intent, wish, or desire to kill themselves
  - Someone who talks about suicide gives you an opportunity to intervene before suicidal behaviors occur
- Many suicidal ideas are associated with the presence of underlying treatable conditions
  - Providing treatment for an underlying condition can save a life
  - Helping the person survive the immediate crisis so that they can seek such treatment is vital
- Suicidal thinking can overwhelm even the most rational person
  - Protective factors may not provide a sufficient buffer during periods of crisis
- Anyone experiencing serious suicidal thoughts should be referred to a health care provider who can evaluate their conditions and provide treatment as appropriate

Additional Warning Signs

The presence of these signs requires contact with a professional

- Inability to sleep or sleeping all the time
- Withdrawing from friends, family and/or society
- Increasing alcohol or drug use
- Acting recklessly or engaging in risky activities
- Rage, anger, seeking revenge
- Avoiding things or reliving past experiences
- Anxiety, agitation
- Dramatic changes in mood
- No reason for living – no sense of purpose in life
- Feeling trapped – like there is no way out
- Hopelessness

Protective Factors

Factors that can protect one from suicidal behavior

Protective factors include:

- Family, friends, social support, close relationships, battle buddy
- Coping/problem-solving skills
- Ongoing health and mental health care relationships
- Reasons for living
- Cultural and religious beliefs that discourage suicide and support living