

Tips for Family & Friends

<https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/>

800-273-8255 (press 1) = Veteran's Immediate Support Line

888-823-7458 = Family and Friend's Support line

Tips for Talking to the Veteran in Your Life About Seeking Care

1. Be respectful and calm during conversations.
2. Be patient. It usually takes more than one conversation before most people accept the idea of seeking care.
3. Don't argue or attempt to talk a Veteran out of their feelings, thoughts, and/or emotions.
4. Allow the Veteran in your life to decide whether or not they want to talk about what they have experienced or what they are currently dealing with. If they don't, that's okay. Let them know the door is always open and you're willing to listen without offering advice or suggestions.
5. Do not take the Veteran's social withdrawal or isolation personally. Be willing to invite them and accept that they may not want to participate. Let them know they are welcome to change their mind. Avoid giving advice unless the Veteran specifically asks for it.
6. Minimize distraction during conversations with the Veteran by turning off phones, TV, radio, etc. Be willing to limit conversations to 10 to 20 minutes at a time, if necessary. Think small steps.

Tips for Supporting a Veteran Dealing with Stress and Mental Health Concerns

1. Be aware of potential triggers that may aggravate a Veteran's heightened alertness, such as loud noises on TV, fireworks, a car back-firing, etc.
2. Remind yourself that it's not about you. Be patient when a Veteran is struggling with feelings, emotions, stress, and so on.
3. Talk about your feelings and encourage the Veteran to share their feelings about what is going on without forcing the issue.
4. Validate the Veteran's feelings if they are willing to share them by simply listening, rather than offering advice.
5. Try to build in some enjoyable activities with the Veteran in your life on a regular basis.
6. Encourage sticking to schedules and routines.
7. Don't force a Veteran into social outings. If they agree to go, plan ahead in case they feel uncomfortable and want to leave

Tips for Taking Care of Yourself

1. Engage in activities you enjoy that help you tolerate or decrease stress.
2. Educate yourself about mental health problems.
3. Consider getting your own counseling and mental health support.
4. Join a support group or talk to others who are struggling with similar issues