



Preventing Substance Use Among Veterans

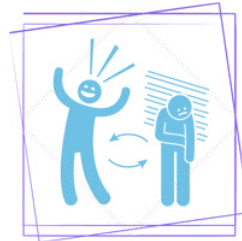
Military life creates unique challenges for veterans and their families. Unfortunately, many military members struggle to leave the trauma of active duty behind. It's common for them to struggle with substance use or mental health disorders.

Preventing substance use among veterans begins with early intervention and not disregarding the problem when the red flags start to show.

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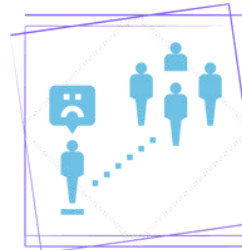


Warning Signs of Veteran Substance Use



Personality Changes

Veterans often use alcohol or drugs to cope with their emotions. This may include a drastic change in their personality. This can be particularly true if they have suffered physical injury, struggle with chronic pain, or deal with emotional problems. When you notice personality changes, it's essential to take steps to understand why.



An Inability to Connect

It's common for veterans to become emotionally distant. They may have trouble reconnecting with their spouse, children, friends, or family. When anyone close to them notices this, it's crucial to intervene and seek counseling. Drug and alcohol use may occur as a way of coping with becoming emotionally distant.



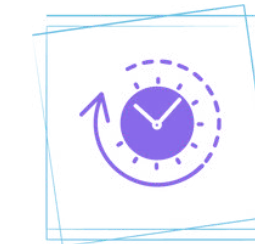
Financial Trouble

Transitioning back to civilian life is not easy. Veterans struggling with emotional or physical health problems will find it challenging to find employment. If there is already an underlying substance use problem, they will experience financial trouble. Many veterans struggle to access the benefits they need and will turn to drugs or alcohol to manage physical and emotional pain.

How Families Can Speak to Their Loved Ones



Learn the facts about drugs and alcohol. It's a good idea to be a reliable source of factual information. It also helps when understanding what a person is experiencing.



Choose a good time and place. While it is ok to express concern about their drug or alcohol use, you would want to avoid the conversation when they are under the influence of these substances.



Be patient, and show compassion and concern. Tell them you are worried and care about their well-being. Express concern about how the drugs have impacted their life.



Avoid lecturing and casting judgment. The goal is to have two-way communication. Listen to what they are saying.



Help them find treatment and offer support.