## Tips: Important Strategies

- Be aware of the signs someone is “shutting down.” These include silence, ignoring, turning away and ending a conversation.
- Engage in open communication with the Veteran in your life. Discuss all aspects of life, including painful and difficult experiences.
- Remind the Veteran in your life that he or she is not alone.
- Avoid pushing the Veteran in your life to open up before he or she is ready.
- Approach the Veteran in your life with love and concern.
- Aim to make emotional and intellectual connections with the Veteran in your life.
- Show the Veteran in your life understanding, rather than anger or anxiousness.
- Validate and normalize feelings of withdrawal. This action will indicate a place of safety within the relationship.
- Be vulnerable. Examine your own unmet needs and work to express them.

## Takeaways: Things to Remember

- Emotional detachment is largely an unconscious action.
- Recognize that detachment is a defense mechanism. It is almost always used to protect the person and the loved ones in his or her life.
- Emotional suppression is toxic to close bonds and intimate relationships.

## Next Recommended PsychArmor Course(s):

- Choosing Your Words
- Leaning In: Investing in a Challenging Relationship

## Personal Reflection

What signs of “shutting down” does the Veteran in your life exhibit, and how do you react to the situation? Reflecting on your reaction, what steps could you take to offer validation and safety to that Veteran?

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## Resources:

Hold Me Tight: Seven Conversations for a Lifetime of Love by Sue Johnson
For additional resources, check out [https://hiddenheroes.org/](https://hiddenheroes.org/).