

Military Mental Health Matters



Just as physical fitness is a central part of military life, good mental health is essential for a service member's well-being, military readiness, and family life. Mental health challenges should not be ignored or hidden. Resources are available for service members and their families to address challenges, provide support, and promote healing.

Recognizing Signs And Addressing Challenges Early

Changes in mood or behavior may be signs that someone is experiencing mental health challenges. Service members should learn to recognize signs in themselves or others close to them. Adults and teens who suffer from a mental health disorder may display one or more of the following symptoms:

- Good mental health is just as essential as physical fitness for military service members.
 - Changes in mood or behavior may be signs that someone is experiencing mental health challenges.
 - Mental health challenges should not be ignored or hidden.
 - Resources are available to service members and their loved ones to address challenges, provide support, and promote healing.
- Prolonged sadness or irritability
 - Feelings of extreme highs and lows
 - Excessive fears, worries, and anxieties
 - Social withdrawal
 - Dramatic changes in eating or sleeping habits
 - Strong feelings of anger
 - Delusions or hallucinations
 - Growing inability to cope with daily problems and activities
 - Suicidal thoughts
 - Denial of obvious problems
 - Numerous unexplained physical ailments
 - Excessive substance use

Mental Health For Children And Youth

Signs in adolescents. Many symptoms in adolescents may be similar to those in adults, but service members may notice other characteristics, including:

- Defiance of authority, truancy, theft or vandalism
- Drop in grades/poor school performance
- Intense fear of weight gain
- Prolonged negative mood, often accompanied by poor appetite or thoughts of death



Wheeler

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Clearinghouse**
a program of the Connecticut Center
for Prevention, Wellness and Recovery

800.232.4424 (phone)
www.ctclearinghouse.org

A Library and Resource Center on Alcohol, Tobacco, Other Drugs, Mental Health and Wellness

Signs In Younger Children And Preadolescents. Younger children and preadolescents may display some of the following symptoms:

- Changes in school performance
- Poor grades despite strong efforts
- Excessive worry or anxiety (such as refusing to go to bed or school)
- Hyperactivity
- Persistent nightmares
- Persistent disobedience or aggression
- Frequent temper tantrums

When To Ask For Help

Service members and their loved ones should not allow stigma to stand in the way of asking for help for themselves or for someone they care about. An estimated one in five American adults experiences a diagnosable mental health disorder each year. Many of these conditions are common and treatable, such as anxiety and depression. However, many people suffer in silence because of shame and stigma. Seeking help for a mental health challenge is just as important as finding help for a physical ailment. Facing issues early is a sign of strength.

If someone is suicidal. Suicide is a serious concern for service members and those they care about. A person who experiences a mental health challenge can be at increased risk for suicide. Warning signs for suicide include but are not limited to:

- Appearing sad or depressed most of the time
- Hopelessness
- Anxiety, agitation, or mood swings
- Feeling as if there is no reason to live
- Feeling excessive guilt, shame, or sense of failure
- Rage or anger
- Engaging in risky activities without thinking
- Increasing alcohol or drug misuse
- Losing interest in hobbies, work, or school
- Neglecting personal welfare and appearance
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Showing violent behavior, like punching a hole in the wall or getting into fights
- Giving away prized possessions
- Getting affairs in order

If an individual suspects that a service member or their loved one is at risk for suicide, they can contact the **Military Crisis Line** by calling 988 and pressing "1" or by texting 838255. The phone and texting services are available 24 hours/day, seven days/week.

Connecticut Resources

CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
www.ct.gov/DMHAS

CT Department of Veterans Affairs
www.ct.gov/DVA

National Resources

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
www.samhsa.gov

TRICARE
www.tricare.mil

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