VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

Stand by Them This Holiday Season: Support Veterans in Crisis

Make sure veterans know about the resources available to them

Dec 13, 2012

Many of our nation's service members leave active duty and enter civilian life without much difficulty, but some service members and their families struggle to make the transition. Some veterans face challenging mental health issues. Others face problems stemming from economic hardship, the loss of loved ones or retirement. These challenges, which can affect veterans of any age, also touch everyone in a veteran's life. Family health is critical to veteran health—so this holiday season, stand by them, and make sure veterans and their families and friends know about the resources available to them.

The Veterans Crisis Line—a resource provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)—is a confidential hotline, online chat, and text service for veterans and their families and friends who are in crisis and need immediate support. This service is free and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Veterans and their loved ones, including families, caregivers, friends, and neighbors, can call **1-800-273-8255 and Press 1**, chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat, or text to **838255** to connect with the support they've earned.

The holidays can bring extra stress into a person's life, and can be especially hard for those already having a tough time. Family members, friends, and supporters of veterans can reach out for confidential support if they are concerned about a veteran in their life. VA is asking these important members of a veteran's support network to help spread the word about the Veterans Crisis Line using downloadable posters, website banners, videos, and other electronic materials. Support is only a call, click, or text away for veterans and for their loved ones, who are often the first to notice signs of a crisis.

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Whether you're a veteran, service member, or part of a military family, you are never alone. Since its launch in 2007, the Veterans Crisis Line has answered more than 650,000 calls and made more than 23,000 lifesaving rescues. The online chat service has helped more than 65,000 people. In November 2011, the Veterans Crisis Line gave Veterans and their families another way to connect with round-the-clock support by introducing a text messaging service.

At the Veterans Crisis Line, trained VA responders help veterans and their loved ones through their crisis and provide referrals to VA services that can help. Responders can connect a veteran to their local VA Suicide Prevention Coordinator, located at a VA Medical Center. These experts provide counseling and educate the community about the causes and signs of suicidal crisis.

Everyone can help make a difference in the life of a veteran. Stand by veterans and their families by letting them know support is always available whenever, if ever, they need it.

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

For more information about VA's mental health resources, visit www.mentalhealth.va.gov.