

Post-deployment



Combating feeling sad

A significant proportion of the general public experience at least one prolonged period of low mood in their lives (sometimes called clinical depression). If, on returning home you feel lethargic, are unable to enjoy any aspect of your life and are persistently 'down in the dumps' then this needs to be sorted.

Although most people feel down sometimes, if these symptoms are present for more than a couple of weeks then you need to do something about it. In this section we offer some tips and hints to increase your activity levels and decrease your feelings of negativity.

To break the shackles of low mood, you should write down an activity list and detail all the activities you enjoy. Write down a separate list of potential things you have always wanted to do. So now you have two lists, the next step is to do them. However, if you are sad or lacking motivation taking this next step is not so simple. Because you may feel as if you just can't find enjoyment anywhere you need to plan a way out. This can be done by producing a simple 'activity schedule'.

To achieve this you need to obtain a calendar.

- In the first month, enter simple tasks from each of your lists with the intention of doing one small enjoyable activity each day
- Keep reviewing your calendar and gradually become more adventurous in your daily achievements
- Even though you are now expending more energy, you will find you are less lethargic. This is because you are slowly, but surely, breaking the cycle of depression
- It is important to take one small step at a time, with every success comes more success and usually enjoyment at the same time

Along with inactivity, you may also encounter negative thinking. When you are feeling low or unhappy, negative thoughts can beset you. In extreme cases they can make you feel out of control. These thoughts are known as 'Negative Automatic Thoughts' (NATs). They can make you see others and yourself in a negative light. If this is happening to you, then you need to examine your NATs and challenge them. For example:

- What is the evidence for and against this thought or belief?
- What are the odds that my thoughts and beliefs are accurate (eg. 100%, 50%, 10%)
- Am I focussing on small details instead of the bigger picture?
- Are my judgements based on feelings instead of facts?

In many cases people tend to be too hard on themselves; instead, challenge your NATs and attempt to move on and get support from family, friends and, if you need to, from your doctor who in turn may refer you to a mental health professional. Take one step at a time.



www.youngdiggers.com.au

Your non-military, non-government, confidential
volunteer help and support service



Australia

Veterans & Veterans Families Counselling
Service (VVCS)

Phone: 1800 011 046 – 24 hrs, 7 days



New Zealand

Veterans' Affairs New Zealand (VANZ)

NZ Freephone: 0800 4 838372

International: +0011 64 7 859 7676

8am-5pm Monday to Friday (NZ time)