

# Afghanistan Veteran Support



## Your service matters. You matter.

Military service members and veterans from all eras are reacting to the recent events in Afghanistan. Veterans may question the meaning of their service or whether it was worth the sacrifices they made. They may feel more moral distress about experiences they had during their service. **You are not alone. It's normal to feel this way.** Talk with your friends and families, reach out to battle buddies, connect with a peer-to-peer network, or sign up for mental health services. Below are a list common reactions and coping advice.

In reaction to current events in Afghanistan, veterans may:

- Feel frustrated, sad, helpless, grief or distressed.
- Feel angry or betrayed.
- Experience an increase in mental health symptoms like symptoms of PTSD or depression.
- Sleep poorly, drink more or use more drugs.
- Try to avoid all reminders or media or shy away from social situations.
- Have more military and homecoming memories.
- Veterans may question the meaning of their service or whether it was worth the sacrifices they made. They may feel more moral distress about experiences they had during their service.
- Veterans may feel like they need to expect and/or prepare for the worst. For example, they may:
  - Become overly protective, vigilant, and guarded;
  - Become preoccupied by danger;
  - Feel a need to avoid being shocked by, or unprepared for, what may happen in the future.

Feeling distress is a normal reaction to negative events, especially ones that feel personal. It can be helpful to let yourself feel those feelings rather than try to avoid them. Often, these feelings will naturally run their course. If they continue without easing up or if you feel overwhelmed by them, these general coping suggestions can be helpful:

**Engage in Positive Activities.** Try to engage in positive, healthy, or meaningful activities, even if they are small, simple actions. Doing things that are rewarding, meaningful, or enjoyable, even if you don't feel like it, can make you feel better.

**Stay Connected.** Spend time with people who give you a sense of security, calm, or happiness, or those who best understand what you are going through.

**Practice Good Self Care.** Look for positive coping strategies that help you manage your emotions. Listening to music, exercising, practicing breathing routines, spending time in nature or with animals, journaling, or reading inspirational text are some simple ways to help manage overwhelming or distressing emotions.

**Stick to Your Routines.** It can be helpful to stick to a schedule for when you sleep, eat, work, and do other day-to-day activities.

**Limit Media Exposure.** Limit how much news you take in if media coverage is increasing your distress.

**Use a mobile app.** Consider one of VA's self-help apps.

## Resources for Military Service Members and Veterans

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has compiled a wealth of information that is specific to Afghanistan service members. A few of the key links are below:

[Afghanistan: How Veterans can reconcile service \(VA Blog\)](#)

[Afghanistan: How Veterans can learn from Vietnam Veterans \(VA Blog\)](#)

[Let's talk about Afghanistan: Resources for Veterans and their families | VAntage Point](#)

[Together We Served \(VA Blog\)](#)

[VA Mental Health Quick Start Guide \(PDF\)](#)

## Additional resources

[Make the Connection \(PTSD Resources\)](#)

An online resource designed to connect Veterans, their family members and friends, and other supporters with information, resources, and solutions to issues affecting their lives.

[Military and Veteran Caregiver Network](#)

The Military and Veteran Caregiver Network (MVCN) offers peer-based support and services to connect those providing care to service members and veterans living with wounds, illnesses, injuries and/or aging.

[Star Behavioral Health Providers \(SBHP\)](#)

A resource for veterans, service members and their families to locate behavioral health professionals with specialized training in understanding and treating military service members and their families.

[PTSD Coach App](#)

PTSD Coach Online has tools for coping with sadness, anxiety, and other symptoms that people who have been through trauma can develop.

[Give An Hour](#)

Give an Hour offers mental health care to Active duty, National Guard and Reserve, Veterans, and their loved ones.

[OhioCares](#)

OHIOCARES is a collaboration of the Ohio Adjutant General, the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, community behavioral health boards and provider organizations to improve access to timely and appropriate community services to veterans, service members and their families.

[Ohio Careline](#)

The Ohio CareLine is a 24/7 toll-free emotional support call service that offers confidential support in times of personal or family crisis when individuals may be struggling to cope with challenges in their lives. When callers need additional services, they will receive assistance and connection to local providers.

**Any former service member who is in distress or simply struggling can access the [Veterans Crisis Line](#) 24/7 at (800) 273-8255 Option 1. By accessing the Crisis Line and selecting option 1, callers are immediately connected to counselors who are adept in military service issues and those conversations are always confidential.**

[Ohio Department of Veteran Services \(ODVS\)](#)

[Ohio National Guard](#)

[Ohio Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services \(OhioMHAS\)](#)