

Suicide Prevention Awareness and Action

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Your Previous Background

- Military cultural awareness
- PTSD

Facts and Stats

- Male Veterans are twice as likely to kill themselves as non-Veteran peers
- 1 in 5 suicide deaths are Veterans
- 22 Veterans each day die by suicide
- We're losing as many or more military personnel to suicide than to combat

Theory – Why People Die by Suicide

- Thomas Joiner
- Acquired capacity
- Lack of belongingness
- Sense of burdensomeness

Myths About Suicide

- Asking someone about suicide will put the idea in his/her head
- There are talkers and there are doers
- If someone really wants to die by suicide, there is nothing we can do about it

Common Problems Associated with Suicidality

- Relationship difficulties
- Chronic pain
- Financial problems
- Physical problems
- Employment problems
- Housing problems
- Parenting issues
- Substance abuse/use
- Mental illness (Depression, PTSD, etc.)
- Traumatic Brain Injury

Direct and Indirect Drivers of Suicidality

- David Jobes
- Sometimes the things that appear to “make” someone suicidal are just the surface issue (e.g., homelessness)
- The real problem is the emotional distress this situation causes in the person’s life
- Most people who consider suicide don’t want to die, they want to end the pain or emotional distress they feel
- Suicide is a coping skill (not a good one) to deal with emotional pain – we want to instill hope that the pain is manageable

So, how do we know if someone
is suicidal?

Operation SAVE

- Signs and Symptoms
- Asks the Question
- Validate the Person's Experience
- Encourage Treatment and Expedite Getting Help

Signs and Symptoms (Risk Factors and Warning Signs)

- Risk Factors – things commonly associated with suicidality (things on previous slide – chronic pain, financial problems, substance use/abuse, etc.)
- Warning Signs – indicators that the person is not doing well emotionally and/or might be considering suicide (talking about killing himself, seeking access to means, hopelessness, rage/anger, acting recklessly, increase substance use, withdrawal from others, sleep problems, dramatic changes in mood, ANY CHANGES FROM TYPICAL FUNCTIONING FOR THE INDIVIDUAL)

Ask the Question

- Be direct
 - “Are you thinking of killing yourself?” “Have you had thoughts about taking your life”
- Be open to whatever answer they might give you
 - Don’t ask in a way that looks for a “no” answer: “You’re not thinking of doing anything stupid, are you?”

Validate the Experience

- Show the person you understand what they are saying and care about them
- Accept the situation for what it is
- Do not pass judgment
- Let them know their situation is serious and deserving of attention
- Acknowledge their feelings
- Let them know they are not alone and you are here to help

Encourage treatment and Expedite getting help

- Ask them to give you just enough time to try something else
- Explain that you want to help get them to an expert who can deal with these kinds of problems
- Remind them that seeking treatment for mental health issues is no different than seeking treatment for physical issues
- Remind them that treatment is his or her right

IF IMMEDIATE HELP IS NEEDED

- The person has ingested potentially lethal substances
 - There is a weapon present
 - The person is hostile
- **CALL FOR HELP – 911, POLICE**
 - **VETERANS CRISIS LINE 1-800-273-8255**

If Help is Needed, but there is no imminent danger

- Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255
- Local suicide prevention coordinators (at VA)
- Vet Centers

Other Foci in your Interactions

- Foster belongingness and ways to feel like an “asset” to others
- Try to help the person figure out ways to keep his/her environment safe
 - Get guns out of homes (even temporarily), guns locks, gun safes, separate guns from ammunition
 - Keep medications secured, dole out into weekly dispensers
 - Keep alcohol and illicit drugs out of home

A Word on Impulsivity

- In one sense, suicidality is NOT impulsive
- The act itself, can be very impulsive
 - 5 minutes from consideration to action in most cases

SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH
September, 2014

SEPTEMBER IS
SUICIDE PREVENTION
MONTH



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs



1 PERSON

can help save a life.

1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1

SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH
September, 2014

• • • Confidential chat at VeteransCrisisLine.net or text to **838255** • • •

