

## Information for Military Families

As our service men and women continue to carry out missions in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, their families, friends and significant others continue to experience varying amounts of worry and fear.

In the face of this anxiety, you or someone you know may be experiencing some of the following signs of the emotional impact of stress:

- Difficulty completing tasks
- Extreme hunger or lack of appetite
- Trouble concentrating
- Difficulty making decisions
- Fear and anxiety about the future
- Crying for "no apparent reason"
- Apathy and emotional numbing

When facing stress, some people will maintain their routines to achieve a sense of control and to distract themselves, and others will have difficulty focusing for some time. Both reactions are common responses to this situation.

## Some tips for coping during these difficult times:

- Talk about it. By talking with others, particularly other military spouses, you will reduce your stress and realize that others share your feelings. Support groups exist at most military installations. If there's one available to you, join; if not, consider starting one.
- Take care of your physical health. Get plenty of rest and exercise, avoid excessive drinking and drugs, and eat properly.
- Limit your exposure to the news media. The images, rumors and speculation can be damaging to your sense of well-being.
- Engage in activities you find relaxing. Plant flowers, attend a concert, visit an art gallery, or take a long bath. Be kind to yourself.
- Do something positive. Contact community volunteer organizations to see how you can help. Give blood, prepare "care packages" for service men and women, or support a friend or neighbor who is having trouble coping.
- Take care of your children. Acknowledge their worries and uncertainties. Reassure them that their feelings are normal. Maintain your family routines and keep the lines of communication open.
- Seek help. If you have strong feelings that won't go away or are troubled for more than four to six weeks, you may want to seek professional help. Military One Source provides 24-hour access to information and help. Contact them at 800-342-9647 or [www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com).



## Resources for Additional Information and Support

**TRICARE**, the administrator of health and mental health services for the armed services, provides information about mental health benefits programs for the military at their web site, [www.tricare.osd.mil](http://www.tricare.osd.mil). Or contact them at 888-363-2273.

The **U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs** operates a web site ([www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)) that contains information on and applications for compensation, health, burial, and other benefits.

The **National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder** ([www.ncptsd.org](http://www.ncptsd.org)) is a program of the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs that focuses on research and education on post-traumatic stress.

The **Vietnam Veterans of America** web site has a section on post-traumatic stress that includes suggestions for veterans or their survivors seeking VA benefits. It can be accessed at [www.vva.org/benefits/ptsd.htm](http://www.vva.org/benefits/ptsd.htm).

The **Anxiety Disorders Association of America** offers information on all anxiety disorders, as well as a referral network of professional therapists and self-help groups. Call 240-485-1001, or visit [www.adaa.org](http://www.adaa.org).

The **International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies** has research and clinical information about PTSD and can be accessed at [www.istss.org](http://www.istss.org).

The **Sidran Institute** ([www.sidran.org](http://www.sidran.org)) is a charitable organization that collects, produces and publishes information on traumatic stress.

The **College of Human Ecology at Kansas State University** has information for families dealing with the impact of deployment at: [www.humec.k-state.edu/news/2003/militarymain.html](http://www.humec.k-state.edu/news/2003/militarymain.html).

**Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, Inc. (TAPS)** assists people who have lost family members in the Armed Forces. TAPS provides a survivor peer support network, grief counseling referrals, and crisis information and can be reached at 1-800-959-TAPS (8277) or [www.taps.org](http://www.taps.org).

## Other web sites for military families include:

<a href="http://www.lifelines2000.org">www.lifelines2000.org</a>	<a href="http://www.militarycity.com">www.militarycity.com</a>
<a href="http://www.armytimes.com">www.armytimes.com</a>	<a href="http://www.navytimes.com">www.navytimes.com</a>
<a href="http://www.airforcetimes.com">www.airforcetimes.com</a>	<a href="http://www.marinecorpstimes.com">www.marinecorpstimes.com</a>
<a href="http://www.afsv.af.mil/FMP">www.afsv.af.mil/FMP</a>	<a href="http://www.sgtmoms.com">www.sgtmoms.com</a>

For more information or referrals to local services, visit our online Frequently Asked Questions section at [www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/faqs](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/faqs), contact Mental Health America or your local Mental Health America affiliate.

If you or someone you know is in crisis now, seek help immediately. Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) to reach a 24-hour crisis center or dial 911 for immediate assistance.

