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PTSD: National Center for PTSD

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Help A Veteran Get Needed Care

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Military service includes risks, even for those who do not deploy to combat zones. It may be hard for Veterans to adjust after service, and you may not know how to talk about it. Learn some tips and resources to help you get a Veteran access to care and services.

Reading time: 4 minutes

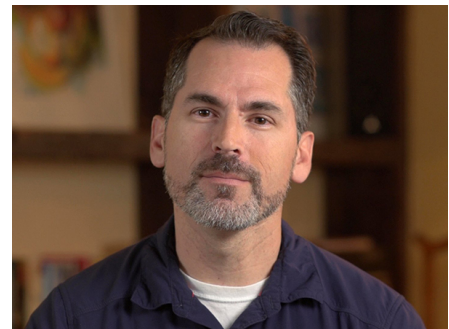
What Is It Like After Service?

Leaving military service can be planned (like retirement) or it may be sudden, for example, if a service member gets injured. The transition out of service can be hard for anyone, even if it is what the person wants. If you notice a difference in a Veteran after service, it might be worth talking to them about what they are experiencing.

"Normal" is different for everyone, but there are signs a Veteran you care about may need help. Some examples are sleep problems, feeling down or depressed, becoming angry easily or always being on edge, difficulties at work or school, problems with relationships, excessive drinking or drug use, or reckless driving.

We Know Each Other So Well. Why Can't We Seem to Talk about This?

It can be hard to tell someone that you think they need help. It can be difficult to say what you mean if you are worried. Also, it can be hard for someone to listen if they are anxious, nervous or even angry.



"It just takes someone reaching out to them and saying, 'Hey, I think you may need to go to the VA and get some help.'"

Andy Dunaway
FAMILY MEMBER

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What Can I Do or Say to Support Them Getting Help?

Mental health care is helpful only if a service member or Veteran makes that decision for themselves. Someone can accept making changes only when they truly feel there is a choice. Here are some tips for you to make it easier for a Veteran you care about to get help:

- Express your support or concern. Try saying, "I know things are not going how you like right now, but know that I'd like to help."
- Set a time to talk about your concerns so your loved one feels prepared.
- Bring up your concerns and then find another time to talk again, instead of trying to resolve everything at once.
- You don't need to ask about what happened to support a Veteran. If you do not have military experience, you can say something like, "I'm sure you went through things while serving that would be hard for me to understand, so maybe talking to someone at the VA or a Vet Center might help?"
- "Demanding" someone seek help can backfire, making them less likely to go for help.
- Avoid using threatening language or making ultimatums. Try not to say, "You need to go for help, or else." But it is okay to let someone know how their behavior is affecting you.
- Talk about choices. You can say, "I know it's your call whether you go to see somebody, but if there's something I can do to help, let me know."

Coaching Into Care

VA has a program called **Coaching Into Care** to help family and friends of Veterans. A coach will help you figure out what to say to your loved one and to help get them into substance use or mental health care if needed.

Each family is different. Some people may need just one call, and others may find it helpful to have several calls. Coaching Into Care is free, and helps you:

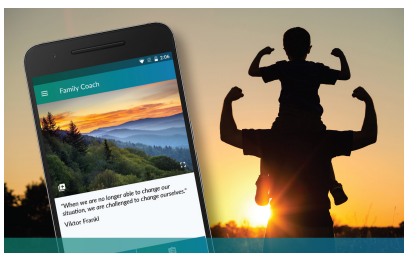
- Learn about VA treatment options
- Recognize mental health symptoms and the impact of PTSD on relationships
- Find tips on communicating during difficult conversations

Coaching Into Care takes privacy very seriously. Coaches are aware of your concerns about the risk of getting a Veteran you care about upset or into trouble. Every aspect of your experience—from first call to services—are kept private, except in cases where we act to protect the lives of you, the Veteran, loved ones or others.

Call Coaching Into Care: 1-888-823-7458

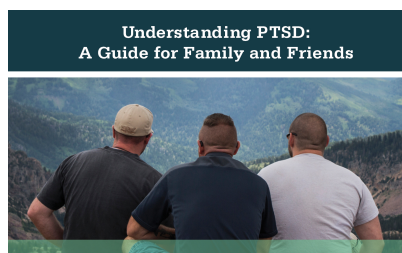


YOU MAY ALSO BE INTERESTED IN



PTSD Family Coach

Practical help for coping with your loved one's PTSD.



Understanding PTSD: A Guide for Family and Friends (PDF)



Online Course: Help with PTSD

What you need to know to help
yourself and your loved one with
PTSD.

How to guide your loved one into
treatment.



PTSD Information Voice Mail: (802) 296-6300
Email: ncptsd@va.gov
Also see: **VA Mental Health**



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