



Your mental wellbeing

Life can be filled with challenges. Supporting your own mental health is an important part of being able to cope with stresses.

Many of these strategies may appear straightforward, but that doesn't mean they're not important. Getting the basics right goes a long way to helping you cope.

Start small. Don't try everything at once.

One key thing is to not try everything at once. Work out a 'plan of action'. Select one or two to begin with and make a plan to work on them.

Set yourself some realistic goals for the first week and at the end of the week, see how things went. Hopefully, it went well but if it didn't try a new strategy for the next week.

Over time, you'll develop a range of strategies and changes to your lifestyle that will help you to get more out of life.

Need urgent help or need to talk? (<https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/contact-us/need-urgent-help-now/>)

Wellbeing tips

Have a healthy diet

A poor diet will increase your stress levels, and that can make small problems harder to deal with. If you're not sure what you should be eating, talk to your general practitioner, or a dietician.

Be active and do the hobbies you enjoy

Sometimes we end up focussing on our problems and stop doing the things that we used to find enjoyable. Even if you don't feel like getting involved in hobbies or other activities, being active is important for your mental and physical health.

Exercise regularly

Exercise is vital to managing stress. Just a half an hour of vigorous exercise most days will greatly improve your fitness and sense of wellbeing.

Sleep well

Problems often appear much bigger than they really are when you're tired, so getting a good night's sleep is important.

Set positive goals and reward yourself

Setting goals on a regular basis helps to bring structure, achievement, and a sense of satisfaction into our lives. You may be up against a barrier that seems too big to overcome. But if you set realistic goals to take small steps and achieve them

be up against a barrier that seems too big to overcome. But if you set realistic goals to take small steps and achieve them then you can make progress, and gain satisfaction when you overcome that obstacle.

Use helpful thinking

The way we think about ourselves affects how we feel and act. People under stress often develop thinking habits that make them feel worse about things. Unhelpful thoughts might make you feel distressed, or hold you back from getting along with other people. By making you feel overwhelmed or hopeless they make it harder to deal with your situation.

People don't often think about how they're thinking, so unhelpful thinking just keeps happening. With a bit of practice, you can teach yourself to replace unhelpful thoughts with helpful ones — thoughts that help you deal with the situation and generally improve your mood.

Managing reactions

When we're not doing so well, certain situations can trigger reactions that affect our mood, health, decision making, our ability to get things done, and our relationships with other people.

Learning skills to manage these reactions can improve self-confidence, relationships, and health. It can reduce our reliance on unhelpful ways of coping, like drinking too much or avoiding situations that make us anxious, stressed, or angry.

Spend time with friends and family

It's easy to pull away from people when you're not feeling great. But having someone around you to support you through difficult times is really important.

You might feel like your friends and family don't understand what you're going through, or that hanging out with the guys from your old unit brings back too many bad memories. It is true everyone needs time to themselves now and then, but being alone for too long isn't good for you.

Try building up your social connections so that you have a few people that you can turn to for different types of support.

Building mental resilience

How you bounce back from setbacks is related to how you view them.

Mental resilience self-assessment tool (<https://health.nzdf.mil.nz/take-action/self-check/resilience-self-assessment/>) 

More info on mental resilience (<https://health.nzdf.mil.nz/your-health/mind/building-resilience/>) 

Recognise the signs

The NZ Defence Force Health website has some good information on recognising the signs that something may not be right.

Defence Health Hub self-assessment tools (<https://health.nzdf.mil.nz/take-action/self-check/>) 

Where to go for help

Access services and support if you — or someone you care about — are dealing with a mental health concern.

In an emergency

If there is a immediate risk of harm to yourself or others, either:

- ring the police — 111
- go to the Accident and Emergency Department (A&E) at your nearest hospital, or
- contact your local district health board's mental health crisis assessment team.

Contact details for local crisis assessment teams (<http://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/services-and-support/health-care-services/mental-health-services/crisis-assessment-teams>) 

If you're concerned about someone else's safety, remain with them and help them to stay safe until support arrives.

If it's not urgent

If you want to talk

You may want to talk about your current situation with someone.

Support organisations you can talk to (<https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/contact-us/need-urgent-help-now/>)

If you want to access support and services

The first port of call is to see a local doctor or family doctor.

You might be able to access your local mental health services directly, but some require a referral from your doctor first. You can call Healthline on 0800 611 116 for advice.

Once you're accessing mental health services we may be able to help fund the cost of treatment.

Mental health treatment (<https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/a-z/mental-health-treatment/>)