



# Stress, Emotional Distress and Suicide Risk

- to be at high risk of suicide.<sup>11</sup>
- How one makes sense of stressors is associated with the risk of suicide, self-injuring behavior, and risky behaviors such as driving under the influence of alcohol. Among Veterans who had transitioned to college, those with high scores on comprehensibility (the ability to make sense of a stressful event) for

the most stressful event they had experienced had lower levels of suicide risk, lower rates of self-harm, and a lower likelihood of driving under the influence of alcohol compared to those with lower scores for comprehensibility.<sup>8</sup>

## Ways You Can Help

- Consider suggesting **free VA apps** designed to help Veterans cope with stress.
- Encourage Veterans to use the **Virtual Hope Box Apple** or **Virtual Hope Box Google** smartphone app, aimed to help Veterans manage negative thoughts and feelings, including thoughts of suicide. The app lets Veterans store a collection of photos, music, and messages that reduce stress and hopelessness. It also includes relaxation techniques, games for distraction, inspiring quotes, and one-touch access to the Veterans Crisis Line.
- Connect Veterans to financial tools and resources at the **National Center for Veterans Financial Health** in the following domains: housing, food security, auto/clothes, saving, budgeting, impulse buying, work, school, benefits, investing, debt management, credit, lowering bills, avoiding scams, secure banking, and preparing for financial emergencies.
- Urge those in distress to contact the **Veterans Crisis Line** at 1-800-273-8255 and to Press 1, to Text 838255 or to Visit the VA's Veterans Crisis Line Online Chat.
- For financial, housing, disability, and physical stressors, consider directing veterans to **VA benefits for Service members** including VA's Disability Compensation, VA's Support for Veteran-Owned Small Businesses, the Veterans Pension Program, the Disability Housing Grant, and Aid and Attendance or Housebound Allowance.
- More information on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and acute stress disorder management is available in the **VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guideline for the Management of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Acute Stress Reaction**.

***There is no single cause of suicide. It is often the result of a complex interaction of risk and protective factors at the individual, interpersonal, community, and societal levels. To prevent Veteran suicide, we must maximize protective factors and minimize risk factors at all of these levels.***

## References

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