

CRISIS TEXT LINE | x  FACE THE FIGHT

Military Community: Mental Health Resource Guide

Crisis Text Line is addressing the mental health and well-being of veterans, service members, and their families, with support from Face the Fight.

You can explore these resources on your own or use them alongside text-based support from Crisis Text Line.

In need of confidential, judgement-free mental health support?

Text **SERVE** or **SERVICIO** to 741741 – free, 24/7.

Issues Affecting Mental Health Within Military Communities

Mental health conditions can affect anyone in the military community, including veterans transitioning to civilian life, active duty service members navigating deployments, spouses holding down the home front, children adjusting to change, and caregivers supporting loved ones. Understanding common mental health challenges and how they show up across different groups is a critical step toward breaking stigma and building support.

Depression

Depression is more than feeling sad. It's a mood disorder that causes persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, or loss of interest in activities once enjoyed. It can affect how someone thinks, feels, and functions in daily life.

Risk factors:

- **Veterans:** Transitioning from military to civilian life can bring identity shifts, loss of structure, and difficulty finding purpose. Veterans may struggle with employment, community reintegration, or a lack of strong support networks.
- **Active duty service members:** Combat exposure, operational stress, long hours, and time away from loved ones can increase feelings of isolation and emotional exhaustion. The culture of "toughness" may discourage seeking help.
- **Family members:** Spouses, parents, and relatives may experience extended separations, limited communication, and uncertainty about a loved one's safety. This can lead to chronic stress, loneliness, and emotional strain.

Warning signs of depression:

- Persistent sadness or irritability
- Changes in sleep or appetite
- Loss of interest in hobbies or relationships
- Fatigue or low energy
- Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- Talking about feeling like a burden

Learn more about [depression](#).

Resources: In addition to reaching out to Crisis Text Line for help—anytime, free and confidential—by texting **SERVE** or **SERVICIO** to **741741**, individuals can also find support through organizations such as Worried About a Veteran or Project Healing Waters. View the full list of additional resources [here](#).

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

PTSD is a mental health condition that can develop after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event. Symptoms may include intrusive memories, flashbacks, nightmares, heightened anxiety, and avoidance of memories or external reminders of the traumatic event.

Risk factors:

- **Veterans and active duty service members:** Combat exposure, training accidents, military sexual trauma, or other life-threatening situations can increase risk. Symptoms may appear soon after the event or emerge months or years later.
- **Family members:** Family members may also experience trauma directly. This can include receiving news of an injury, sudden loss, or living through other frightening or life-threatening events.

In addition, supporting a loved one who is coping with PTSD or other service-related challenges can be emotionally demanding. Ongoing stress, worry, changes in family roles, or shifts in communication and connection can affect overall well-being. Children may be especially sensitive to changes in a caregiver's mood, availability, or behavior.

These reactions are understandable. With information, support, and connection, families can strengthen coping skills and continue building resilience together.

Warning signs of PTSD:

- Flashbacks or nightmares
- Hypervigilance or being easily startled
- Irritability or angry outbursts
- Emotional numbness
- Difficulty sleeping

Resources: In addition to reaching out to Crisis Text Line for help—anytime, free and confidential—by texting **SERVE** or **SERVICIO** to **741741**, individuals can also find support through organizations such as Wounded Warrior Project or Centerstone. View the full list of additional resources [here](#).

Suicide Risk: Thoughts and Behaviors

Thoughts about suicide can include wishing you were not alive, feeling like others would be better off without you, or thinking about ending your life. For some people, these thoughts are brief and pass quickly. For others, they may become more frequent, intense, or include making a suicide plan.

Having these thoughts does not mean someone is weak or beyond help. They are often a sign of overwhelming pain, stress, or feeling disconnected. Support can make a major difference and people's lives.

