

#BeThere



S.A.V.E.

 **Veterans
Crisis Line**
1-800-273-8255 **PRESS 1**



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Overview

- Objectives
- Facts about suicide
- Myths/realities about suicide
- The steps of S.A.V.E.
- Resources and References

Objectives

By participating in this training you will:

- Have a general understanding of the scope of suicide within the United States
- Know how to identify a Veteran who may be at risk for suicide
- Know what to do when you identify a Veteran at risk



Common myths vs. realities

Myth

Reality

If somebody really wants to die by suicide,
there is nothing you can do about it.

Common myths vs. realities

Myth

Reality

Making one form of suicide less convenient does not usually lead people to find another method. Some people will, but the overwhelming majority will not.

Death by Suicide is Preventable

Lethal Means Safety

- Safe storage of lethal means reduces suicide
 - e.g., Firearms, abundance of analgesic doses per bottle, etc.
- How did we figure this out?
 - e.g., Coal gas in the UK, placement of lethal items behind counters, fencing off bridges
- 85-90% of people who survive a suicide attempt do not go on to die by suicide later.

Common myths vs. realities

Myth

Reality

Asking about suicide may lead to someone taking his or her life.

Common myths vs. realities

Myth

Reality

Asking about suicide does **not** create suicidal thoughts. The act of asking the question simply gives the Veteran permission to talk about his or her thoughts or feelings.

Common myths vs. realities

Myth

Reality

There are talkers, and there are doers.

Common myths vs. realities

Myth

Many individuals who die by suicide or attempt suicide have given some clue or warning. Someone who talks about suicide provides others with an opportunity to intervene before suicidal behaviors occur.

Suicide threats should never be ignored. No matter how casually or jokingly said, statements like, "You'll be sorry when I'm dead," or "I can't see any way out" may indicate serious suicidal feelings.

Reality

Common myths vs. realities

Myth

Reality

If somebody really wants to die by suicide, there is nothing you can do about it.

Common myths vs. realities

Myth

Reality

Most suicidal ideas are associated with treatable disorders. Helping someone connect with treatment can save a life. The acute risk for suicide is often time-limited. If you can help the person survive the immediate crisis and overcome the strong intent to die by suicide, you have gone a long way toward promoting a positive outcome.

Common myths vs. realities

Myth

Reality

He/she won't die by suicide because...

- He just made plans for a vacation.
- She has young children at home.
- He made a verbal or written promise.
- She knows how dearly her family loves her.

Common myths vs. realities

Myth

Reality

The intent to die can override rational thinking.

Someone experiencing suicidal ideation or intent must be taken seriously and referred to a clinical provider who can further evaluate his or her condition and provide treatment as appropriate.

S.A.V.E.

- S.A.V.E. will help you act with care and compassion if you encounter a Veteran who is in suicidal crisis.
- The acronym “**S.A.V.E.**” helps one remember the important steps involved in suicide prevention:

S | Signs of suicidal thinking should be recognized.

A | Ask the most important question of all.

V | Validate the Veteran’s experience.

E | Encourage treatment, and Expedite getting help.

Importance of identifying warning signs



- There are behaviors that may indicate/reveal that a Veteran needs help.
- Veterans in crisis may show behaviors that indicate a risk of harming or killing themselves.

S | Signs of suicidal thinking

Learn to recognize these warning signs:

- Hopelessness, feeling like there's no way out
- Anxiety, agitation, sleeplessness, or mood swings
- Feeling like there is no reason to live
- Rage or anger
- Engaging in risky activities without thinking
- Increasing alcohol or drug use
- Withdrawing from family and friends

S | Signs of suicidal thinking

The presence of any of the following signs requires immediate attention:

- Thinking about hurting or killing themselves
- Looking for ways to die
- Talking about death, dying, or suicide
- Self-destructive or risk-taking behavior, especially when it involves alcohol, drugs, or weapons

A | Asking the question

Know how to ask the most important question of all...

A | Asking the question

“Are you thinking about killing yourself?”

A | Asking the question

- Are you thinking of suicide?
- Have you had thoughts about taking your own life?
- Are you thinking about killing yourself?

A | Asking the question

Do's

- DO ask the question if you've identified warning signs or symptoms.
- DO ask the question in a natural way that flows with the conversation.

Don'ts

- DON'T ask the question as though you are looking for a "no" answer.
 - "You aren't thinking of killing yourself. Are you?"
- DON'T wait to ask the question when someone is halfway out the door.

Things to consider when talking with a Veteran 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, encouraging comments.
- Be honest — there are no quick solutions, but help is available.

V | Validate the Veteran's experience.

- Talk openly about suicide. Be willing to listen, and allow the Veteran to express his or her feelings.
- Recognize that the situation is serious.
- Do not pass judgment.
- Reassure that help is available.



E | Encourage treatment, and expedite getting help.

- What should I do if I think someone is suicidal?
 - Don't keep the Veteran's suicidal behavior a secret.
 - Do not leave him or her alone.
 - Try to get the person to seek immediate help from his or her doctor or the nearest hospital emergency room.
 - Call 911.
- Reassure the Veteran that help is available.
- Call the Veterans Crisis Line at **988 and Press 1**.

Resources

Mental Health

- VHA provides specialty inpatient and outpatient mental health services at its medical centers and community-based outpatient clinics. All mental health care provided by VHA supports recovery, striving to enable a person with mental health problems to live a meaningful life in the community and achieve his or her full potential.
- For more information on VA Mental Health Services, visit www.mentalhealth.va.gov

Vet Centers

- Vet Centers are VA community-based centers that provide a range of counseling, outreach, and referral services.
- For more information about Vet Centers and to find the Vet Center closest to you, visit www.vetcenter.va.gov

Resources (cont.)



Make The Connection

- ***MakeTheConnection.net*** is a one-stop resource where Veterans and their families and friends can privately explore information about physical and mental health symptoms, challenging life events, and mental health conditions. On this site, Veterans and their families and friends can learn about available resources and support. Visit [MakeTheConnection.net](https://www.maketheconnection.net) to learn more.

Resources (cont.)



Veterans Crisis Line/Chat/Text

- **988 and Press 1**
- [VeteransCrisisLine.net](https://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net)
- Text to **838255**

VA Suicide Prevention Coordinators

- Each VA Medical Center has a Suicide Prevention Coordinator (SPC) to make sure Veterans receive needed counseling and services.
- Find your local SPC at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/ResourceLocator](https://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/ResourceLocator)

Remember:

S.A.V.E.

- S** Signs of suicidal thinking should be recognized.
- A** Ask the most important question of all.
- V** Validate the Veteran's experience.
- E** Encourage treatment, and Expedite getting help.

By participating in this training, you have learned:

- Suicide prevention is everyone's business.
- General facts about suicide in the U.S.
- Facts about Veteran suicide.
- How to identify a Veteran who may be at risk for suicide.
- How to help a Veteran at risk for suicide.
- How to address a crisis situation.
- What resources are available and how to access them.
- <http://spreadtheword.veteranscrisisline.net/materials/>