



## Start the Conversation: *Information for Veterans Dealing With Substance Misuse*

When Veterans use alcohol or drugs as their primary means to cope with traumatic events, stressful experiences, or emotional pain, the consequences can be severe. If you are drinking heavily or taking drugs, it's important to consider how these actions may be affecting your life and the people you care about. Confronting how substance misuse may be taking a toll on your mental and physical health could be the turning point you need to get yourself on a better, more fulfilling path.

Loved ones can offer encouragement and support, and they may be able to connect you with resources that can promote your path to recovery.

### **YOU DON'T HAVE TO DEAL WITH ALCOHOL OR DRUG PROBLEMS ALONE**

Quitting or cutting back on drinking or drug use can be challenging. Trying to do it on your own, without any support, can make it even harder. Talking to family and friends can be a helpful first step. Loved ones can offer encouragement and support, and they may be able to connect you with resources that can promote your path to recovery.

One option is to get counseling, either one-on-one with a therapist or in a group with others who are working on similar concerns. In addition, there are options for medications that may help you reduce your use of alcohol or drugs. You can work with your counselor or doctor to try different types of treatment. Remember: Finding the care that's right for you may take some time. Be patient with the process, and try to keep an open mind as you work toward recovery.



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

## You may also consider contacting:

- ▶ Your family doctor, who may know you well and be able to offer support, guidance, and appropriate referrals, including to a doctor who has extensive experience treating individuals with substance misuse problems if yours does not
- ▶ A mental health professional, such as a therapist
- ▶ Local support groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or Narcotics Anonymous (NA)
- ▶ Your local VA Medical Center or Vet Center: The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs specializes in the care and treatment of Veterans
- ▶ A spiritual or faith-based adviser

*Learn to recognize these warning signs of a mental health crisis. If you notice any of the following, get help immediately or encourage your Veteran to do so:*

- ▶ Engaging in self-destructive behavior, such as drug abuse or reckless use of weapons
- ▶ Thinking about hurting or killing oneself
- ▶ Looking for ways or having a set plan in place to kill oneself
- ▶ Talking about death, dying, or suicide
- ▶ Saying final goodbyes to friends and family
- ▶ Putting personal affairs in order or giving away possessions

## WARNING SIGNS OF A CRISIS

Individuals sometimes misuse alcohol and/or drugs as a means to cope with stressful life experiences and emotional challenges. If you notice that your increased drinking or drug use coincides with feelings of hopelessness, aggression, withdrawal, or anxiety, it's time to reach out for help.

Remember: Finding the care that's right for you may take some time. Be patient with the process, and try to keep an open mind as you work toward recovery.



It's important that you talk to someone right away if you have thoughts of harming yourself, death, or suicide. You can always contact the **Veterans Crisis Line** by calling **1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1**, using the online chat, or **texting to 838255**. These services provide free, **confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year**.

For additional information and resources to help a Veteran you're concerned about, visit *Start the Conversation: New Tools for Veteran Suicide Prevention* at [www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/starttheconversation](http://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/starttheconversation)