



CONNECTION IS SUICIDE PREVENTION.

1. RECOGNIZE

Pay attention to what's different.

Look for changes from the person's usual baseline. One sign does not necessarily mean someone is suicidal. Pay attention to changes that persist, several changes together, or anything that makes you think, 'That is not like them.'

- Pulling away from the team, family, friends or activities that usually matter.
- Changes in sleep, drinking or substance use, exercise, appearance or daily routines.
- More anger, irritability, hopelessness, recklessness or talk of feeling trapped or like a burden.
- Loss of mission, purpose, identity, or direction — especially after retirement, separation, injury or transition.
- A major relationship, financial, legal, disciplinary, health or career problem.
- Giving away valued possessions, putting affairs in order, saying goodbye or a sudden unexplained calm after significant distress.

3. LISTEN

Hold the line without judgment.

Your job is not to win an argument, deliver a speech or solve everything in one conversation. Stay present. Let them talk. Take what they say seriously and don't offer solutions unless asked to.

- Instead of: "You need to toughen up." Say, "That sounds like a lot to carry."
- Instead of: "You have a lot to be grateful for." Say, "What's hitting you the hardest right now?"
- Instead of: "You'll get through it." Say, "I am here. You don't have to handle this alone."
- If they say they are thinking about suicide: Stay with them. Ask whether they are in immediate danger, have a plan or have access to the means they would use. Do not promise secrecy.

A Guide to Support **MILITARY PERSONNEL, VETERANS AND FIRST RESPONDERS**

We watch out for each other on the job. That should not stop when the problem is happening off the job — or when the injury is one no one can see. You don't need the perfect words or all the answers. Recognize what has changed, ask a real question, listen without judgment, and help make the next move.

2. ASK

Start where you are and be direct when needed.

If something feels different, don't wait for the perfect moment. Keep the conversation private, direct and free of judgment.

- "You've seemed off since that call/experience. How are you doing, really?"
- "I've noticed you haven't been going to the gym lately. What's going on?"
- Asking directly about suicide does not put the idea into someone's head. It gives them a clear opening to tell the truth, and it makes it clear that you're willing to engage on the very tough stuff.

4. CONNECT

Make the next move with them.

Connection is not a handoff. It can mean sitting with them, making the call together, driving them to support or involving someone they trust. You can be the contact without being the entire response. Bring in cover when you need it.

- Offer specific options and let them keep as much choice as safety allows.
- Connect them with someone who understands military or first-responder culture.
- Do not make the first conversation the last conversation. Check back, stay connected and follow through on what you said you would do.

Confidential, no cost, no wait peer support
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Talk with someone who understands military and first-responder culture. You do not have to be suicidal to reach out. Support is available as long as you need it.

If there is immediate danger or someone may act on suicidal thoughts now, call or text 988. Stay with them and get additional help.