



Well-Being in the Midst of Transition

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Three Big Ideas

1. The construct of *Well-Being* provides a human-centric way to the navigate transition challenges in service of ...
 - Identity
 - Purpose
 - Connection
 - Agency
2. Transition is a human experience – not just a Veteran experience. All of our lives are in transition
3. Transition is a process – predictable in structure, infinite in variety



The Science and Practice of Well-Being

Well-Being: Hundreds of Models



Google model of well-being

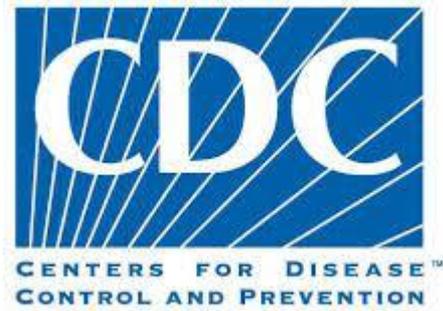
About 2,030,000,000 results (0.31s)



Commonality: Well-Being is multidimensional, and those dimensions are

interrelated!

Well-Being: Government



- Physical well-being
- Economic well-being
- Social well-being
- Development and activity
- Emotional well-being
- Psychological well-being
- Life satisfaction
- Domain specific satisfaction
- Engaging activities and work

Well-Being: Popular Press

Psychology Today

- Well-being is the experience of health, happiness, and prosperity
- It includes having good mental health, high life satisfaction, a sense of meaning or purpose, and the ability to manage stress
- **More generally, well-being is just feeling well**

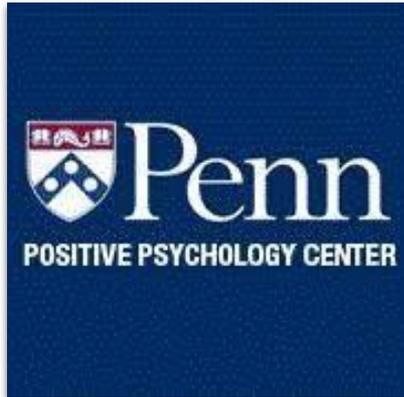
Well-Being: Academia



Dr. Tyler VanderWeele

- The five domains of *human flourishing*:
 - Happiness and life satisfaction
 - Mental and physical health
 - Meaning and purpose
 - Character and virtue
 - Close social relationships

Well-Being: Academia



Dr. Martin Seligman

- **P**ositive Emotions
- **E**ngagement
- Positive **R**elationships
- **M**eaning
- **A**ccomplishment



Well-Being: The Building Blocks



Dr. Dacher Keltner

Ten “Building Blocks” of Well-Being

- Altruism
- Awe
- Bridging Differences
- Compassion
- Diversity
- Empathy
- Forgiveness
- Gratitude
- Happiness
- Intellectual Humility
- Mindfulness
- Purpose

Well-Being: Research

■ Psychological Well-Being

- **Feeling good** – positive emotions i.e., happiness and contentment, interest, engagement, confidence, and affection
- **Functioning effectively** (in psychological sense) - developing one's potential, having some control over one's life, have a sense of purpose (working towards valued goals) and experiencing positive relationships
- Recognizing that this is **not happiness everyday** but managing the negative or painful emotions that are a part of normal life

*Psychological Well-being:
Evidence Regarding its Causes and Consequences (Felecia
Huppert)*

Well-Being Across the Domains of Life

Social Connection & Community



Physical & Mental Health



Housing/
Environmental Quality & Security



Employment & Financial Security



Life-long Learning/
Growth



Spiritual/Purpose/Calling

Enabling Identity, Purpose, and Belonging

Key Characteristics:

- Reflect the multiple domains of life
- Domain names can be tailored
- Domains impact each other
- A strength in one can help off-set a challenge in another

Working Draft: Alabama Challenge to Prevent Veteran Suicide Well-Being Working Group (Dr. Karl Hamner, Chris Gill, and Paulette Risher)





