



National Center for  
**PTSD**

POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs



WWW.PTSD.VA.GOV

ADVANCING SCIENCE AND PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING OF TRAUMATIC STRESS

## CONSIDER

**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 meaningful regarding your work or your spirituality where you can focus additional energy?**

These activities will not change the things you can't control, but they can help life feel meaningful and reduce distress.

## IN ADDITION

**It can also help to notice your thoughts.**

- 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, consider thinking of additional possibilities. For example, rather than thinking "The world just isn't safe anymore. We are likely heading to another world war," consider instead "**No one wants another world war. I can use my coping skills and get help if I need it.**"

## STRATEGIES FOR VETERANS

### Managing Ongoing Distress Related to Ukraine



**It is normal to feel stress, overwhelm, and changes in mood due to the events in Ukraine. You may notice a range of reactions such as:**

- Feelings of frustration, sadness, helplessness, distress (including moral distress), anger or betrayal
- Experiencing an increase in mental health symptoms like symptoms of PTSD or depression
- Sleeping poorly, drinking more or using more drugs
- Trying to avoid all reminders or media or shy away from social situations
- Having more military and homecoming memories
- Questioning the meaning of their own service
- Having empathy for the people in Ukraine and wanting to help in some way
- Feeling the need to prepare for the United States becoming drawn into a war
- Become more protective, vigilant and guarded
- Become preoccupied by danger
- Feeling a need to avoid being shocked by, or unprepared for, what may happen in the future

During times of increased stress, it can be helpful to focus on the present and to engage in the activities that are most meaningful and valuable to you.



## Finally, consider more general coping strategies:

- ☑ **Engage in positive, healthy activities** that are rewarding, meaningful, or enjoyable, even if you don't feel like it, as they can make you feel better.
- ☑ **Stay connected** by spending time with people who give you a sense of security, calm, or happiness, or those who best understand what you are feeling.
- ☑ **Practice good self-care** by engaging in activities such as listening to music, exercising, practicing breathing routines, spending time in nature or with animals, journaling or reading inspirational text.
- ☑ **Stick to your routines** and follow a schedule for when you sleep, eat, work and do other day-to-day activities.
- ☑ **Limit media exposure** especially if it's increasing your distress.
- ☑ **Acknowledge** those people, values, and goals in your life that are most important to you
- ☑ **Take time outs** and channel your energy productively if you're feeling angry
- ☑ **Create** specific routines for day-to-day living and reduce worrying about conditions beyond those routines
- ☑ **Proceed** with life's necessities, which will help develop and maintain a continued engagement in life.

## When to Consider Professional Help

If your distress continues or you are unable to function well, consider seeking help. There are experienced and caring professionals available who can help you with common responses to current events, such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, moral injury and complicated grief.

Every VA facility has mental health specialists. Visit [VA's Get Help](#) page to find a provider near you.

- Use a [VA mobile app](#) to help manage reactions and practice self-care.
- Try [PTSD Coach Online](#), with 17 tools explained by video coaches to help you manage stress.

Or go to [Make the Connection](#), an online resource designed to connect Veterans, their family members and friends, and other supporters with information, resources and solutions to issues affecting their lives.

**If you feel like you might hurt yourself or someone else, REACH OUT NOW**

The [Veterans Crisis Line](#), includes phone, online chat and text-messaging services free to all Veterans, even if you are not enrolled in VA health care.

Confidential support is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

**Call 1-800-273-8255 and press 1.**