



## Bob's Babbles

I was totally shocked after reading the latest U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) report on the suicides of our American heroes. The VA is leading the way in understanding the risk factors, developing prevention programs and executing the most effective strategies to prevent veteran suicides. The 2016 data sheets present the latest findings from the VA's ongoing analysis and includes the most up-to-date information for the United States.

Nationwide there were 6,079 veteran suicides in 2016 of that 490 were in California. That is 28.2% of the total. The largest age group was 55 to 74. This works out to 16 ½ vets per day killing themselves. The numbers for previous years range as high as 22. More than 64% used a firearm. You can find a lot more information on this at [www.mentalhealth.va.gov](http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov)

These statistics are not only shocking they're unacceptable. So what can we do as an individual, a family, a friend, a neighbor, a community? What can we do as a veterans organization? We're all in this together we need to do something.

Here's an idea. Learn to recognize the "Red Flags". Veterans as well as civilians experience emotional or mental health issues many different ways. It could be a personal relationship gone bad, maybe the loss of a job, or the death of a loved one, could be health issues. There are so many things that can bring us down. For veterans these crisis can be heightened by experiences while in the service to their country.



Many veterans show no signs of intent to harm themselves before doing so. Here are a few of the warning signs we all should aware of:

- Being depressed or sad more than normal
- Hopelessness - Anxiety, agitation, mood swings
- Feelings of guilt, shame, failure
- Rage and/or anger
- Loss of interest in hobbies, work, school
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Neglecting one's appearance and welfare
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Self-destructive, risky behavior

Crisis, stress, depression, emotional and physical issues effect individuals in different ways. If you or someone you know is having trouble coping with everyday life treatment can help.

We as veterans have a special bond, one of camaraderie, fellowship and brotherhood. If one of us sheds blood we all shed blood. Organizations like ours provide a place to gather and share life experiences; a place to help and support one another as well as our community. We should all keep our eyes and ears open for those "Red Flags" suggesting someone is crying out for help. Reach out to that person and listen, don't judge, listen and offer any and all the help you can and remember confidentiality is a high priority.

Suicide is Preventable...

Veterans Crisis Line  
1 800 273-8255 ex#1

