

Post-deployment



Coping skills

Our coping skills have developed since early childhood. Like a bank account, we keep adding credits to our coping skills account as life teaches us how to react to different experiences.

Your training and military experience adds greatly to your coping skills account. In the same positive way you deployed your coping skills whilst on operations, you should positively engage the same skills in the weeks and months following your return.

Although you cannot make any stress reactions disappear overnight, you hope this section can explain some proven strategies that can be employed to allow you to gain full control of your reactions.

Let's look at some of the potential difficulty and offer you some tips that may assist you.

On your return it is possible you may encounter upsetting images or memories

They may be fixed on some particular event or series of events that you found disturbing. They have the ability to come back into your consciousness when you don't want them to.

Because of this, they can be extremely disturbing and lead to you feeling out of control. In some cases, individuals will employ a number of avoidance tactics (drinking, excessive physical activity, carrying out extra hours of work) in an attempt to get rid of such images and memories.

Unfortunately, robustly avoiding these images merely tends to strengthen their hold on you; it's a bit like running away from a bully – unfortunately, the bully just keeps coming back.

By avoiding the thoughts you are reinforcing the belief that memories are dangerous when of course, they are not.

Experience has show that these feelings will dissipate over time

If faced with a 'flashback' situation, remain calm, take four to five steady deep breaths and remind yourself you are in a safe and secure environment.

- Hold onto something if you need to.
- Reassure yourself the images will do, along with the disturbing feelings connected to them
- Remind yourself these are only images and they will dissipate. Actively remind yourself each and every time that these images are not dangerous



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