



DEFENSE CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE

For Psychological Health & Traumatic Brain Injury

Depression: What Unit Leaders Need to Know

What is Depression?

Depression is a serious medical disorder that can affect a person's thoughts, feelings and behaviors resulting in a range of symptoms. If depression is left unrecognized and untreated, it can severely damage a service member's career and relationships. As leaders, it's important to recognize depression in your service members and get them help.

Facts about Depression:

- Depression is one of the most common psychological health disorders
- Depression can affect anyone, from the newest recruit to the commander in chief
- Nearly ten percent of Americans have depression in any given year
- Depression is one of the most treatable psychological health disorders with several effective treatment options available



What can you do to help your service members?

- Know your service members so that you recognize when their behaviors change dramatically
- Give your service members the benefit of the doubt— if you do notice dramatic changes, inquire about the changes rather than make assumptions
- Know the symptoms of depression and don't be afraid to ask if a person has them
- Try to encourage service members who need care to go in for help, recommend that they look into off-base or online resources if they are hesitant

Things to avoid when it comes to helping

- Don't try to act as a counselor or therapist—if service members need help, encourage them to see a professional
- Don't ignore the problem—hoping the person “snaps out of it” is not an acceptable plan
- Don't remove them from leadership positions simply because they have depression
- DO NOT leave a service member who is suicidal alone— immediately get them to a professional qualified to do a medical evaluation
- Do not discuss the service member's issues with others in the unit