

National Suicide Prevention Month is September “It Matters”

Suicide is complex. There are almost always multiple causes, including the presence of undiagnosed mental illness. “Mental health illnesses are treatable and preventing suicide is a major focus for us,” says Emma Metcalf, Medical Center Director. “During National Suicide Prevention Month, we’re putting the theme “It Matters,” into action by concentrating on the people, relationships, and experiences that matter to Veterans and their loved ones,” informs Metcalf. According to Metcalf, in many cases suicide can be prevented. “We want Veterans and their families, and their friends to know about these resources, and that we’re here to help,” says Metcalf.

- The Veterans Crisis Line **1-800-273-8255, press “1”**
- Recognizing the signs
- The website www.veteranscrisisline.net for more information

Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255, press “1”

Since 2007, the Veterans Crisis Line has answered more than 890,000 calls and made more than 30,000 lifesaving rescues. In 2009, the Veterans Crisis Line added the anonymous chat service, which has had more than 108,000 chats. “Many of the responders are Veterans themselves and understand the challenges Veterans and their families and friends face,” says Metcalf. “They are specially trained and experienced in helping Veterans of all ages and circumstances, and are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week/365 days a year.” The Veterans Crisis Line, online chat and text-messaging services offer free, confidential support to Veterans, their families and friends. Veterans, or anyone concerned about a Veteran, can call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, chat online at www.veteranscrisisline.net/Chat or text to 838255 to receive support—even if they are not registered with VA or enrolled in VA health care. All Veterans Crisis Line resources are optimized for mobile devices.

Recognizing the Signs: www.veteranscrisisline.net

Many Veterans may not show any signs of intent to harm themselves before doing so, but some actions can be a sign that a Veteran needs help. Veterans in crisis may show behaviors that indicate a risk of harming themselves. Veterans who are considering suicide often show signs of depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and/or hopelessness, such as:

- Appearing sad or depressed most of the time
- Clinical depression: deep sadness, loss of interest, trouble sleeping and eating—that doesn’t go away or continues to get worse
 - Feeling anxious, agitated, or unable to sleep
 - Neglecting personal welfare, deteriorating physical appearance
 - Withdrawing from friends, family, and society, or sleeping all the time
 - Losing interest in hobbies, work, school, or other things one used to care about
 - Frequent and dramatic mood changes
 - Expressing feelings of excessive guilt or shame
 - Feelings of failure or decreased performance
 - Feeling that life is not worth living, having no sense of purpose in life
 - Talk about feeling trapped—like there is no way out of a situation
 - Having feelings of desperation, and saying that there’s no solution to their problems

Their behavior may be dramatically different from their normal behavior, or they may appear to be actively contemplating or preparing for a suicidal act through behaviors such as:

- Performing poorly at work or school
- Acting recklessly or engaging in risky activities—seemingly without thinking
- Showing violent behavior such as punching holes in walls, getting into fights or self-destructive violence; feeling rage or uncontrolled anger or seeking revenge

- Looking as though one has a “death wish,” tempting fate by taking risks that could lead to death, such as driving fast or running red lights
- Giving away prized possessions
- Putting affairs in order, tying up loose ends, and/or making out a will
- Seeking access to firearms, pills, or other means of harming oneself

“If you are a Veteran or know a Veteran who is showing any of the above warning signs, please call the Veterans Crisis Line, **chat online**, or send a text message today,” encourages Metcalf. “It matters and can make all the difference.”

Visit www.veteranscrisisline.net

People who know a Veteran best may be the first to recognize emotional distress and reach out for support when issues reach a crisis point—and well before a Veteran is at risk of suicide. The Veterans Crisis Line Website connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text message. Veterans and their loved ones can call **1-800-273-8255** and **Press 1**, chat online, or send a text message to **838255** to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

This Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month show your support for Veterans and help spread the word that confidential support is always available through the Lexington VA Medical Center and Veterans Crisis Line. Download posters, flyers, social media, and information to share with your family and friends at www.veteranscrisisline.net.

For more information about suicide prevention [watch this video](#). For mental health screenings and interventions, and other VA healthcare services, please contact:

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