Risk factors:

- **Veterans and active duty service members:** Risk can increase with untreated depression, PTSD, survivor's guilt, chronic pain, substance use, access to lethal means, legal or financial stress, or challenges during transition to civilian life. Experiences that affect identity, purpose, or belonging may also contribute.
- **Family members:** Military life can bring unique pressures, including repeated separations, relocation, caregiving responsibilities, isolation from support networks, or relationship strain. Family members may also experience their own depression, anxiety, trauma exposure, or feelings of being overwhelmed.

Warning signs:

- Talking or writing about wanting to die or kill oneself
- Expressing hopelessness or having no reason to live
- Feeling like a burden to others
- Withdrawing from family, friends, or activities
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Giving away possessions or saying goodbye
- Sudden mood changes, especially a noticeable shift from despair to calm

If you notice these signs in yourself or someone else, it's important to take them seriously. Reaching out to a trusted person, a health professional, or a crisis resource can be a critical first step. Read more about suicide [here](#).

Resources: In addition to reaching out to Crisis Text Line for help—anytime, free and confidential—by texting **SERVE** or **SERVICIO** to **741741**, individuals can also find support through organizations such as Worried About a Veteran or Vets4Warriors. View the full list of additional resources [here](#).



Substance Use Disorder

Substance use disorder involves the harmful or excessive use of alcohol or drugs to cope with stress, trauma, or emotional pain.

Risk factors:

- **Veterans and active duty service members:** Substance use can be a strategy to help individuals cope and manage trauma symptoms, physical pain, or reintegration stress.
- **Family members:** Spouses or caregivers under chronic stress may turn to alcohol, medication, or other substance misuse as a coping mechanism. This can increase tension and instability within the household and in relationships.

Warning signs of substance abuse:

- Increased use, tolerance, or frequent intoxication
- Neglecting responsibilities
- Risky behaviors
- Mood swings or irritability
- Defensiveness about use

Substance abuse can often overlap with depression, PTSD, and suicidal ideation.

Resources: In addition to reaching out to Crisis Text Line for help—anytime, free and confidential—by texting **SERVE** or **SERVICIO** to **741741**, individuals can also find support through organizations such as Centerstone or Wounded Warrior Project. View the full list of additional resources [here](#).

Financial Stress

Financial stress refers to the emotional strain that can result from money-related challenges such as debt, unemployment, underemployment, rising expenses, or housing instability. Financial transitions are common in military life, and periods of uncertainty can affect overall well-being.

Financial challenges are not a reflection of personal failure. With information, planning, and support, many individuals and families are able to regain stability and confidence.

Risk factors:

- **Veterans and active duty service members:** Transitioning from military to civilian employment can bring changes in income, benefits, and professional identity.
 - Some veterans may experience underemployment, gaps in employment, difficulty translating military skills to civilian roles, or periods of financial instability.
 - Active duty service members may have a similar experience to the above and additionally may face frequent Permanent Change of Station moves, spouse employment disruption, out-of-pocket relocation costs, or childcare instability.
- **Family members and caregivers:** Frequent relocations may limit long-term career development for spouses and partners. Families may also face challenges navigating healthcare systems, benefits, disability compensation, or other support programs, which can create additional stress.

Warning signs of substance abuse:

- Anxiety about bills or debt
- Arguments about money
- Avoiding financial discussions
- Making risky financial decisions, such as taking on high-interest loans
- Changes in mood tied to financial events

Financial strain can intensify depression, relationship conflict, and substance use. Learn more about this topic [here](#).

Resources: In addition to reaching out to Crisis Text Line for help—anytime, free and confidential—by texting **SERVE** or **SERVICIO** to **741741**, individuals can also find support through organizations such as Blue Star Families, Hiring Our Heroes, or Military Spouse Advocacy Network. View the full list of additional resources [here](#).

