

Five Ways To Help Prevent Veteran Suicide

(NAPS)—It's a tragedy: Every day, 22 U.S. veterans take their own lives—a needless loss of 8,000 service members a year.

The Problem

Returning veterans may experience divorce, joblessness, homelessness and hopelessness.

The often-devastating effects of mild to moderate traumatic brain injury (mTBI) and post-traumatic stress (PTS), plus the loss of their military community support, can cause a downward spiral.

Symptoms of mTBI include headaches and problems with balance, sleep, vision and memory. Emotional signs include depression and anxiety. But today's treatment approaches and therapeutic technologies offer hope for veterans feeling overwhelming physical and emotional pain from these invisible wounds of war.

What You Can Do

1. Be observant about behavior changes. For many veterans, the physical symptoms of mTBI are not obvious. Be on the lookout for loss of interest in meaningful activities, personality changes, social isolation and substance abuse.

2. Reach out and spend time together. Let a veteran know he or she is not alone. Meet for coffee or go for a walk. Listen and encourage them to seek help.

3. Tell veterans and their families about helpful programs. Encourage caregivers, spouses and friends to seek help on behalf of a veteran.

One outstanding option that's transformed the lives of more than 550 veterans and their families is the SHARE Military Initiative at Shepherd Center in Atlanta, Ga. This innovative program provides up to 12 weeks of intensive rehabilitation, at no cost to the veteran, to treat mild to moderate brain injury and psychological concerns of those who served in the U.S. military since September 11, 2001. Treatment plans



Photo by Louie Favorite

Horticulture therapy is one type of recreation therapy provided to clients in the SHARE Military Initiative at Shepherd Center as part of a comprehensive treatment approach.

are personalized to each veteran's needs. The program is open to all post-9/11 veterans, including those with other than honorable discharges.

Because of intensive and comprehensive therapy, rehabilitation and life coaching, SHARE has become a model for centers nationwide. Experts in working with veterans provide medical consultation, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech and cognitive therapy, recreation therapy, case management, neuropsychology, chaplaincy and counseling.

4. Volunteer or donate to organizations battling the epidemic of veteran suicide.

5. Support fundraisers and events, such as the Shepherd's Men Run. Annually, a team of committed volunteers runs seven days of half marathons in multiple states wearing 22-pound flak jackets—to increase awareness of treatment options and suicide prevention for veterans. Shepherd's Men have raised millions for this heartfelt mission.

Learn More

Veterans and those who want to help can call 404-603-4314 or visit www.shepherd.org/share and www.shepherdsmen.com.