

Answering the Call:

If you have a phone, you can help a Veteran in crisis

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Everyone has a role to play in Veteran suicide prevention, and you don't have to be an expert to talk to a Veteran facing challenges.

A simple phone call can help a Veteran in crisis, whose emotional struggles and health challenges may lead to thoughts of suicide. Talking with a Veteran in crisis may seem daunting, but your conversation can mean the difference between a tragic outcome and a life saved.

When talking to a Veteran in crisis, remain calm and listen for signs of distress or other clues that might indicate they need immediate help.

Examples include:

- Crying, yelling, rage, or anger
- Making concerning statements, such as:
 - "My family would be better off if I wasn't here."
 - "I can't go on like this."
 - "No one can help me."



Ask directly in a nonjudgmental tone:
"Are you thinking about taking your own life?"

If the response is "NO" (NOT suicidal)
and they do not appear to be in crisis

If the response is "YES" (individual confirms they're thinking about suicide)

Route the Veteran to appropriate local resources. You can find resources in your area, including local suicide prevention coordinators and crisis centers, using our Resource Locator (VeteransCrisisLine.net/LocalResources).

Determine whether the Veteran is at imminent risk and if they've already inflicted self-harm or injured others or has an immediate plan to do so, with access to means.

Follow the below steps to help keep the Veteran safe.

1. Try to find out where the Veteran is located and whether anyone else is nearby.
2. Verify the Veteran's phone number and, if possible, obtain the last four digits of their Social Security number.
3. Explain that you'll add the Veterans Crisis Line (**Dial 988 then Press 1**) into the call.
4. Complete a warm transfer. When the Veterans Crisis Line responder answers, identify yourself, explain what's going on, and provide the Veteran's information.
5. Ask the Veteran if they'd like you to remain on the phone to talk to the responder together or disconnect so they can speak to the responder privately.
6. If the Veteran asks you to disconnect, make sure the Veteran is on the line with the Veterans Crisis Line responder before hanging up.



For more information about the Veterans Crisis Line, visit VeteransCrisisLine.net.

For more information about VA's suicide prevention resources, visit MentalHealth.VA.gov/Suicide_Prevention.

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