

Use these tips and messages to spread the word about the *Don't Wait. Reach Out.* campaign from the Ad Council and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

KEY MESSAGES

- The national "*Don't Wait. Reach Out.*" campaign is designed to support Veterans across a wide range of life challenges, before their problems become overwhelming.
- It can sometimes be hard for Veterans to ask for help or accept it for themselves. If you or a Veteran you know is struggling. Don't wait. Reach out.
- Veterans, it's okay to not be okay. Don't wait. Reach out. If you or a Veteran you know needs support, visit [VA.gov/REACH](https://www.va.gov/REACH).
- [VA.gov/REACH](https://www.va.gov/REACH) makes it easier by helping Veterans navigate the full range of the VA's offerings, all in one place. Resources are available to support Veterans with their mental and physical health, finances, education, relationships, housing, and more.
- Tragically, U.S. Veterans are at a higher risk for suicide compared to the general population, but there is hope and everyone can play a role in suicide prevention.
- Together, we can spread hope that Veterans—and all of us—can overcome challenges we face in life.

SUGGESTED GUIDELINES & MESSAGING TIPS

- When possible, talk about "**life challenges**" (including specific examples) rather than just "mental health."
 - We all sometimes face challenges like financial struggles, relationship problems, or health issues—all of which can impact our mental wellbeing.



SUGGESTED GUIDELINES & MESSAGING TIPS (CONTINUED)

- Feel free to **share personal anecdotes**, such as reflecting on your own experiences as a Veteran (if applicable), talking about transitioning to civilian life, or memories of when times when you reached out for support and how it helped.
 - Using statistics isn't always as effective or relatable for audiences. It can be more effective to try to connect emotionally through personal experiences and feelings.
- It's important that we normalize conversations about mental health and help-seeking behavior. When you're worried about someone or concerned that things are not getting better, it's **okay to ask directly** about suicide.
- It's also okay to use the word "suicide" in sharing personal stories of suicide loss or lived experience. Sharing your story may help others feel more comfortable getting help if they need it. To help with suicide prevention efforts, experts recommend a few best practices in how we talk about it:
 - Say **"died by suicide,"** rather than "committed suicide" or "took their own life." This shifts the focus to the person's depression or other mental illness being the cause of their death, instead of blaming the individual.
 - **Avoid referring to a suicide attempt as "successful,"** because we don't want to associate "success" with something so tragic. Instead, just say **"died by suicide!"**
 - Likewise, don't describe a suicide attempt as "unsuccessful"—you can say someone **"survived a suicide attempt"** or, simply, **"attempted suicide!"**
 - If talking about someone's suicide or suicide attempt, **avoid going into details** and describing how they went about it. We don't want to risk triggering someone who may be struggling or creating a contagion effect.

For more guidance on how to talk about Veteran suicide, visit the VA's ["Safe Messaging Best Practices" guide](#).

CRISIS RESOURCES

If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, contact the Veterans Crisis Line to receive free, confidential support and crisis intervention **24/7**.

- Dial [988](#) then Press 1.
- Or text [838255](#).
- Or chat online at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](#).

For more messaging guides for different audiences, visit the [Ad Council's Mental Health Toolkit](#).