

Take Care of Your Mental Health: Cope with Stress, Depression, and Anxiety

Mental well-being plays a key role in thinking, memory, and making decisions.

Stress: When you are under stress, your brain is focused on dealing with immediate issues and “holding it together.” Stress can make it harder to think clearly. Most people have had the experience of feeling confused and disoriented during times of high stress or challenge.

Depression: Major depression is an extended period of low mood that causes problems with mental activities. When people are depressed, they report being unable to focus on things, being unable to “get up and go,” and not having interest in things they used to enjoy. These symptoms can make it more difficult to recall things, to solve problems, or to make choices. Some people with depression say that their thinking is slower, or that they are “swimming through concrete.”

Anxiety: Anxiety is a condition where something seems to be wrong, even if there is little reason for concern. People with anxiety often spend their mental energy worrying that bad things that might happen. Sometimes they may feel that something is wrong, but they cannot say exactly what is wrong. Such worrying can stop them from being in the “here and now” and make it hard to focus. For instance, if you are anxious, when you meet someone new, anxiety may stop you from being able to recall the person’s name. While it is normal to feel worried in the face of life problems or bad news, sometimes excessive worry can get in the way of solving these problems.

What you can do:

- Stress, depression, and anxiety **can be treated** – Mental Health Services are available to you
- Talk with your health care provider, or another trusted person, about how you are feeling
- There are Veteran training online modules for Moving Forward (problem-solving) that may be helpful – www.veterantraining.va.gov
- There are also many books, apps and online materials for coping better with anxiety and stress, such as https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/self_help.asp

If you are having thoughts of hurting yourself, get help right away. The 24-Hour Veterans Crisis Line is **1-800-273-8255**. You can dial 9-1-1 or go to an emergency room.



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