Depression

Being in the military can be a particularly stressful occupation and puts major strain on military families, especially in a time of frequent deployments and fighting in two wars. A common emotional reaction to excess and/or continuous stress is depression.

Facts about Depression

- Depression is a common and highly treatable disorder affecting approximately 18.8 million Americans.
- 80% of depressed people are not currently receiving any treatment for it.
- Women are about two times more likely to suffer from depression than men.
- While major depression can develop at any age, the average age of onset is 24.
- 15% of depressed people will commit suicide.

- Depression is higher in deployed Service members as opposed to non-deployed members.
- A 2008 study revealed that approximately 18.5% of Service members who have returned from Afghanistan and Iraq currently have post-traumatic stress disorder or depression.
- An estimated 9.3% of veterans aged 21 to 39 experienced at least one major depressive episode in the past year.

Who Gets Depressed?

Everyone gets depressed to some degree from time to time. Whether you are deployed or stationed at home, a Private or a General, you *will* feel depressed at some point.

How Do You Know If You Are Depressed?

There are no objective medical tests to identify depression. Evaluation is made on the basis of self-reporting, observing behaviors, and responding to symptom questionnaires and tests.

What Causes Depression?

There are many causes of depression including: biological, medical, environmental/situational and psychological/attitudinal.

How Is Depression Treated?

Talk therapy and medications are typical treatments for most forms of depression. Specific treatment recommendations are based on the particular factors that cause the depression. More severe depression is usually treated with both cognitive therapy and medication. In extreme cases, hospitalization and/or electric shock therapy may be provided.

Suicide Prevention and Intervention

Persistent and serious thoughts of suicide or any self-destructive actions are emergency conditions that require immediate intervention.

The Military and Suicide

About 33,000 people in the United States commit suicide each year. Sadly, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) estimates that approximately 20% (more than 6,500 per year) of them are veterans. This means that, on average, 18 veterans commit suicide every day. Male veterans are twice as likely as non-veteran males to take their own lives.

Cautions about Suicide

- Take comments or threats of suicide seriously. Talk with the person and help them find help. Ignoring suicidal comments suggests to the person that you do not care if he or she dies.
- Helping someone in a suicidal crisis makes you vulnerable to emotional distress. Try not to remain the only one providing help.
- Suicide and homicide are often connected. You could become a victim of violence. If weapons are present, keeps some distance and call for help. Do not take unnecessary risks.
- No one method works with every suicide case. Approach the situation according to the individual's background and needs.

Military Suicide Myths

- **Military training makes a person tough and therefore not likely to commit suicide.**
  (FALSE) Suicide occurs in veterans and Service members, from new recruits to generals and admirals. Suicide does not respect rank or riches.
- **Suicides always occur without warning.**
  (FALSE) One Navy study indicated that, in about 80% of suicide cases, the person gave verbal warnings or dropped clues about their intentions.
- **Nothing can stop a person who is seriously thinking about suicide.**
  (FALSE) Until the final moments, most suicidal people are in an undecided state about whether they want to die. Most just want their pain to stop.
- **Once suicidal - always suicidal.**
  (FALSE) A suicidal crisis is a temporary condition. With proper support, people have lived long, happy and productive lives without being suicidal again.
- **When depression starts to lift, the person is safe from suicidal thoughts and actions.**
  (FALSE) Suicide takes energy. People are most at risk when they enter into or come out of their worst personal stage. At that point, they have plenty of depression and just enough energy to take their own lives.
- **It can't be suicide if there is no note.**
  (FALSE) Many suicides occur without a note being left behind.

Freedom from Alcohol

Many adults can and do drink alcohol in a safe and responsible way. However, drinking too much and/or as a way to cope with life's problems can lead to serious difficulties.

What is Problem Drinking?

Problems with alcohol may be occasional and intermittent or occur on a regular and constant basis. They may interfere with your life, the lives or loved ones, fellow workers and even strangers.

Facts about Alcohol

- In the U.S., one in every 13 adults gets into serious trouble due to their drinking.
- 700,000 Americans receive treatment for alcoholism on any given day.
- Alcohol-related problems cost society 185 billion dollars annually.
- Alcohol and medication interactions may be a factor in 25% of emergency room admissions.
- Mixing alcohol with medications or illegal drugs can lead to accidental death.
- It is illegal to buy or possess alcohol if you are under the age of 21.
- Brief treatments have been found to reduce alcohol problems for those who are not alcohol dependent.
- Comprehensive treatment programs have helped many who are alcohol abusers or alcohol dependent.

ANGER Management

Anger is a normal human emotion. How it is expressed can have a severe impact on your well-being, and that of your comrades and your friends and family.

Facts about Anger

- Intermittent explosive disorder (IED) is a psychiatric condition where individuals sometimes explode in anger and may attack others or damage property.
- IED affects more than 7% of the U.S. population. About 16 million people across the country are afflicted.
- Incidences of IED are highest in males under the age of 25.
- In IED, the degree of aggression is always out of proportion to the facts of the situation.
- In IED, the individual usually feels justified in their actions, avoids responsibility and blames the victim.
- Domestic abuse or intimate partner violence (IPV) occurs when a current/former partner uses behaviors or threats to scare, control or intimidate their partner.
- An estimated one-third of American women report experiencing abuse at some point in their lives.
- Estimates of abuse committed by male active-duty Service members or veterans range from 13.5%-58%. These rates are about 3 times higher than among civilians.
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) affects 10%-18% of veterans who served in Afghanistan and Iraq.
- Research indicates a correlation between PTSD and suicide.

How Anger Can Affect You

Excessive or exaggerated anger can lead to serious problems for yourself and others.

Consequences

- Mouthing off at a superior officer can get you unpleasant assignments, reprimands and even time in jail.
- Insults and cursing can easily escalate into a physical fight.
- When others get upset and have easy access to deadly weapons, impulsive actions can have dangerous and even deadly consequences.
- Anger can lead to bad relationships and make living and working together harder and un-pleasant.
- Taking out anger on your spouse, who isn't the cause of your anger, can lead to domestic abuse and divorce.
- Anger that leads to bad feelings can have a negative effect on your morale.
- Anger can erode the respect that is critical for effective teamwork.

How Well Do You Cope?

Even if you feel your anger is justified, angry behaviors almost always make a bad situation worse.

No matter how angry you may be, you can control your reactions.

Coping Strategies

- Listen to music
- Write letters
- Read
- Pray
- Practice relaxation/meditation
- Exercise
- Watch television or movies
- Play cards or board games
- Talk things over with a friend
- Communicate directly with the person you feel upset with
- Take a shower or a bath
- Talk to yourself
- Laugh/use humor
- Think about the consequences of responding with anger
- Think *before* you act
- Chill out
- Count to 10
- Try to understand where the other person is coming from
- Take pleasure in keeping your cool
- Delay any action until a later time
- Discuss the issue with a higher military or civilian authority