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VFW DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA HOSPITAL AND VAVS DIRECTOR
SEPTEMBER 2020 HOSPITAL REPORT

September is moving along rapidly. Covid is still in our everyday life experiences. Our posts are now open and adapting to the rules of social distancing, wearing masks and operating at a percentage of their occupancy number.

There will be lots of program events being held this month. VJ Day, Labor Day, Patriot Day, Air Force Birthday, POW/MIA Day and VFW Birthday will have group gatherings. Please social distance and think safety.

September is National Suicide Awareness Month. VA says veteran suicide rate is 17 per day after a change in calculation. Whatever the number is, it's to many. This month and every month, take a moment to reach out to a Veteran in your life. Your simple acts of kindness can help give a Veteran hope. For a Veteran facing hard times, your support can provide hope when it's needed most-and you already have what it takes to show you care. Take a few minutes to check in today. Talking on the phone with a Veteran can strengthen your connection. Calling to just "catch up" is important-especially during this unpredictable time.

- **Not only does an open and honest conversation help people feel less alone, but it also can give you a window into their experience.**

If you're worried about someone, you might need to have a more serious conversation.

- **Remind them you are there for them, even if physically apart. It's easier to feel isolated these days-so reaching out is more important than ever.**

- **Validate their experience. Listen more than you speak-don't dominate the conversation. Even if you can't relate to what they are going through, you can tell them you understand that they went through something difficult and show them you respect their feelings about it.**
- **Let them decide how much information to share. Supportive and encouraging comments, rather than invasive personal questions, will create a space for open communication and avoid putting them on the defensive.**
- **If you're concerned, it's okay to ask directly if they are thinking about suicide. Asking questions about thoughts of suicide does not increase a person's suicide risk, and the answers can help you determine the next steps to take.**

Suicide is preventable. Let's BE THERE for our comrades when they need us the most. Encourage your members (even in small ways) to support veterans, throughout SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH and each month after.

VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat

**Chester Pyatt
Hospital Director**