

A complete resource for relationships and intimacy.



Changes in your social life.

Serving as a Sailor or Marine is a great source of honor and pride. While serving, you may have experienced a wound, illness, or injury that impacted your psychological, emotional, and/or physical well-being; disrupted your everyday routine; or interrupted your existing personal relationships and social life. You may find yourself spending less time with your social network or significant other due to the time and energy required for treatment and recovery. You may also experience pain, numbness, fatigue, stress, anxiety, depression, or medication side effects that can impact your relationship with your partner. Communicating and maintaining strong bonds with your partner, family, friends, peers, and your community are essential to long-term psychological and emotional well-being and physical health. The Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center Health Promotion and Wellness Department offers resources for service members and their families that include strategies and suggestions for nurturing personal relationships and achieving physical and mental wellness.

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

- › Communi-cation
- › Preventing Social Isolation
- › Maintaining Relationships
- › Intimacy
- › Family Support

For more information on support groups and peer support, visit:

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

To learn how our programs can help facilitate recovery and strengthen resilience, visit us at WWW.MED.NAVY.MIL/SITES/NMCPHC/WOUNDED-ILL-AND-INJURED/PAGES/HEALTH-PROMOTION.ASPX.

For more information on your local resources, contact:

MAINTAIN RELATIONSHIPS. IMPROVE WELLNESS.



**Relationships and Intimacy
for Wounded, Ill, and Injured
Sailors and Marines**



NAVY AND MARINE CORPS PUBLIC HEALTH CENTER
PREVENTION AND PROTECTION START HERE



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Maintaining Relationships.

The relationships you built before and during your treatment and recovery may change, but they will likely remain your primary support system after your recovery. Maintaining these relationships takes effort, but they can provide you with rewards that last a lifetime. Finding a balance between spending time with your partner or with others, and making time for yourself can be a challenge. Your family, friends, and peers all want to be there for you. Be honest with them about 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.

Communicating with your partner.

One of the great advantages of being in a relationship is that you don't have to go through this alone. Sit down with your partner and acknowledge that your wound, illness, or injury affects both of you. Create a list of your intimacy concerns and ask your partner to talk through it with you. When you share what you are going through in detail, be open and honest. It may be uncomfortable to express in detail what you are going through. But, you must trust that you and your partner are a team, and that communication can help you both work through the impact these differences have had on your ability or desire to be intimate.

Reestablishing trust and intimacy can take some time and will certainly require ongoing openness and patience. Remember to communicate with each other and to reach out for support when you need it. If you find that you or your partner are withdrawing, go on a date or set aside time for each other away from the hospital, home, or other causes of stress. Enjoy each other's company and continue to grow your loving relationship.

Relationships and Intimacy for Wounded, Ill, and Injured Sailors and Marines

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. Participating in a local sport league, volunteering, furthering your education, or finding peer support from others who may be going through the same thing can be helpful. All of these are social activities that give you an opportunity to connect with others and accomplish something for yourself or your community.

Talk to your health care team.

You may feel uneasy, uncomfortable, or embarrassed addressing intimacy concerns with your doctor, and your provider may be reluctant to initiate the conversation. Below are some tips for talking to your provider:

- ▶ Initiate the conversation by giving your doctor background information on your family history, personal health history, current symptoms, and medications.
- ▶ Write down your top three concerns and bring them to the appointment. Writing down questions about the possibility of sex, changed sensation, emotional concerns with intimacy, fatigue, body image, or medication side effects can help your conversation remain focused and professional.
- ▶ Acknowledge, repeat, and paraphrase the answers to your questions to make sure you grasp the information. Writing down answers can also help you recall the information later.

Your health care team's goal is to improve your health and provide quality medical care. You can help them accomplish this goal by keeping a detailed account of the plan of action you have agreed upon and any new or additional concerns you have regarding your treatment.