Relationships and Mental Health

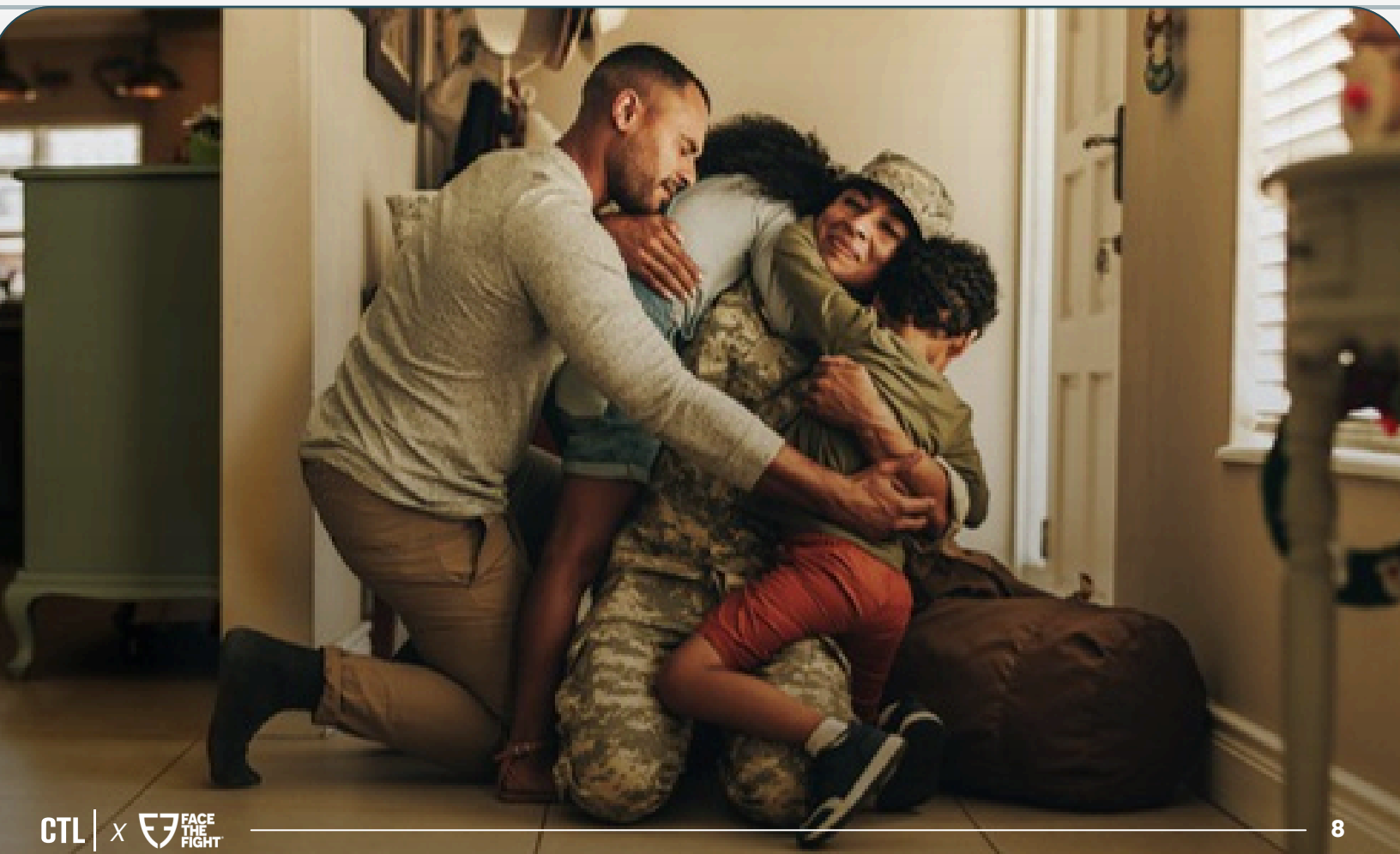
Relationships play a powerful role in mental health. Healthy relationships foster connection, stability, and emotional support. They can improve mood, reduce stress, and build resilience.

