



**Veterans, military, and family members from all era's are being affected by the events in Afghanistan, to include the takeover by the Taliban. It is important for military-connected individuals to be aware they are not alone and they made a difference.**

- **Veteran Service Officers** – Every town in MA has a Veteran Service Officer, they are a great resource <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/local-veterans-service-officers>
- **Bilingual Veterans Outreach Centers** - <http://bilingualvets.org/>
  - Springfield: 413-731-0194, Berkshires: 413-448-6052
- **Vietnam Veterans of America** – <https://vva.org/> MA State Council President: Gumersindo Gomez, call 413-883-4508
- **Veterans Crisis Line** - *If you are having thoughts of suicide, call 1-800-273-8255, then PRESS 1 or visit <http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>*
  - For emergency mental health care, you can also go directly to <https://www.va.gov/find-locations/> 24/7 regardless of your discharge status or enrollment in other VA health care.
- **Vet Centers** - *Discuss how you feel with other Veterans in these community-based counseling centers. **70% of Vet Center staff are Veterans.** Call 1-877-927-8387 or find one . <https://www.va.gov/find-locations/>*
- **VA Women Veterans Call Center** - Staff is trained to provide women Veterans, their families, and caregivers information about VA services and resources. Call or text 1-855-829-6636 (M-F 8AM - 10PM & SAT 8AM - 6:30PM ET) <https://www.womenshealth.va.gov/programoverview/wvcc.asp>
- **VA Mental Health Services Guide** <https://www.va.gov/files/2020-11/mental-health-quick-start-guide.pdf> *This guide will help you sign up and access mental health services.*
- **Make The Connection** - <https://www.maketheconnection.net/> *information, resources, and Veteran to Veteran videos for challenging life events and experiences with mental health issues.*
- **Together We Served** - *Find your battle buddies <https://join.togetherweserved.com/va> through unit pages <https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/73552/together-served-provides-virtual-base-connecting-veterans/>*



- **Power Breath Workshop** - The Power Breath Meditation Workshop is a mind-body resilience-building program for returning veterans. <https://projectwelcomemetroops.org/power-breath-workshop/>
- **Download VA's Self-help apps** - <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/appvid/mobile/> Tools to help deal with common reactions like, stress, sadness, and anxiety. You can also track your symptoms over time.
- **VA Caregiver Support Line** - <https://www.caregiver.va.gov/> Call 1-855-260-3274 (M-F 8AM - 10PM & SAT 8AM - 5PM ET)
- **George W. Bush Institute** - *Need help or want to talk? Connecting veterans with the support and services they need to live happier, healthier, more successful lives—and to make sure veterans are treated like people, not case numbers, every step of the care journey. Check In* <https://www.bushcenter.org/veteran-wellness/clinical-care.html> or call: 1-630-522-4904 or email: [checkin@veteranwellnessalliance.org](mailto:checkin@veteranwellnessalliance.org)
- **Elizabeth Dole Foundation Hidden Heroes** – established a national registry for military caregivers to better connect them to helpful resources, community, and support [Join the Community https://hiddenheroes.org/registration/](https://hiddenheroes.org/registration/) - The MA Dole Caregiver Fellow, Lisa Ducharme, [Lisa@lisaducharme.com](mailto:Lisa@lisaducharme.com)
- **American Red Cross Military Veteran Caregiver Network** - [Peer Support and Mentoring https://www.redcross.org/get-help/military-families/services-for-veterans/military-veteran-caregiver-network.html](https://www.redcross.org/get-help/military-families/services-for-veterans/military-veteran-caregiver-network.html)
- **Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)** – [Request a Peer Mentor https://www.taps.org/requestapeermentor](https://www.taps.org/requestapeermentor) Spouse, parent, sibling, or adult child of a service member who was killed in service.
- **Team Red, White & Blue** - *Hundreds of events weekly.* [Find a chapter https://www.teamrwb.org/chapter-locator/](https://www.teamrwb.org/chapter-locator/) in your area.
- **Student Veterans of America** - *Find a campus chapter* <https://studentveterans.org/chapters/find-a-chapter/> to connect with.
- **Team Rubicon** - *Find a local support* <https://teamrubiconusa.org/volunteer/> squad. Team Rubicon responds to domestic and international disaster operations.
- **RallyPoint** - Talk to other Veterans online. Discuss: [What are your feelings as the Taliban reclaim Afghanistan after 20 years of US involvement?](https://www.rallypoint.org/discussion/what-are-your-feelings-as-the-taliban-reclaim-afghanistan-after-20-years-of-us-involvement?)



**IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Department of Defense Offers Mental Health Resources for  
Service Members and Their Families**  
AUG. 18, 2021

You are not alone. Remember that what is happening now does not minimize or negate the experiences of all who served overseas. Countless service members answered the call of duty and did what was asked of them. Service is never for naught. Think about the times when valor and courage changed lives for the better. Focus on the present and what feels meaningful to you in this moment. Our veterans served honorably and completed missions as required and as necessary – protecting our freedoms and we are forever grateful for their service.

Talking can be very therapeutic, whether it's to a local chaplain, psychologist or someone you served with in the military. Do what feels right for you. There is not one way to think or feel or act. The important thing is to take advantage of the numerous mental health care resources that are available to you.

