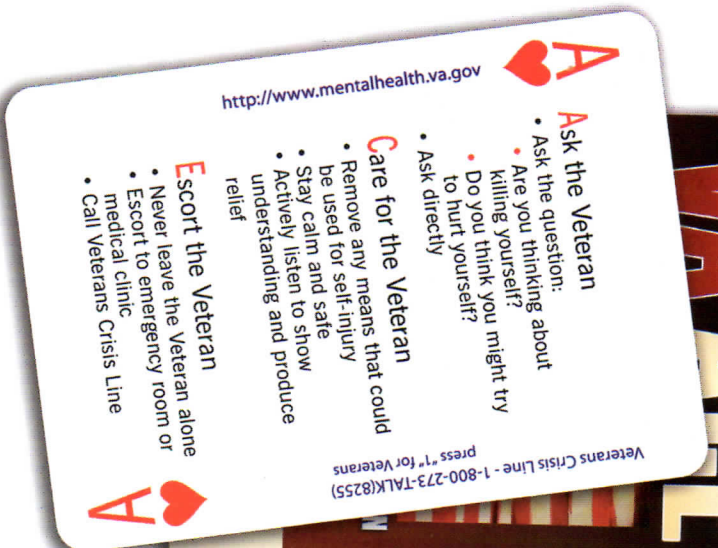


# VA ACE



Ask your VA provider for an ACE card to carry with you

## Recognizing Suicide Warning Signs

Warning signs are early indicators of heightened risk

### These signs require immediate attention

- Thinking about hurting or killing self
- Looking for ways to kill self
- Seeking access to pills, weapons or other means
- Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide

## What Veterans and Their Family Members and Friends Should Know about Suicide

- Asking a Veteran about suicide does not create suicidal thoughts any more than asking about chest pain causes a heart attack
- The act of asking may give the Veteran permission to talk about thoughts or feelings
- Many people who die by suicide have communicated some intent, wish, or desire to kill themselves
- Someone who talks about suicide gives you an opportunity to intervene before suicidal behaviors occur
- Many suicidal ideas are associated with the presence of underlying treatable conditions
- Providing treatment for an underlying condition can save a life
- Helping the person survive the immediate crisis so that they can seek such treatment is vital
- Suicidal thinking can overwhelm even the most rational person
- Protective factors may not provide a sufficient buffer during periods of crisis
- Anyone experiencing serious suicidal thoughts should be referred to a health care provider who can evaluate their conditions and provide treatment as appropriate

## Additional Warning Signs

The presence of these signs requires contact with a professional

- Inability to sleep or sleeping all the time
- Withdrawing from friends, family and/or society
- Increasing alcohol or drug use
- Acting recklessly or engaging in risky activities
- Rage, anger, seeking revenge
- Avoiding things or reliving past experiences
- Anxiety, agitation
- Dramatic changes in mood
- No reason for living – no sense of purpose in life
- Feeling trapped – like there is no way out
- Hopelessness

## Protective Factors

Factors that can protect one from suicidal behavior

### Protective factors include:

- Family, friends, social support, close relationships, battle buddy
- Coping/problem-solving skills
- Ongoing health and mental health care relationships
- Reasons for living
- Cultural and religious beliefs that discourage suicide and support living