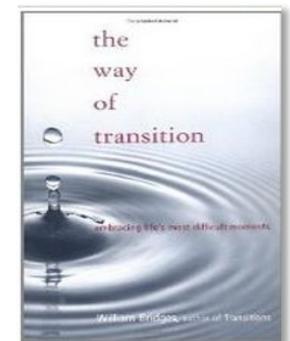
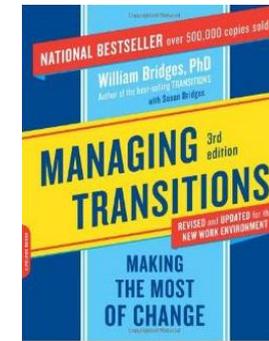
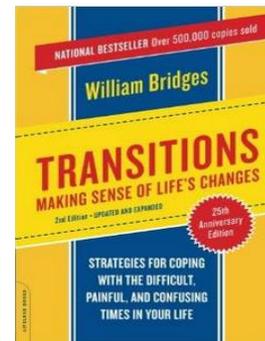
Transition as a Human Process

Transition as a Process

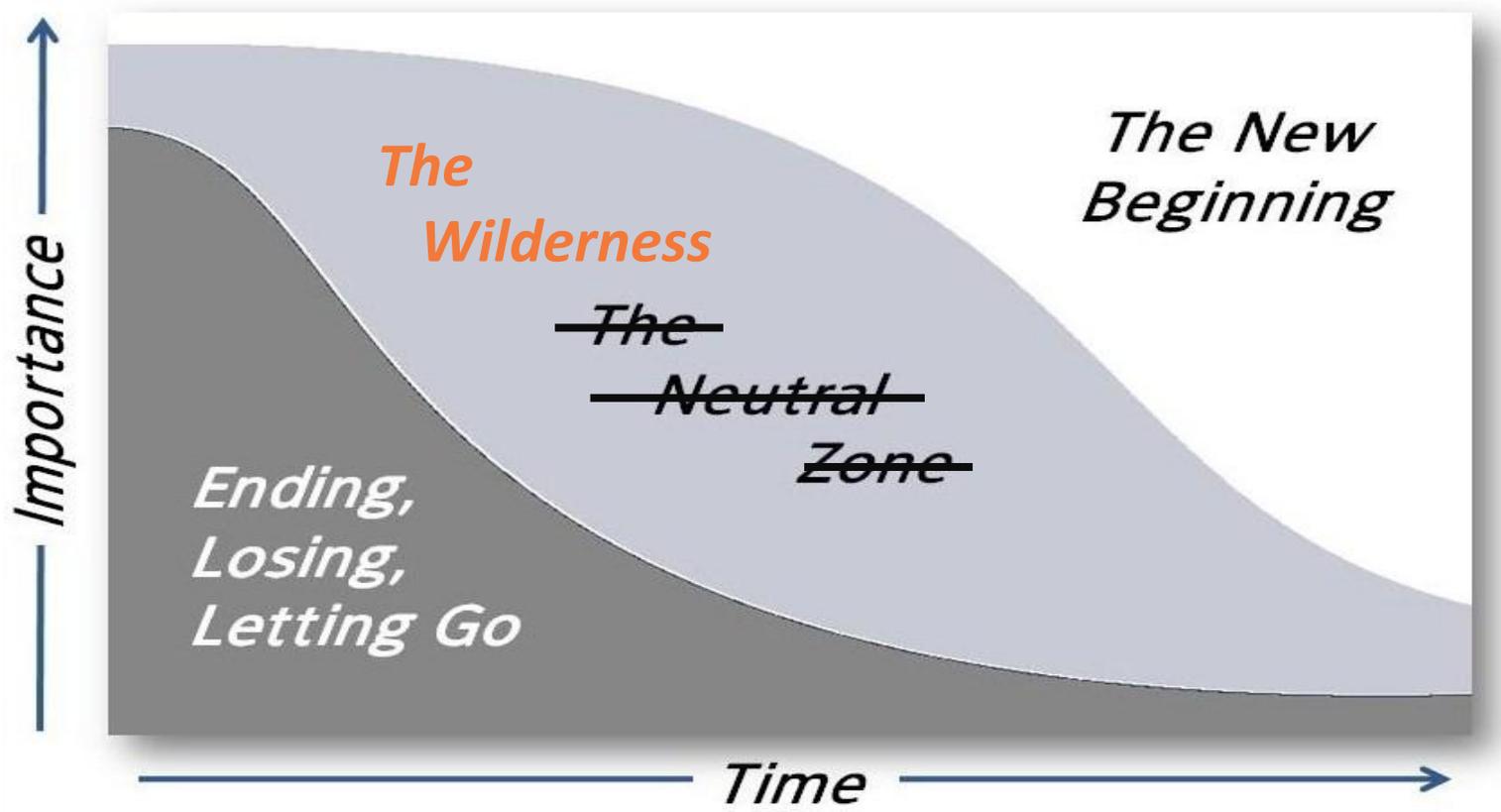
**“Essentially, all models are wrong,
but some are useful.”** *George E.P. Box*

