



What to expect



What to expect when getting help

There are many support options available to your loved one. Effective treatments can involve counselling, medication, or a combination of both. Counselling involves talking about your thoughts and feelings to understand what led to the problems you are experiencing. A counsellor works with you to develop coping strategies, and this usually involves learning new skills.

Find a good match

Ask your loved one to think of a set of questions to ask a mental health professional to help your loved one select the right person for them. For example:

- » Do they have experience in helping people with the same or similar issues that your loved one is dealing with?
- » Can the counsellor clearly describe how they can help your loved one with the issue that is affecting them?
- » Can they explain how the treatment works, how long it will last and what your loved one can expect to happen during treatment?
- » Do they understand why your loved one is seeking help?
- » Do they put your loved one at ease? Are they warm, approachable, understanding and on the same wavelength as your loved one?

Some people you may need to talk to more than one person to get the right help. But remember, it can take a little while to feel comfortable with someone.

Find out about best practice treatments

Defence members can access support from their treating Garrison Health Medical Officer. Information can be found at Joint Health Command for current serving members [ADF Mental Health Services](#) | [ADF Members & Families](#) | [Defence](#)

It is important to know that your loved one will be getting the best and most up-to-date treatments available when they seek help from a professional. More information can be found at:

- » For information on the best treatments for PTSD go to: <https://www.phoenixaustralia.org/australian-guidelines-for-ptsd/>
- » For information on what works for Depression go to: <https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/resources-support/depression/treatment/>
- » For information on effective drug and alcohol treatment go to: <https://www.phoenixaustralia.org/your-recovery/effects-of-trauma-alcohol-substance-use/>

Don't expect a quick fix

- » Recovery takes time but a good practitioner will help you set goals and let you know how long treatment will go on for.
- » Be patient and persevere. This can be difficult when impacted by mental health symptoms or if you are feeling burnt out as a carer or loved one
- » It's a good idea to do regular progress reviews to see how far your loved one has gone in their recovery.

Get medication right, if applicable

- » Prescribing medication and getting the dose level right can be a process of trial and error
- » Encourage your loved one to discuss any concerns about side effects with their doctor and remind them it is not a good idea to stop taking medication without talking to the doctor first
- » Consult the GP or psychiatrist regularly. Be consistent and give it time.

Supporting your loved one during treatment

1 - Acknowledge that opening up can be difficult

In their work your loved ones are rarely encouraged to be vulnerable. Revealing their emotional side can be confronting and 'scary'.

"The military trains you to be tough and resilient, and not to show when you feel vulnerable, so when Steve started counselling, he hated it. I acknowledged this was not an easy process and told him how much it meant to me that he was trying."

2 - Review and adjust the treatment approach if treatment isn't working

Although it is important to encourage your loved one to persevere with getting help, sometimes they may not be getting the right treatment or be working with the right professional. Sit down with your loved one and encourage them to talk to their counsellor or doctor about what is not working.

"Amy was not taking her antidepressants regularly. She said they affected her sleep, and she didn't like the weight gain. I told her it might be a good idea to talk to her psychiatrist to see when she could expect the side effects to go away and to see if other medication might work better."

3 - Challenging and changing family interactions

As your loved one learns to do things differently and improves during treatment, your family interactions and routines may change. Be prepared for adjustments to the way you and your family function as your loved one goes through the counselling process.

"I was used to our five-year-old daughter coming to me for help. As my partner started getting better and more involved in our family, my daughter started going to him more than me for advice. I was glad to see my partner was getting better but missed being the favourite."

Seeking help is an important step for your loved one to take. Using the above information will help your loved one have a better experience in getting that help.

To access DMFS support services or products:



1800 624 608



MemberAndFamilyHelpline@defence.gov.au



www.defence.gov.au/adf-members-families



@DefenceMemberandFamilySupport



@dmfs_ausdefence



www.forcenet.gov.au