Tips: Important Strategies

• Allow your relationship and home to be places the Veterans in your life can find safety and support.
• Talk openly about depression and/or suicide with the Veterans in your life.
• Don’t minimize or discount your Veteran’s experience. Start by acknowledging his or her feelings and that this may be a really difficult time.
• If the Veteran is experiencing depressive or suicidal thoughts and has not yet sought help, contact the VA’s Coaching into Care line (1-888-823-7458). These professional coaches can help you support your Veteran until her/she gets to the point in which they can ask for help. Do not keep it a secret, reach out and ask for help.
• If the Veteran in your life is endorsing any suicidal thoughts or behaviors, call the Veterans Crisis Line right away (1-800-273-8255 Press 1).

Takeaways: Things to Remember

• Signs and symptoms of depression include: Feeling sad or hopeless, having thoughts of suicide, losing interest or pleasure in activities that used to mean something (anhedonia), weight loss or gain without trying to do so, troubles with sleeping, and difficulty concentrating.
• Depression is a very real and complex medical condition. It is not a sign of weakness.
• Depression is treatable and recoverable. It does not get worse by talking about it and it is not a life sentence.
• Your support and quality relationship in your Veteran’s life is a protective factor.

Personal Reflection

Are you concerned about symptoms of depression in the Veteran in your life? Are you talking openly and with support about those symptoms?

Resource: If you like this course and want additional resources, contact the VA Caregiver Support Program at 855-260-3274 or online at http://www.caregiver.va.gov/.

For caregiver support in your area, please click here http://www.operationfamilycaregiver.org/caregiver_support/