

Managing Depression During the Coronavirus Pandemic

Maintaining Your Mental Health

It is common for people to experience an increase in symptoms of depression during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is especially important to make your mental health a priority and seek ways to cope during these challenging times.

SELF-HELP TIPS

Here are some things you can do to manage through this time:

- Maintain structure during your day and stick to healthy eating, exercise, and sleep routines. In fact, regular exercise can help improve your sleep. Learn more about healthy sleep habits [here](#).
- If you take medication for your mood, set reminder alarms to help you make sure you stay on schedule.
- Try to do at least one thing you enjoy per day, such as taking a brief walk outside or listening to a favorite song.
- Monitor your use of alcohol or other substances, and reach out for [help or support](#) if you feel that your consumption might be having a negative effect on your mood or health.
- Reach out to your family members, friends, and neighbors while staying physically distanced. A short text message or phone call can help boost your spirits — and theirs.
- Focus on what is within your control right now. For instance, you can't control what you see on the news, but you may be able to limit how much news you take in per day.
- Try to focus on what you can accomplish in the next minute, hour, or day, such as taking deep breaths, preparing a favorite meal, or talking to a loved one.

RESOURCES

Explore these resources for maintaining and enhancing your mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- [Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance](#) is a national organization that supports people with depression and bipolar disorder and their families. Its website provides information and resources for managing mental health and features a search function to find online support groups.
- [MakeTheConnection.net](#) connects Veterans with information, resources, and potential solutions to issues affecting their lives, including [depression](#).
- The [AfterDeployment](#) website offers an online workshop with interactive exercises to evaluate the symptoms you are experiencing. You can also hear from other Veterans and service members who have dealt with depression.
- The [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\) National Helpline](#) is a free, confidential treatment referral and information service for individuals and their families facing mental health and/or substance use disorders. It's available 24/7, 365 days a year, in English and Spanish.
- [Veterans Crisis Line](#): If you are a Veteran who is having thoughts of suicide — or you're concerned about one — free, confidential support is available 24/7. Call the Veterans Crisis Line at **1-800-273-8255** and **press 1**, text to **838255**, or chat online at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](#).

STAY CONNECTED

Technology has made it possible for all of us to stay connected. Seek support from your family, friends, mentors, clergy members, and people you know who are having experiences like yours. As a Veteran, your resilience and strength can also assist others during these times.

KEEP YOUR MENTAL HEALTH APPOINTMENTS

Learn ways to connect with VA providers:

- VA offers both [video and phone](#) telemental health options that do not require you to go to your closest facility in-person should you have a medical concern or need to follow specific physical distancing guidelines in your community.
- [Schedule or reschedule your appointment online](#). If you are requesting a new mental health appointment, please call your [local VA](#) and they will work to arrange an appointment for you. If you need same day access for mental health services, call your [local VA](#) to request this and you will be connected to care.

STAY INFORMED, STAY ENGAGED

Stay engaged with VA information as it becomes available so you can continue to maintain your mental health:

- [VA's Novel Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) webpage](#) has the most current information and [VA's Coronavirus FAQs page](#) provides answers to many important questions.
- You can communicate with your care team, track your health information, and access your VA health records from your computer or mobile device with [My HealtheVet](#).
- [VA Video Connect](#) provides secure video visits with your VA care team from anywhere.
- [Mental Health Apps for Veterans](#) help Veterans manage feelings of stress and anxiety and also remain in contact with their VA care providers.
- [Healthy Sleep](#) at My HealtheVet provides guidance on getting the right amount of daily sleep.
- [VA's Mental Health Coronavirus Page](#) has information on maintaining your mental health and well-being during the COVID-19 outbreak.

