

Veteran Stress and How to Help

Stress in Military Service

Many people think that veteran stress comes from combat, but it's much more complicated. Military life brings challenges. Training, pressure to perform and discipline can take a toll. Veterans often say they must be ready for anything with no room for mistakes. The strict environment is especially tough for those who are new to it.

Approximately 20% of veterans from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in a given year (U.S. National Science Foundation). For Gulf War veterans, the number is about 12%. For Vietnam veterans, it's about 30%. Combat isn't the only source of stress. Veterans also describe training, time away from family, tiring schedules and tough living conditions as big reasons for stress.

Why Some Veterans Don't Seek Help

Only about half of veterans with PTSD or other mental health concerns look for treatment. A big reason is shame or stigma. The military expects you to be tough and push through difficult situations. Asking for help can feel like it goes against this. Military values are helpful for combat, but they are less helpful when veterans come home.

Finding Support Resources

Luckily, things are changing. Programs for mental health care are helping veterans realize that reaching out isn't a weakness. Peer support groups are also growing. These give veterans a chance to connect with others who understand what they've been through.

Military culture is also changing. Leaders and service members now recognize that mental health is a part of being strong. Asking for help should simply be seen as another way to stay prepared.

#SupportVeterans #ThankAVet

If you or someone you know is a veteran or military family member experiencing a mental health crisis, call 9-8-8 and press 1 to connect with the 24/7, free and confidential Veterans Crisis Line. For more resources, contact Military OneSource at 800-342-9647.

Reviewed by Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW)



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