For Servicemembers

Serving in the military presents a unique set of challenges for servicemembers and their families. Servicemembers may be separated from their family and friends for long periods of time. Deployments can be sudden and unpredictable. Servicemembers can experience injury and loss of life. It can be difficult making the transition to civilian life. They may be reluctant to ask for help.

What are the signs for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)?
PTSD can occur as the result of experiencing harm or witnessing harm to someone else (National Center for PTSD, 2016). Common signs of PTSD include 1) re-occurring thoughts or nightmares about the experience, 2) feeling keyed up, 3) withdrawing from family and friends, and 4) negative thoughts. If PTSD lasts longer than a few months, is causing intense distress, or is disrupting one’s daily life, it is very important to get help. Treatment can be helpful even when the trauma occurred years ago.

What if alcohol or prescription drug use has become a problem?
Sometimes people turn to alcohol or drugs including painkillers to self-medicate symptoms of PTSD, depression, anxiety, or negative thoughts. Substance use usually makes the situation worse and not better. PTSD, depression, anxiety, and alcohol/drug addiction can be treated at the same time.

What if you or someone you know is considering taking one’s life?
• You need to learn the warning signs: Talking about wanting to die. Feeling hopeless. Not sleeping or sleeping all the time. Withdrawing. Increased alcohol/drug use. Unbearable pain. Feeling like a burden. Being irritable. Quick to anger.
• You need to listen. Don’t judge. Don’t joke about it. Don’t keep as a secret.
• Get help immediately.

Where do you go to get help?
• For crisis services, call the National Suicide Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 (press 1 at the prompt) for professional assistance 24/7. If anyone is immediate danger, call 911.
• For the nearest VA facility, visit the website www.va.gov/directory.
• For help finding a treatment center in Missouri, call 1-800-364-9687 or visit the website www.dmh.mo.gov.

Suicide is very much preventable. For more information, go to HelpHimStay.org.