

Cognitive & Unhelpful thinking

There can be a number of ways of thinking that are unhelpful when dealing with friends and family

Anger - How to Rule it?

Which strategies are you going to pull out of your coping skills toolbox to avoid anger ruling you and blighting your life?

- Pay attention to your breathing, slow it down and take those essential 4 to 5 deep breaths.
- Notice any tension in your body and try to relax.
- Take “time out” if you feel you are becoming angry. Often it may be helpful to withdraw from the situation prior to saying anything destructive. Tell the other person “I need to leave now, but will be back in a few minutes”. During the time away, use strategies to calm down and don’t try to justify your anger. A good technique is to get the person to think of the figure of 1000, when they have visualised it, reduce the figure by ‘7’, the answer 993, reduce it again by ‘7’, the answer this time is 986. What is happening here is you are using another part of the brain and the anger feelings diminish.
- Be assertive, but not aggressive about what you want. Express yourself directly and firmly whilst always respecting the other person. Make reassuring statements to yourself to assist you in remaining calm and controlling your anger.
- Remind yourself that the issues at hand are not life threatening. Buy yourself time when responding (deep breaths again or use the 1000 strategy). Delay your response until you have taken control of your anger.
- Write down the thoughts and feelings that you have encountered in an anger situation. Don’t just journal the events that went badly, but also recall the times when you handled the situation well.

Combating Alcohol Problems

- At times when you are feeling low, it can be all too easy to become reliant on alcohol and other substances. As a Veteran you can feel free from any restrictions on alcohol consumption and losing yourself in drink can be an attractive option to over-indulge on a regular basis.
- Many Veterans when interviewed, about excessive alcohol use will claim: “it helps me sleep”, “it blocks out bad memories”, “it helps me feel that I fit in”, and “it makes me feel happy”. Whilst some will think that these are good reasons for excessive drinking (or even substance abuse) there are far better and more valid reasons for reducing your intake or stopping altogether:
- Drug taking is illegal in the UK and if you are caught taking drugs, the consequences could be very serious.
- Over-indulgence in alcohol/drug taking will, most likely, ruin relationships with spouses, partners, families, friends and colleagues.
- You are letting yourself and your family & your colleagues down. You will lose control, at the very least; it is highly likely that you may embarrass yourself whilst under the effect of drink or drugs.
- There will be a detrimental impact on your health.
- If you find yourself increasingly dependant on alcohol you must do something about it.
Remember, don’t drink to: forget, cope or self medicate

Combating Feeling Sad

A significant proportion of the general public experience at least one prolonged period of low mood (some times called clinical depression) in their lives. If, you find yourself beginning to feel lethargic, are unable to enjoy any aspect of your life and are persistently “down in the dumps” then this needs to be sorted. Although most people can feel down for short periods (less than three weeks). If these symptoms are present for more than a couple of weeks then you need to do something about it. This week we will discuss some tips and hints to increase your activity levels and decrease your feelings of negativity.

- To break the shackles of low mood, you should write down an activitylist and detail all the activities that you enjoy. Write down a separate list of potential things that you have always wanted to do. So now you have two lists, the next step is to do them.
- However, if you are sad or lacking motivation taking this next step is not so simple. because you may feel as if you just can't find enjoyment anywhere you need to plan a way out. This can be done by producing a simple 'activity schedule'. Show activity schedule and discuss how it is completed. To achieve this you need to obtain a calendar. In the first month, enter simple tasks from each of your lists with the intention of doing one small enjoyable activity each day. Keep reviewing your calendar and gradually become more adventurous in your daily achievements.
- Even though you are now expending more energy, you will find that you are less lethargic. This is because you are slowly, but surely, breaking the cycle of depression.

It is important to take one small step at a time, with every success comes more success and usually enjoyment at the same time.

- Along with inactivity, you may also encounter negative thinking. When you are feeling low or unhappy, negative thoughts can beset you. In extreme cases they can make you feel out of control. These are known as “Negative Automatic Thoughts” (NATs). They can make you see others and yourself in a negative light. If this is happening to you then you need to examine your NATs and challenge them.

For example:

- > What is the evidence for and against this thought or belief?
- > What are the odds that my thoughts and beliefs are accurate (e.g. 100%, 50% 10%)?
- > Am I focussing on small details instead of the bigger picture?
- > Are my judgements based on feelings instead of facts?

In many cases people tend to be too hard on themselves; instead, challenge your NATs and attempt to move on and get support from family and friends. If you feel it would be helpful, consult your GP or T4V Practitioner. Remember; take one step at a time.