

Veterans from all eras are reacting to the events in Afghanistan, such as the U.S withdrawal and the takeover by the Taliban. You are not alone. Scroll down for a list of extensive resources, coping advice and common reactions.

Resources available right now:

- **Mental Health America of Greater Houston** - There are a wealth of screenings available on Mental Health America of Greater Houston's website that can provide anonymous assessments and direct you to the appropriate resources. Visit <https://screening.mhanational.org/screening-tools/?ref=MHAHouston>.
- **Combined Arms** - Combined Arms is a dynamic, ever-evolving collaborative impact organization that is using an innovative approach to technology and service delivery to disrupt the veteran transition experience. Call [\(888\) 737-3112](tel:8887373112) or visit <https://www.combinedarms.us/tvn>.
- **Veterans Crisis Line** - If you are having thoughts of suicide, call [1-800-273-8255](tel:18002738255), then PRESS 1 or visit <http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>
 - For emergency mental health care, you can also go directly to [your local VA medical center](#) 24/7 regardless of your discharge status or enrollment in other VA health care.
- **Vet Centers** - Discuss how you feel with other Veterans in these community-based counseling centers. 70% of Vet Center staff are Veterans. Call [1-877-927-8387](tel:18779278387) or find one [near you](#).
- **[VA Mental Health Services Guide](#)** - This guide will help you sign up and access mental health services.
- **[MakeTheConnection.net](#)** - Information, resources, and Veteran to Veteran videos for challenging life events and experiences with mental health issues.
- **Rally Point** - Talk to other Veterans online. Discuss: [What are your feelings as the Taliban reclaim Afghanistan after 20 years of US involvement?](#)
- **[Download VA's self-help apps](#)** - Tools to help deal with common reactions like, stress, sadness, and anxiety. You can also track your symptoms over time.
- **Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)** - [Request a Peer Mentor](#)
- **VA Women Veterans Call Center** - Call or text [1-855-829-6636](tel:18558296636) (M-F 8 a.m. – 10 p.m. & SAT 8 a.m. - 6:30 p.m. ET)
- **VA Caregiver Support Line** - Call [1-855-260-3274](tel:18552603274) (M-F 8 a.m. – 10 p.m. & SAT 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. ET)
- **Together We Served** - [Find your battle buddies](#) through unit pages
- **George W. Bush Institute** - Need help or want to talk? [Check In](#) or call: [1-630-522-4904](tel:16305224904) or email: checkin@veteranwellnessalliance.org
- **Elizabeth Dole Foundation Hidden Heroes** - [Join the Community](#)
- **American Red Cross Military Veteran Caregiver Network** - [Peer Support and Mentoring](#)

- **Team Red, White & Blue** - Hundreds of events weekly. [Find a chapter](#) in your area.
- **Student Veterans of America** - Find a [campus chapter](#) to connect with.
- **Team Rubicon** - Find a [local support](#) squad.

Strategies for Managing Ongoing Distress

We understand this is a trying, challenging and highly tense time for many on both the military and civilian side in Afghanistan.

At this moment, while there may be some significant challenges for many, please consider the ways that your service made a difference, the impact it had on others' lives or on your own life. Remember that now is just one moment in time and that things will continue to change. Your work and dedication is critical, honorable and respectable.

It can be helpful to focus on the present and to engage in the activities that are most meaningful and valuable to you. Is there something you can do today that is important to you? This can be as an individual, a family member, a parent, or a community member. Is there something that is meaningful to you in regard to your work or your spirituality? Such activities won't change the past or the things you can't control, but they can help life feel meaningful and reduce distress, despite the things you cannot change.

It can also help to consider your thinking and thought process. Ask yourself if your thoughts are helpful to you right now. Are there ways you can change your thinking to be more accurate and less distressing? For example, are you using extreme thinking where you see the situation as all bad or all good? If so, try and think in less extreme terms. For example, rather than thinking "my service in Afghanistan was useless" consider instead "I helped keep Afghanistan safe."

Finally, consider more general coping strategies that you may want to try including:

- **Engage in Positive Activities.** Try to engage in positive, healthy, or meaningful activities, even if they are small, simple actions. Doing things that are rewarding, meaningful, or enjoyable, even if you don't feel like it, can make you feel better.
- **Stay Connected.** Spend time with people who give you a sense of security, calm, or happiness, or those who best understand what you are going through.
- **Practice Good Self Care.** Look for positive coping strategies that help you manage your emotions. Listening to music, exercising, practicing breathing routines, spending time in nature or with animals, journaling, or reading inspirational text are some simple ways to help manage overwhelming or distressing emotions.
- **Stick to Your Routines.** It can be helpful to stick to a schedule for when you sleep, eat, work, and do other day-to-day activities.
- **Limit Media Exposure.** Limit how much news you take in if media coverage is increasing your distress.
- **Use a mobile app.** Consider one of VA's self-help apps) such as PTSD Coach which has tools that can help you deal with common reactions like, stress, sadness, and anxiety. You can also track your symptoms over time (see <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/appvid/mobile/>).

- [PTSD Coach Online](#). A series of online video coaches will guide you through 17 tools to help you manage stress. PTSD Coach Online is used on a computer, rather than a mobile device, and therefore can offer tools that involve writing.

If you develop your own ways of adapting to ongoing events and situations, you may gain a stronger sense of being able to deal with challenges, a greater sense of meaning or purpose, and an ability to mentor and support others in similar situations.

Common Reactions

In reaction to current events in Afghanistan, Veterans may:

- Feel frustrated, sad, helpless, grief or distressed
- Feel angry or betrayed
- Experience an increase in mental health symptoms like symptoms of PTSD or depression
- Sleep poorly, drink more or use more drugs
- Try to avoid all reminders or media or shy away from social situations
- Have more military and homecoming memories

Veterans may feel like they need to expect and/or prepare for the worst. For example, they may:

- Become overly protective, vigilant, and guarded
- Become preoccupied by danger
- Feel a need to avoid being shocked by, or unprepared for, what may happen in the future

Feeling distress is a normal reaction to negative events, especially ones that feel personal. It can be helpful to let yourself feel those feelings rather than try to avoid them. Often, these feelings will naturally run their course. If they continue without easing up or if you feel overwhelmed by them, the suggestions and resources above can be extremely helpful.