William Bridges model of transitions is
one of these useful models

- Easy to explain
- Feels descriptive of experienced life
- Over ~61,000 academic citations
- Over 26.8m Google results for transition model



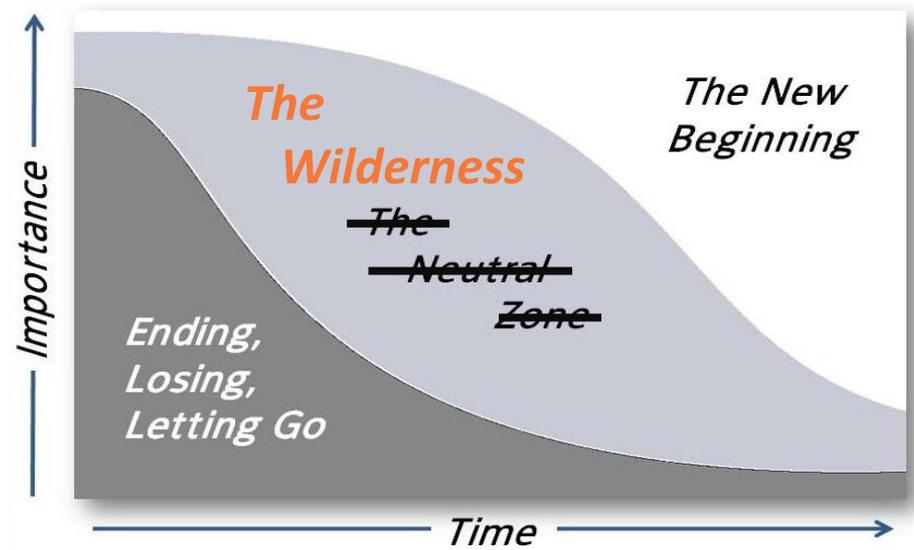
Transition as Process



**Transition is a three-phased
psychological reorientation
process**

Transition as Process

- The process is not linear and tidy. It is messy. It is full of ups and downs
- Each traveler is unique, and each journey is unique
- We are often confronted with multiple transitions



