

## Veterans and Family Support

### May 2025 Promotion

May is Mental Health Awareness Month. Suicide Awareness was the topic of the August V&FS promotion so this promotion will focus on other aspects of mental health that can impact the quality of day to day life for Veterans and their Family members.

As family members, what are some of the signs we can look out for that might indicate that our loved one is experiencing some mental health issues? Here are just some:

- Alcohol or substance abuse
- Anger or irritability
- Eating problems
- Flashbacks
- Gambling
- Loss of Interest
- Reckless behavior
- Social isolation
- Trouble sleeping



Whatever the circumstances, it is important to remember that it's probably not a unique situation and someone else out there is going through a similar experience. If we suspect a family member or friend is having a hard time, what are some of the resources available to them or us?

- Healthcare professionals are available and can advise on the best course of action. The VA has over 11,000 mental health care professionals who can provide peer support, counseling, therapy and medication.
- The VA also offers on line training <https://www.veterantraining.va.gov> covering topics such as dealing with sleep problems, anger management, parenting.
- The VA Caregiver Support Program <https://www.caregiver.va.gov> provides caregivers with tools and advice
- Organizations such as Narcotics and Alcoholics Anonymous provide ongoing support to those who are affected by substance abuse
- Vet Centers provide counseling and other wellbeing services to eligible veterans and their families and those who have experienced sexual military trauma.

As Auxiliary members we can role model the 5 c's for maintaining and improving mental health

- **Connection:** humans are social creatures and strong positive connections are fundamental to our wellbeing. Joining groups that have similar interests, such as a Post or Auxiliary, can help to build a network of supportive relationships.
- **Compassion:** be kind to yourself and others. Extend compassion to others by showing empathy, offering help and being understanding of your own and others struggles.
- **Coping:** find strategies and develop skills that work for you to manage stress and make them part of your daily routine. It might be as simple as doing breathing exercises or engaging in a hobby. These techniques can help maintain a positive mindset and sense of control.
- **Community:** be an active part of a supportive community, such as a Post or Auxiliary, where there is a sense of belonging and shared strength. A strong community can reduce feelings of isolation and promote wellbeing.
- **Care:** prioritize being proactive about maintaining and improving mental health. Seek help when needed and maintain a healthy lifestyle by exercising, eating a healthy diet, and getting plenty of sleep.

Many of the things we do as Auxiliary members support these 5 priorities. We share a common mission to serve veterans, service members and their families; we develop strong bonds with the Comrades and our brothers and sisters; we support each other in times of need; we do wellness checks; we share information and we provide opportunities for social gatherings where connections can be made.

In the words of Leo Buscaglia:

“Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around”