

“CALL TO ACTION”
FOR MILITARY SUICIDE PREVENTION ADVOCATES

4 STEPS TO ASSESSING SUICIDE RISK AMONG VETERANS

1. **LOOK** for the warning signs (these warning signs require immediate attention & referral.

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

Additional Warning Signs (any of these signs, refer for mental health treatment.

- Hopelessness
- Rage, anger, seeking revenge
- Acting recklessly or engaging in risky activities, seemingly without thinking
- Feeling trapped—like there’s no way out
- Increasing alcohol or drug abuse
- Withdrawing from friends, family, and society
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- Dramatic changes in mood
- Perceiving no reason for living, no sense of purpose in life

2. **ASSESS** for risk and protective factors that may increase or decrease risk for suicide

- Current ideation, intent, plan, assess to means
- Previous suicide attempt or attempts
- Alcohol/substance abuse
- Previous history of psychiatric diagnosis
- Impulsiveness and poor self-control
- Hopelessness—presence, duration, severity
- Recent losses—physical, financial, personal
- Recent discharge from an inpatient unit
- Family history of suicide
- History of abuse—physical, sexual or emotional
- Co-morbid health problems, especially a newly diagnosed problem or worsening symptoms
- Same-sex sexual orientation

3. **ASK** the questions (these are very serious questions)

- Are you feeling hopeless about the present/future? If yes, ask....
- Have you had thoughts about taking your life? If yes, ask....
- When did you have these thoughts, and do you have a plan to take your life?
- Have you ever had a suicide attempt?

4. **RESPONDING** to suicide risk

- Refer them to mental treatment
- Inform and involve someone close to this person
- Limit access to means of suicide
- Increase contact and make a commitment to help the person through the crisis

FACTORS THAT MAY DECREASE RISK

- Positive social support
- Spirituality
- Sense of responsibility to family
- Children in the home, pregnancy
- Life satisfaction
- Reality testing ability
- Positive coping skills
- Positive problem-solving skills
- Positive therapeutic relationships

This information was copied off the Suicide Risk Assessment Guide from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs guide.

By no means are we to diagnose the Veteran but we must aware that Post Traumatic Syndrome Disorder is real and it is a hidden factor that effects many.

Veterans Crisis Line 1-800-273-8255 press 1 or
Online Chat at: www.VeteransCrisisLine.net

There are many more contact numbers or emails but the number/email listed goes directly into the Veteran Crisis Line and they will direct them to the closest VA Hospital.