Common ~~Veteran~~ Transitions

Human

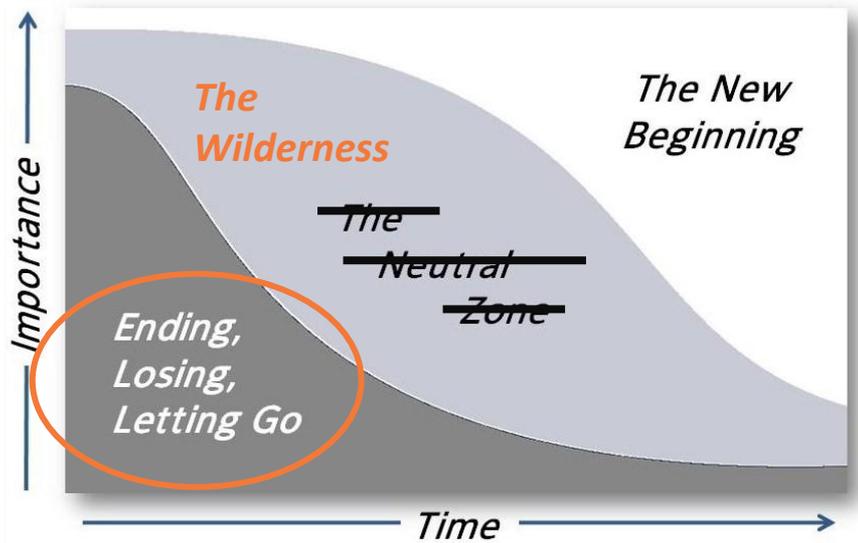


From → To

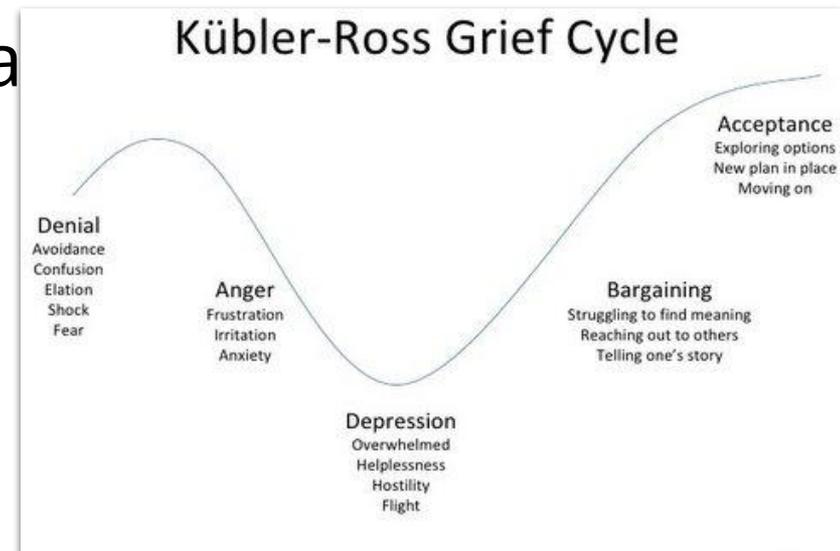
- Military to civilian
- Military to student
- Student to civilian employee
- Healthy to sick
- Young to old
- Strong to weak
- Employed to unemployed
- Married to widowed/divorced
- Children at home to “empty nester”
- Self-sufficient to dependent
- Socially connected to socially isolated
- Valued to invisible
- Clear sense of identity and purpose to lost

Transition as Process

- Many people are surprised by, and unprepared for, the emotional rollercoaster of transition
- There is almost always an element of grieving – especially when the situation is not voluntary

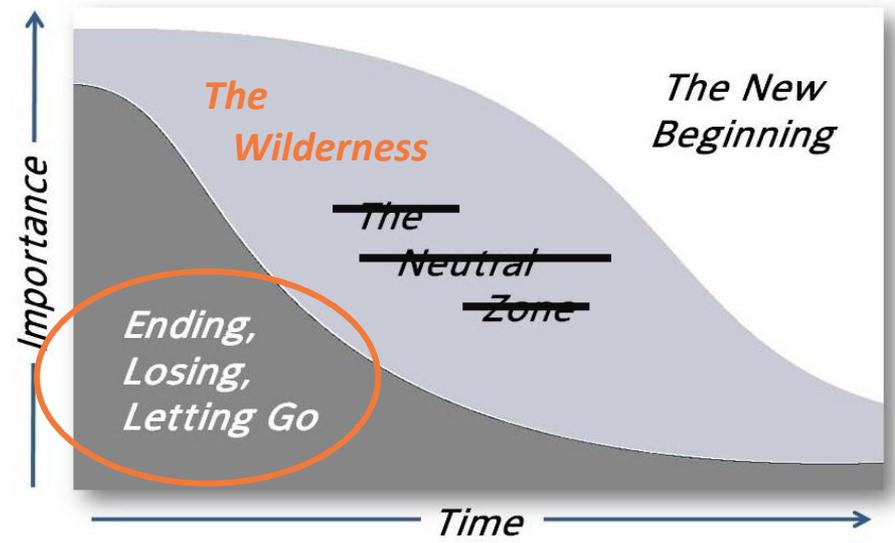


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Practical Example

Letting Go - Selectively



Hold on to ...

- Putting mission accomplishment first even in harsh conditions, with time pressures and resource constraints
- Being responsive and adaptable
- Performing as a member of a team or solo
- Taking direction or giving direction
- Taking care of your coworkers

Let go of...

