



MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES FOR VETERANS DURING COVID-19

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Managing your mental health is crucial during this difficult time.

There are many resources available to help you manage the stress, fear, anxiety or feelings of depression you may be experiencing. This document highlights some key tips and resources.



DEALING WITH CORONAVIRUS ANXIETY

1. Develop a realistic mindset

- Limit your information intake about COVID-19 and stick to credible sources such as:
 - World Health Organization, [who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019](https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019)
 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html)
 - State of Michigan, [michigan.gov/coronavirus](https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus)

VETERAN-SPECIFIC INFORMATION:

- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs FAQ, [va.gov/coronavirus-veteran-frequently-asked-questions](https://www.va.gov/coronavirus-veteran-frequently-asked-questions)
- House Committee on Veterans Affairs resources, [veterans.house.gov/covid-19](https://www.veterans.house.gov/covid-19)
- Limit how often you check for news updates to once or twice a day, such as in the morning and again during the evening. It's good to stay informed, but constantly reading or watching news can become overwhelming. Also avoid scanning social media for news if you're seeing too many updates there.

2. Manage your feelings

- Share your feelings with sympathetic family or friends. Talk to them about how you're feeling. A good conversation may help you feel better about it.
- Stay connected and maintain your social networks. You can stay connected via email, social media messaging, video conference and telephone.
- However, avoid talking to anyone who is panicking about the virus or spreading inaccurate or sensationalized information.
- Engage in stress-relieving activities to relax, such as:
 - Meditating
 - Yoga
 - Going for a walk or jog
 - Working on a hobby or creative project
 - Reading a book or watching a fun TV show

2. Manage your feelings (continued)

- Write your feelings down to help them feel more manageable. Jot down your thoughts about the coronavirus in a journal, notebook or computer document. Don't judge your thoughts and feelings – just write them down.
 - For example, you might write down something like, “I keep thinking about that news story I read about the coronavirus this morning, and I feel scared. I'm afraid it might spread to my town.”
- Talk to a counselor if your anxiety is disrupting your daily life. They can teach you coping strategies or prescribe medications. You may need additional help if:
 - Your worries interfere with work, sleep or interaction with others.
 - You have intrusive or obsessive thoughts about the coronavirus.
 - You have fears about symptoms you're experiencing that don't get better even if a doctor reassures you that you don't have coronavirus.
 - You can call the **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)** free **24-hour Disaster Distress Helpline** at **1-800-985-5990** if you feel lonely or need support.
 - The VA has many telehealth opportunities now and many local community mental health agencies are offering telehealth as well.

OTHER RESOURCES TO HELP

- If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, contact the **Veterans Crisis Line** to receive free, confidential support and crisis intervention 24/7/365. Call **1-800-273-8255** and **press 1, text to 838255** or chat online at **VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat**.
- The VA National Center for PTSD created a webpage about **Managing Stress Associated with the COVID-10 Virus Outbreak** which discusses the practical steps you can take to improve your wellbeing and manage stress associated with COVID-19 virus outbreak. Visit **bit.ly/2xJFaPO**.
- The **Walking With Warriors Veteran Navigator Program** provides assistance and support to Michigan veterans and their families when working through any mental illness or substance use challenge. Visit **bit.ly/2JJ3ynz**.
- The Anxiety and Depression Association of America has this blog post, COVID-19 Lockdown Guide: How to Manage Anxiety and Isolation During Quarantine. Visit **bit.ly/2R0zmbA**.
- The National Alliance on Mental Illness created a **COVID-19 Resource and Information Guide**. This 15-page PDF covers a variety of topics – from dealing with anxiety to getting medications if quarantined to finding support if you lose a loved one to COVID-19. View the PDF at **bit.ly/2wTiVXQ**.
- Mental Health America has also compiled an extensive list of mental health and COVID-19 resources for a variety of groups, including veterans, caregivers, older adults, domestic violence survivors and others. Visit **mhanational.org/covid19**.
- For mobile apps that cover mental health information, support and tools, visit this U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' webpage at **mobile.va.gov/appstore/mental-health**.



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