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# DEPRESSION

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Depression is a common symptom for those who have experienced trauma. It colors the way you feel, your attitude and belief about the world. Depression can look like sadness or the veteran may cover his or her depression with a smile making it difficult to detect. You will be sad when someone close to you dies. Depression can last longer. Depression looks different in everyone, similar in most. Signs of depression may include moving more slowly than normal, or agitation, anxiety, fears, feelings of guilt, hopelessness, frequent crying, withdrawal, difficulty making decisions, low self-esteem, a negative view of the world, substance abuse, and/or thoughts of suicide or a suicide attempt. It is very important to get help immediately if you or someone you know ever mentions thoughts of suicide. Suicide is a leading cause of death and must be taken very seriously. Have a safety plan ready with a number to call of a friend or get to a local emergency room if you ever are feeling unsafe.



It is understandable that having experienced trauma in the service could lead to symptoms of depression. You no longer find interest in things or people you once enjoyed. There may be "survivor's guilt" because you came home and others did not. There is no shame in depression. It would be a shame not to seek treatment when depression can be successfully treated. There is help and support for you at your local Vet Center and within your community. There is a listening ear for you.

What can you do about your depressive symptoms? Diagnosis and treatment will offer relief to the pain and isolation of depressive symptoms often associated with trauma. Learning positive coping skills will help you to feel more control as you feel your mood lift. Once you feel well enough to begin to exercise, reach out to friends and family, begin a hobby you enjoy, learn relaxation skills which improve your quality of sleep. It is helpful to eliminate unhealthy habits such as anything that is not good for you; you will then notice a positive change in your mood. Your self confidence will grow. You may surprise yourself!

Success builds upon success. Regular counseling is important and can help you sustain your success. Depressive symptoms often respond well to medications. It is critical to take prescribed meds exactly as ordered. Maintain good contact with whomever you see. Vet Center staff can make appropriate referrals. Keep asking questions until you get the answers you need and are feeling better.