

# Tips for using R.A.C.E.

## Recognize Distress

- Look for signs of distress
  - ✓ Note changes in personality, emotions, or behavior
  - ✓ Note withdrawal from co-workers, friends and family
  - ✓ Note changes in eating and sleeping patterns

## Ask the Veteran

- To determine if the Veteran is suicidal, it is helpful to
  - ✓ Interact in a manner that communicates concern
  - ✓ Calmly inquire about distress you observe
  - ✓ Know how to manage your own discomfort in order to directly address the issue
- The most difficult R.A.C.E. step is asking
  - ✓ You look upset. “Are you thinking about killing 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 him/herself

## 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. Don't judge
  - ✓ Nod your head and encourage them to tell you more – let the person know they are not alone
  - ✓ Calmly control the situation
  - ✓ Do not use force; keep everyone safe
- Accept that their situation is serious and deserving of attention while you also offer the person **Hope**

## 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 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?”
- Call the Suicide Prevention Lifeline for additional information, guidance or help: **800-273-8255 Press 1**

# 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 Family and Friends

### National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-TALK (8255) and press “1” for Veterans

[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

### 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

[https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide\\_prevention/docs/Information\\_and\\_support\\_after\\_a\\_suicide\\_attempt.pdf](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/docs/Information_and_support_after_a_suicide_attempt.pdf)

### PTSD Coach

Free app that you can download. **PTSD Coach** information can be used for yourself or to help someone you care about.

*This information may just help save a life*

### R.A.C.E. Suicide Prevention Training

To register for the free three one-hour training modules, visit <http://www.racesuicideprevention.us>

# Suicide Prevention is Not a Spectator Sport!

# R.A.C.E.

**Recognize – Ask – Care – Escort**

**Get Informed!**

**Get Involved!**

**Save a Life!**

[www.RaceSuicidePrevention.us](http://www.RaceSuicidePrevention.us)

# R.A.C.E.

The purpose of R.A.C.E. is to help Veterans, their family members and friends learn the necessary steps they can take to help someone in need.

The acronym **R.A.C.E.** (**R**ecognize, **A**sk, **C**are, **E**scort) summarizes the steps needed to take an active and valuable role in suicide prevention and necessary steps to get help.

## Ways of Preventing Suicide

### Prevention:

Reducing things that contribute to suicide

### Intervention:

Increasing safety of person with thoughts of suicide

### Postvention:

Help for people who injure themselves and those affected

## Warning Signs of Acute Suicide Risk

### Warning Signs are early indicators of heightened risk

These signs require immediate attention

- Threatening to hurt or kill themselves, or talking of wanting to hurt or kill themselves;
- Looking for ways to kill themselves by seeking access to firearms, available pills, or other means;
- Talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide, when these actions are out of the ordinary
- Expressing wish to go to sleep and not wake up



## 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 pains 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 **Escorted** to the nearest Mental Health Provider or Emergency Department who can evaluate their conditions and provide treatment as appropriate. **Don't Leave The Person Alone. Stay With Them Until They Are In The Care of Professional Help**
- **If harm to self and/or others is occurring or about to occur, activate an emergency response – Call 911 Immediately**

## 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
- Expressions of helplessness, hopelessness or worthlessness
- Increasing alcohol or drug use
- Acting recklessly or engaging in risky activities
- Rage, anger, seeking revenge
- Avoiding things or reliving past experiences
- Giving away personal possessions
- Feeling trapped – like there is no way out
- No reason for living – No sense of purpose in life
- Dramatic changes in mood
- Anxiety, agitation

## Protective Factors

Factors that can protect one from suicidal behavior

**Protective Factors include:**

- Strong family relationships, friends, social support, buddies
- Effective coping and problem-solving skills
- Positive, healthy lifestyle – diet, exercise, rest
- Stress reduction activities
- Ongoing health and mental health care relationships – Early interventions
- Healthy spiritual/religious affiliation
- Reasons for living
- Opportunities to make significant contributions
- Sense of belonging to a group: Cohesion – Camaraderie – Support
- Cultural and religious beliefs that discourage suicide and support living