- Military rank
- Military language
- The uniform (and its civilian counterpart)
- Attitude of entitlement
- Attitude of superiority or arrogance



The Transitions of Student Veterans

VA's Student Veteran Profile *

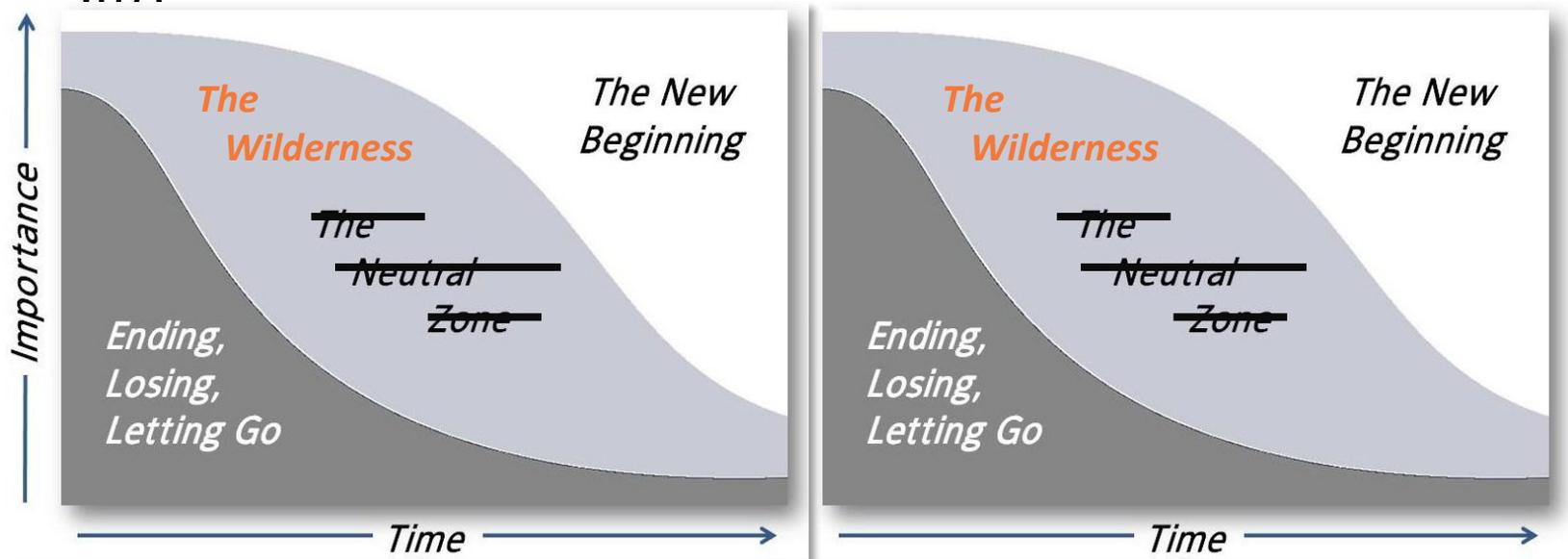
- Only 15% of student Veterans are the traditional age of college students. Most student Veterans are ages 24–40.
- 47% of student Veterans have children.
- 47.3% of student Veterans are married.
- 62% of student Veterans are first-generation college students.
- Of Veterans who began using VA education benefits in 2017, 52% were enrolled in an undergraduate program, 24% in a two-year school, 9% in a graduate program, and 15% in a vocational, technical, or nondegree program.
- 75% of student Veterans are attending school full time.