Remember that this is one moment in time and regardless of what comes next, we will get through it together. Arctic. The Department is currently determining the appropriate location for the center. The following resources are available:

The **Real Warriors Campaign** aims to break down the stigma associated with mental health care and encourages service members to reach out for help when they need it. Find articles with support resources, video profiles with service member and veteran stories, and materials to download or order at [www.health.mil/RealWarriors](http://www.health.mil/RealWarriors)

The **Psychological Health Resource Center** is available 24/7 for service members, veterans, and family members with questions about psychological health topics. Trained mental health consultants can help callers access mental health care and community support resources in their local area. [www.health.mil/PHRC](http://www.health.mil/PHRC) or call 866-966-1020 for assistance.

The **inTransition Program** is a free confidential program that provides specialized coaching and assistance for service members, National Guard members, reservists, veterans, and retirees who need access to mental health care when relocating to another assignment, returning from deployment, transitioning between active duty and reserve component, preparing to leave military service, or any other time they need a new mental health provider, or need a provider for the first time. [www.health.mil/inTransition](http://www.health.mil/inTransition) or call 800-424-7877

**The Military Crisis Line**, text-messaging service, and online chat provide free VA support for all Service members, including members of the National Guard and Reserve, and all Veterans, even if they are not registered with VA or enrolled in VA health care. Call: 1-800-273-8255 and press 1. Text: 838255 Chat: <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/chat>

<https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Releases/Release/Article/2737954/departments-of-defense-offers-mental-health-resources-for-service-members-and-their-families>  
[th/source/GovDelivery/mc\\_cid/39cc184496/mc\\_eid/22155262cc/](https://www.govdelivery.com/messages/govmsg_22155262cc/)



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**TRICARE** offers mental health care to all its enrollees. Find out how by visiting <https://www.tricare.mil/CoveredServices/Mental/GettingMHCare>. This website also contains links to mental health providers through the TRICARE network.

**Military Medical Treatment Facilities** often provide mental health services, including integrated behavioral health clinics. Contact your primary care manager to see if this resource is available at your local MTF. If it is, you can schedule an appointment same day. Find out more by visiting <https://www.tricare.mil/Military-Hospitals-and-Clinics>

**Military OneSource** can provide access to confidential Military and Family Life Counselors in your community: [www.militaryonesource.mil](http://www.militaryonesource.mil) or by calling 1-800-342-9647.

**Military OneSource** also provides resources so you can manage stress and access benefits and tools that will help you stay strong in body and mind. This page provides access to self-care mobile applications developed within the Department of Defense, Veteran Affairs and other partners. All mobile applications are free and for iOS and/or Android devices. <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/health-wellness/recommended-wellness-apps>

**Military Health System Web Pages.** There are two sources of information on the Military Health System websites. Specific links listed at the bottom of this page. They are: [www.health.mil/mentalhealth](http://www.health.mil/mentalhealth) and [www.tricare.mil/mentalhealth](http://www.tricare.mil/mentalhealth)

[https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Releases/Release/Article/2737954/departement-of-defense-offers-mental-health-resources-for-service-members-and-th/source/GovDelivery/mc\\_cid/39cc184496/mc\\_eid/22155262cc/](https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Releases/Release/Article/2737954/departement-of-defense-offers-mental-health-resources-for-service-members-and-th/source/GovDelivery/mc_cid/39cc184496/mc_eid/22155262cc/)



## Common Reactions

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, the suggestions below can be helpful.

Taken from: VA News [veteransaffairs@messages.va.gov](mailto:veteransaffairs@messages.va.gov), August 16, 2021

**“For any Veteran out there listening, be proud of what you have done,”** he added. **“Our government has made the decision and we have followed lawful orders.”** [Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman Ramón “CZ” Colón-López.](#)



## Strategies for Managing Ongoing Distress

At this moment, it may seem like all is lost, like your service or your sacrifices were for nothing. Consider the ways that your service made a difference, the impact it had on others' lives or on your own life. Remember that now is just one moment in time and that things will continue to change.

It can be helpful to focus on the present and to engage in the activities that are most meaningful and valuable to you. Is there something you can do today that is important to you? This can be as an individual, a family member, a parent, or a community member. Something that is meaningful to you in regard to your work or your spirituality? Such activities won't change the past or the things you can't control, but they can help life feel meaningful and reduce distress, despite the things you cannot change.

It can also help to consider your thinking. Ask yourself if your thoughts are helpful to you right now. Are there ways you can change your thinking to be more accurate and less distressing? For example, are you using extreme thinking where you see the situation as all bad or all good? If so, try and think in less extreme terms. For example, rather than thinking "my service in Afghanistan was useless" consider instead "I helped keep Afghanistan safe."

Finally, consider more general coping strategies that you may want to try including:

- **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 (see <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/appvid/mobile/>) such as PTSD Coach which has tools that can help you deal with common reactions like, stress, sadness, and anxiety. You can also track your symptoms over time.
- **PTSD Coach Online.** A series of online video coaches will guide you through 17 tools to help you manage stress. PTSD Coach Online is used on a computer, rather than a mobile device, and therefore can offer tools that involve writing.

If you develop your own ways of adapting to ongoing events and situations, you may gain a stronger sense of being able to deal with challenges, a greater sense of meaning or purpose, and an ability to mentor and support others in similar situations.