

SELF-CARE STRATEGIES AFTER RETURNING FROM DEPLOYMENT

Returning-veteran support

Deployment can be very different from daily life at home. The experiences you have while deployed may lead to stress reactions, even after returning home.

You can't change what happens due to deployment, but you may be able to manage the stress better by taking good care of yourself. This is called "self-care."

Self-care can help you to feel stronger and more resilient. This may make it easier to cope and adapt as you transition back to home life. Here are some self-care tips that may help.

- > Remember that you are normal. Feeling stressed is a normal response to unusual events or conditions you have experienced.
- > Talk to people about your experiences – other veterans, friends, loved ones, your minister, or a counselor. Discussing the events may help you to process them and work through your reactions.
- > When talking isn't possible, try writing out your thoughts and feelings. You don't have to share them with anyone else. Just putting your experience into words can help you understand your feelings and emotions. Writing may also help reduce your sense of stress.
- > Try relaxation methods. Deep breathing, meditation, mindfulness practice, or yoga may help release tension and bring a sense of calm.
- > If you find yourself feeling guilty because you survived and others did not, seek support to address these feelings.
- > Make time for meaningful and enjoyable activities. It could be reading a good book, spiritual practices, or getting outdoors for a walk. It may mean trying something new.
- > Exercise can be helpful. Even moderate activity, such as walking, helps counter stress reactions. Talk to your doctor before starting any new exercise program.
- > Drugs, including alcohol and tobacco, should be avoided.
- > Be productive and make necessary decisions. But avoid making major life changes until you are fully readjusted.
- > Think about what you *can* control in your life. Work at letting go of the things you can't control.
- > Other people may not know what's important to you. Tell them what you need and want, as well as what you don't.
- > Take care of health basics. Get enough sleep to feel well rested. Eat regular, healthy meals. It may not be appealing or easy to do this. Make it a priority. Get help if needed for any sleep or eating issues.
- > Be patient with yourself, not critical. Recurring thoughts, upsetting memories, and restlessness can be part of your experience. Allow yourself to adjust at your own pace. Be as kind to yourself as you would be to a loved one in a similar situation.



You can call the EAP and talk with a counselor. It's confidential, and there's no cost to you.

Together, all the way.®



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