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VA suicide prevention tool puts lifesaving information in R.E.A.C.H

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) released a mobile app, March 18, that offers step-by-step guidance for those who are trying to support someone they care about and for those who are concerned about their own emotional wellbeing.

Developed by the [PREVENTS](#) Office, the [How We R.E.A.C.H. Coaching Tool](#) includes five actions to take when REACHing out to someone in need or when you are REACHing out for help for yourself. It provides additional resource information and suggested language to use when starting what are often very difficult conversations.

When we REACH to those in need, we:

- R – Reach** out and ask, “How are you...*really*?” Listen and offer hope.
- E – Engage** them about possible risk factors and changes in their life to better understand their pain.
- A – Attend** to their safety. Unless you are concerned about your safety, stay with them.
- C – Connect** them to resources such as supportive friends and family, professionals or a crisis line.
- H – Help** them make and maintain a plan to stay safe. Encourage them to share it with others.

When we REACH because we are hurting, we:

- R – Reach** to a loved one or someone we trust. Don’t be afraid to **reach** out — *now*.
- E – Engage** those we trust and discuss life changes and risk factors that are contributing to our pain.
- A – Attend** to our safety. Contact someone who can be with us and help us stay safe.
- C – Connect** with family, friends or appropriate professionals. Contact a crisis line and be honest so they can help.
- H – Help** others understand how they can help us stay safe. Share a safety plan if we have one.

“The How We R.E.A.C.H. Coaching Tool empowers everyone with basic information so they can take the necessary critical steps to provide – or receive – help and hope,” said PREVENTS Executive Director Barbara Van Dahlen, Ph.D. “It puts this important information at our fingertips, on our phones, giving people the confidence to reach out for themselves, to friends and loved ones, to ensure they get the support they deserve.”

The tool is a key component of [REACH](#), the first ever national public health campaign focused on suicide prevention. Established in July 2020, [REACH](#) aims to engage everyone with the goal of changing the culture of mental health and preventing suicide among Veterans and all Americans.

It was developed with the help of military and Veterans Service Organizations, and in collaboration with other organizations that have pledged to assist with the dissemination of this potentially life-saving app.

Download the [How We R.E.A.C.H. Coaching Tool](#).

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If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, contact the Veterans Crisis Line to receive free, confidential support and crisis intervention available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, text to 838255 or chat online at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](https://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat).

Media covering this issue can download VA's [Safe Messaging Best Practices fact sheet](#) or visit www.ReportingOnSuicide.org for important guidance on how to communicate about suicide.