At the same time, relationships can experience strain, especially during periods of transition or high stress. In military communities, extended deployments, frequent relocations, training demands, and transitions to civilian life can disrupt routines, communication patterns, and shared expectations. Reintegration after deployment may require both partners and families to adjust as roles and responsibilities shift.

Additional stressors, such as financial pressure, PTSD symptoms, substance use, chronic pain, or depression, can place added tension on couples and families. Without support, this strain may lead to conflict, emotional distance, or feelings of isolation.

With open communication, mutual understanding, and access to supportive resources, relationships can adapt and grow stronger over time.

[Learn more](#) about the impact of relationships and ways to strengthen connection.





Helping Yourself and Others

The military community is grounded in resilience, connection, and service. While mental health challenges can affect anyone, each person's experience is unique and shaped by their strengths, background, and identity. Some groups, including LGBTQ+, Latine, people of color, and women service members, may face additional stressors, making awareness and culturally responsive support especially important.

Awareness can save lives. It's important to pay attention to a person's circumstances, behavior changes, warning signs, and shifts in relationship dynamics—in yourself and in others. To learn more, check out the [Additional Resources](#) section on the next page and the [Get Help](#) section of our website [here](#).

Check in regularly with your family, your fellow service members, and your community. Ask direct, caring questions, listen without judgment, and normalize conversations about mental health. Strong communication, empathy, and early support can make a meaningful difference.

If you or someone you know is struggling, immediate, nonjudgmental mental health support is available—free, confidential, and 24/7. Text **SERVE** or **SERVICIO** to **741741** to connect with a live, trained volunteer Crisis Counselor. Spread the word and share this resource. You never know who may need it.

Additional Resources

Below are some organizations to reference that also support the well-being of the military community.

- [Americas VetDogs](#)
Trains and places service and guide dogs with veterans, active duty service members, and first responders with disabilities at no cost to them.
- [The Armed Services YMCA](#)
The Armed Services YMCA (ASYMCA) provides low- or no-cost programs that support the resilience and well-being of active duty service members and their families, helping them navigate the challenges of military life.
- [Blue Star Families](#)
Supports military families through research, programming, and partnerships focused on career development, community building, and family well-being.
- [Bob Woodruff Foundation](#)
Supports programs that address the physical, mental, and social well-being of veterans, service members, and their families.
- [Centerstone](#)
Provides mental health and substance use disorder services, including specialized programs for veterans and military families.
- [Hiring Our Heroes](#)
Connects veterans, transitioning service members, and military spouses with employers through fellowships, hiring events, and career development programs.
- [Military Spouse Advocacy Network](#)
Empowers military spouses through professional development, mentorship, and advocacy to strengthen career growth and community connection.
- [Project Healing Waters](#)
Offers therapeutic fly-fishing programs to active duty military personnel and veterans to support physical and emotional recovery.
- [SeaWaves](#)
Provides education, resources and support for service members and their families that are navigating eating disorders.
- [Veterans Collaborative](#)
Connects veterans and military families to trusted community resources, including mental health care, housing support, and employment services.

- [Vets4Warriors](#)

Offers 24/7 confidential peer support by veterans for veterans, service members, and their families to address challenges before they escalate into crisis.

- [Worried About a Veteran](#)

Offers guidance and resources to help friends, family members, and caregivers recognize signs of crisis and support veterans who may be struggling.

- [Wounded Warrior Project](#)

Provides programs and services for post-9/11 wounded, ill, and injured veterans, including mental health support, career counseling, and long-term rehabilitative care.

Mental health is an important part of overall readiness and well-being in the military community. Service members, veterans, and their families demonstrate extraordinary resilience, commitment, and perseverance every day. That same strength is reflected in the ability to recognize when additional support is needed. Seeking help is not a weakness, it's an act of courage, self-awareness, and responsibility.

By building on the values of teamwork, accountability, and mutual support that already define military culture, we can continue to normalize conversations about mental health. Together, we can foster an environment where every member of the military community feels respected, supported, and empowered to access care when they need it.

