

When the War Comes Home Wellness Conference

It's good to be home...isn't it?

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Homecoming

- Homecoming is not just an event...it is a process
- Go slow
- Simple, flexible
- Fantasy is not fact



Transition

- **Combat** – normal reactions to abnormal events
- **Home** – abnormal reactions to normal events
- **Combat** – experience brings understanding & togetherness
- **Home** – experience brings confusion & separation

Transition

- Days, weeks, months
- Range of feelings & behaviors
- Talk & listen
- Re-establish trust, intimacy, openness



Stress – Behavioral

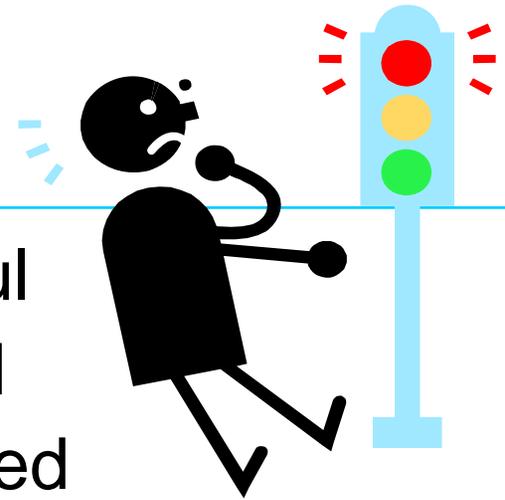
-  concentration
- Jumpy, easily startled
- Always alert, on guard
- Bad dreams, flashbacks
- Avoiding people & places
- Work or school problems
-  intimacy, feeling withdrawn, detached, disinterested



Stress – Physical

- Trouble sleeping, overly tired
- Stomach upset, trouble eating
- Headaches & sweating
- Lack of exercise, poor diet, poor health care
-  drinking, smoking, drug use
- Other health problems worsen

Stress – Emotional



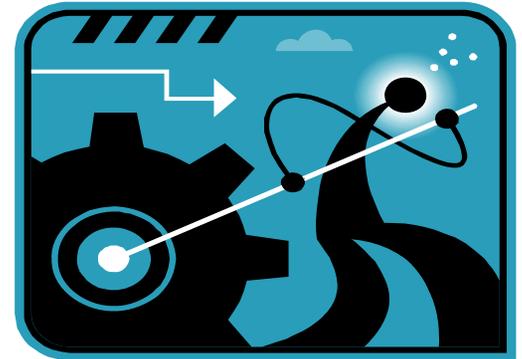
- Feeling nervous, helpless, fearful
- Sad, guilty, rejected, abandoned
- Edginess, easily upset or annoyed
- Experiencing shock, being numb, unable to feel happy
- Feeling hopeless about the future
- Irritable, angry
-  trust in others, being overly controlling,
-  conflicts

Self

- Exercise
- Healthy diet
- Good sleep
- Restrict alcohol, caffeine, tobacco
- Do enjoyable activities
- Set a routine
- Support of people

Work

- Changes at the job
- Not exciting
- Career change
- Absenteeism & presenteeism
- Return can bring new skills of leadership, teamwork, & a broadened perspective



Family

- Families change
- Fights & arguments
- Disconnected & detached
- Financial issues
- Separation & divorce
- Domestic violence & child abuse
- Homelessness



Sense of Purpose

- From war to home
- At home in absence of spouse
- Re-negotiate relationship
- Re-establish a shared sense of purpose



Four Steps to Achieving a Shared Sense of Purpose

- Understand common factors that have shaped the service member's & spouse's sense of purpose during separation
- Recognize common concerns shared by service member & spouse resulting from the separation
- Be aware of relationship breakers: common, sensitive issues can distance couples
- Focus on relationship makers: ways to build shared experiences, shared sense of purpose & closeness

Stigma

- Only 40% seek help
- What others think
- Effect on military career
- Weakness



Risks of Not Seeking Help

- Acute Stress Disorder
- PTSD
- TBI
- Depression & suicide
- Alcohol & substance use/misuse
- Aggression & anger
- Guilt & shame
- Poverty & homelessness

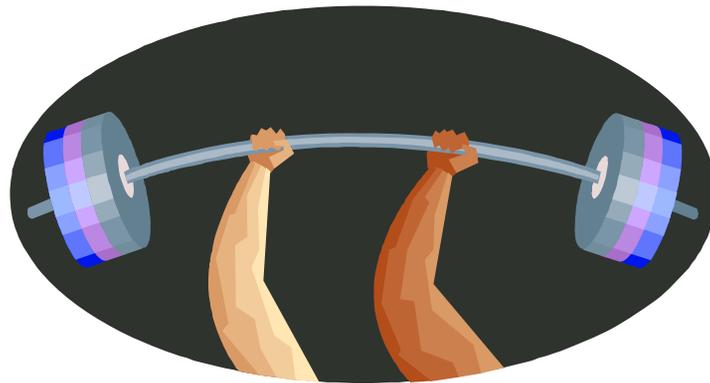


Seek Help

- Treatment works
- Early is best



Seeking Help is a Sign of Strength...
Not Weakness!



Questions



- What are some ways to decrease the stigma of asking for help?
- How can families and employers help make the transition home easier?
- What are the realistic expectations for veterans, families, & employers regarding the transition home?

References

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