

Reasons to Get Help

Changes in your social life

A serious wound, illness, or injury can disrupt your everyday routine and interrupt your existing personal relationships and social life. As your social life changes and your social network evolves, temporary bouts of social isolation may occur. During treatment and recovery, you may find yourself spending less time with your social network due to the time and energy required for your health and health care. You may withdraw from other people because you are worried that if you open up, what you say will upset them. However, communicating and maintaining strong bonds with family, friends, peers, and your community are essential to long term psychological and emotional well-being and physical health.

Preventing social isolation

Social isolation happens when you are disconnected from your family, friends, and peers, and often limits your access to the support you need. Spending some time alone is healthy but if you find yourself overcome with negative or repetitive thoughts, it might be time to reach out and connect. Isolating yourself can become a habit if you don't take action to prevent it. Plan out when you are going to socialize and then stick with your plan even when you'd rather be alone.

Small steps toward change

It's ok if you realize that you are isolating yourself, as this is something you can change. It is important to be patient with yourself and focus on small steps. Do what's right for you and don't compare yourself with others. Give yourself time to develop your new normal. It is important to strike a balance that you are comfortable with between being alone and being social.

Social Relationship Resources

Visit <http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/wounded-ill-and-injured/Pages/intimacy-relationships.aspx> to learn more about:

- Emotional and Physical Intimacy
- Communicating with TBI
- Communicating with Your Partner
- Family Support

Recreational Activities

- Navy Wounded Warrior Adaptive Athletic Reconditioning
<http://safeharbor.navylive.dodlive.mil/transition/adaptive-athletics/>
- Wounded Warriors, Physical Health and Wellness
www.woundedwarriorproject.org/programs/physical-health-wellness/

Support Groups and Peer Support

- National Resource Directory www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/nrd
- Marine Corps DSTRESS Line www.dstressline.com/
- Real Warriors Message Board www.realwarriors.net/forum/
- Vets4Warriors www.vets4warriors.com
- Military Crisis Line www.militarycrisisline.net

Volunteering

- United We Serve www.serve.gov
- Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service www.volunteer.va.gov/
- Volunteer Match www.volunteermatch.org
- Volunteers of America www.voa.org



MAINTAINING SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

While Coping with Wound, Illness, or Injury



Use the tips in this brochure to help you maintain and expand strong social networks and relationships throughout your recovery.



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Maintaining Relationships

The relationships you built before and during your treatment and recovery may change, but often remain your primary support system after your recovery. Maintaining these relationships takes effort, but they can provide you with rewards that last a lifetime.

Your Significant Other

Nurturing your relationship with your significant other during this time of change is important. Finding a balance between spending time together and making time for yourself can be a challenge for both you and your partner. If you find that one or both of you are withdrawing, go on a date or set aside time for each other away from the hospital, home, or other causes of stress. Seek out new activities and hobbies that can be a source of enjoyment for both of you.

Friends and Family

A vital part of sustaining relationships with family, friends, and peers is reaching out to them and accepting their gestures to connect with you. Communication doesn't always have to be in person—social media, video chatting, text, and phone calls are all methods of communication that can help you maintain contact with your social network. Be honest with those you care about regarding what to expect, and how to talk about your wound, illness, or injury. Sharing your perspective with others is a good way to prevent misunderstandings and opens the door for honest communication.

**Maintaining Social Relationships
While Coping with Wound, Illness, or Injury**

Expanding Your Social Network

Forming new relationships and exploring new interests allows you to learn about yourself, increase engagement in your community, and participate in enjoyable activities. Consider the following activities to help you engage in your current relationships and establish new ones.

Exercise, Sports, and Recreation

Sports and recreational activities can provide fun and entertainment as well as an opportunity to socialize. Talk to your healthcare provider about the best options when it comes to exercise and recreation. Look into local activity clubs, Navy and Marine Corps and Wounded Warrior leagues, or talk to your MWR coordinator to find out what is available in your area.

Volunteer

Community involvement can help you meet new people, and find new hobbies, interests, or causes. Volunteering is a good way to boost your mood – the feeling of helping others can give you a sense of contribution and accomplishment for a good cause. There are hundreds of opportunities to support local and federal non-profit organizations, including those that serve Navy and Marine Corps service members and families.

Continuing Education

Community colleges and adult learning institutions are a great place to learn a new skill or pursue your education while interacting with others who share your interests. Course options often include a foreign language, sport, art, film, cooking, or music.

Support Groups

It can also be helpful to connect with someone who is going through or has experienced a situation similar to yours. Support groups can be a place (online or in person) to find others who you can relate to and understand your circumstances. Support groups may be specific to your wound, illness, injury, or branch of service.

Don't forget to have fun! Family, friends, and recreation are things that can make your life more enjoyable.