*** Source:**

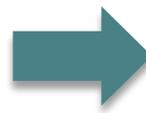
<https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/student-veteran/learn-about-student-veterans.asp>

Student Veteran TransitionS

- Student Veteran life – is a process of multiple transitions, each including losing/letting go, exploration, and adapting to new roles and a new “life”



*From Military to
Civilian Student*



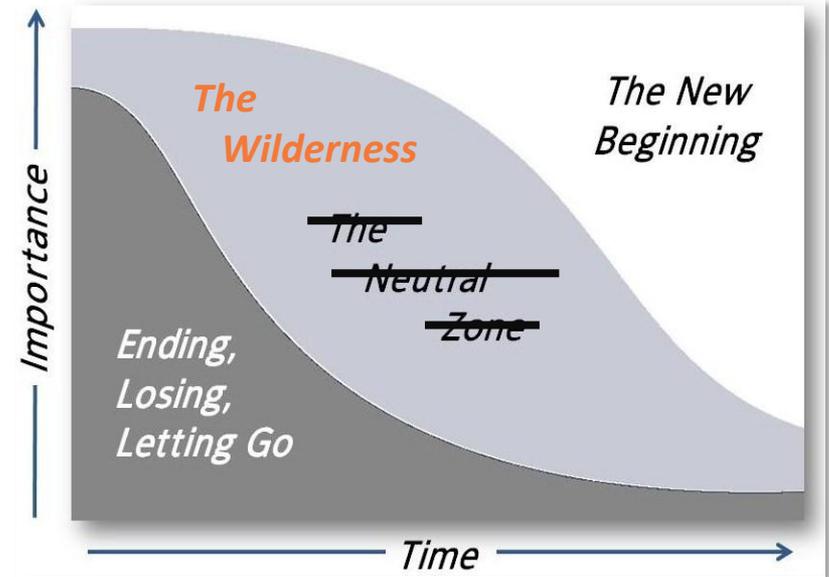
*From Civilian Student to
Civilian Employee*

and ... relationships, health, economics, location, and/or social transitions

Three Steps for Facilitating Transitions

Step 1: Think and talk about “transition as a human process”

- Three predictable steps - letting go; wandering and wondering; starting anew
- Emotional upheaval is normal - anger, bargaining, denial, and depression are common - not once and done
- Each transition is unique and *always* multiple for a student Veteran



Facilitating Transition – 3 Steps

Step 2: Encourage reflection and agency

- **Identity.** Who are you today? What do you have to let go of? What do you choose to keep?
- **Purpose.** What are your options? What are your alternative futures? What are you being called to do?
- **Connection.** Who can support you in this exploration? What do you care about and who cares about you? Who is your tribe – today?
- **Agency.** What can you control? What can you influence? What must you accept?



Create Time &
Space to Think

Write Down
Your Thoughts

Listen to Your
Inner Voice

Open the Lens Then
Narrow the Choices

Decide and
Explore the Path

Facilitating Transition – 3 Steps

Step 3: Listen Beyond the Words

- Suicide
- Military Sexual Trauma
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

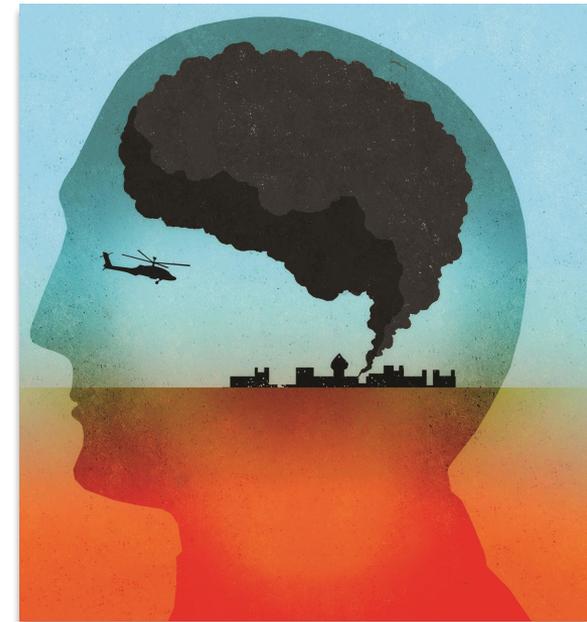


Image Source:

<https://news.emory.edu/features/brain/articles/flashpoint-invisible-wounds-of-war/index.htm>

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Practical Advice

- Connect Veterans with other Veterans
- Nurture relationships of trust
- Make it safe to share
- Know the signs ... S.A.V.E. training
- Trust your instincts ... don't turn away
- For those with significant emotional issues, call or encourage them to call the **Veterans Crisis Line** or the **Vet Center**



S.A.V.E
Training

Listen | Welcome | Accommodate | Advocate



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