



## Start the Conversation: *Information for Veterans Who Have Transitioned From Service*

Returning to civilian life can present new opportunities — and new challenges. Many Service members look forward to life after the military because they can spend more time with family and friends without the constraints of military structure or the disruption of deployments. At the same time, transitioning out of the military may raise a lot of questions. You may wonder what you are going to do with this new phase of your life, or whether you will be able to find a job. You may think about going back to school but not know where to start. Or you may miss the order and discipline of military life and wonder whether you will be able to adjust.

### What should I keep an eye out for while transitioning from service?

Most Veterans go through some period of adjustment as they transition from military service to civilian life. For some Veterans, the challenges continue — affecting their health and well-being, including:

- ▶ Frequently feeling on edge or tense
- ▶ Having difficulty concentrating
- ▶ Feeling angry or irritable
- ▶ Having trouble sleeping
- ▶ Feeling down for weeks or months

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U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

## Helpful ways to ease the transition from service

Going from something familiar, like military life, to something new and different can be challenging. There are things you can do to ease the path forward and build a foundation for success:

- ▶ Reach out to other Veterans or to Veterans' groups for social support. Recognize that others may not always agree with you or understand your military service, and agree to disagree.
- ▶ Be prepared for insensitive questions or topics of conversation; practice how to respond before you hear them; respectfully decline to talk about things that make you uncomfortable.
- ▶ Have a plan of action for your adjustment that includes a list of goals for your transition, future, and personal life.
- ▶ Try to get a good night's sleep as often as possible.
- ▶ Exercise regularly and eat healthy meals.
- ▶ Practice relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing.
- ▶ Avoid unhealthy "quick fixes" that you think may help you cope, such as drinking alcohol, taking drugs, or smoking cigarettes.

## WARNING SIGNS OF CRISIS

Some of the challenges that come with transitioning from the military can be difficult or stressful. They can put a strain on your relationships and may lead to feelings of despair.

*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



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)**