

Veteran loneliness is real, but your support system is strong

After serving your country and being surrounded by team members, returning to a civilian life can feel like no one understands what you've lived through and experienced.¹ Loneliness and social isolation can affect health. The good news is—you're not alone, and there are resources and support to help.

FEELINGS OF LONELINESS CAN HAPPEN—EVEN WHEN SURROUNDED BY OTHERS

It's common to experience feelings of loneliness, even when surrounded by friends, family and other veterans. Loneliness is a feeling of sadness or distress about being by ourselves or feeling disconnected from the world around us.

Compared to typical civilian loneliness, military-related loneliness has been found to be different—defined by feeling “alien and homeless in a civilian world,” as well as feeling misunderstood and the only one who feels a certain way.¹

THE IMPACT OF VETERAN LONELINESS

According to a study from Yale and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the primary enemy most veterans face after service is not war-related trauma, but loneliness.² In fact, loneliness affects more than 33% of adult Americans.³

Working on ways to help you feel less lonely and get more socially connected can help you decrease your risk of stroke, dementia and Alzheimer's disease.^{4,5}

SOCIAL ISOLATION CAN OCCUR WHEN YOU'RE PHYSICALLY ALONE

Social isolation happens when we're separated from other people and don't have social connections. This can occur from life situations, like transitioning from active duty to civilian status, moving to a new city for employment, or not having a family to go home to every day. It can also occur when friends and loved ones pass away.

USE YOUR DOCTOR FOR HELP

It's important to have a good relationship with your doctor to talk about challenges in your everyday life, including loneliness, anxiety, depression or PTSD.



Choose a doctor with whom you can speak easily and openly. Ask friends, relatives and veterans for recommendations.



Bring a list of questions and concerns with you, especially if you've been feeling down or stressed, and ask as many questions as you need for clarity and understanding.



Answer your doctor's questions about your physical and mental health honestly to ensure the right diagnosis and treatment.



Bring a friend or relative for support if you know you'll be discussing serious topics, like surgery or a recent diagnosis.

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Good news

There are resources to help you create and build social connections



Stay connected and engaged

- **Find veterans in your community.** Reconnect through the VFW (www.vfw.org), American Legion, DAV, Team RWB, Student Veterans of America, Wounded Warrior Project or other veterans organizations.
- **Talk about it.** Share your feelings or challenges with family members, veterans or a counselor.
- **Get out.** Use transportation services to get out and about, even if only for coffee or groceries.
- **Care for a pet.** Enjoy companionship by having a dog, cat or other pet.
- **Join a club.** Share your hobbies and interests—such as woodworking, golf, photography, painting or writing—with a group.
- **Get active.** Join a gym or participate in fitness classes, running/walking groups or other endurance sport activities you enjoyed in the military.
- **Volunteer.** Sign up for a cause that’s meaningful to you. You may be able to volunteer helping your fellow veterans through the VA Voluntary Service program (www.volunteer.va.gov).
- **Go outdoors.** Enjoy the fresh air and get active by going hiking, climbing, kayaking or just walking in nearby parks and recreation areas.



Turn to these resources for help

- **At Ease:** Offers information and strategies for veterans dealing with loneliness and social isolation. www.maketheconnection.net/symptoms/social-withdrawal
- **Connect2Affect:** Connects people to transportation services, volunteer programs, senior centers and more. www.connect2affect.org
- **Give an Hour:** Helps you connect with local mental healthcare providers who are willing to donate their time to speak with veterans like you. www.giveanhour.org
- **Local VFW:** Provides a communal location for veterans to gather and interact. To find the nearest local VFW, visit www.vfw.org
- **Make the Connection:** Provides information, treatment options, self-help tools and resources to aid veterans in recovery. www.maketheconnection.net/symptoms/social-withdrawal
- **Veterans Crisis Line:** Connects veterans and service members with qualified VA responders. [1-800-273-8255 \(TTY: 711\)](tel:1-800-273-8255), www.veteranscrisisline.net
- **Vets4Warriors Peer Support:** Connects you with a fellow veteran to talk any time, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. [1-855-838-8255 \(TTY: 711\)](tel:1-855-838-8255), www.vets4warriors.com
- **VolunteerMatch:** Helps you find volunteer opportunities nearby. www.volunteermatch.org

References

¹The Foundation for Art and Healing, <https://artandhealing.org/military-veterans-loneliness-fact-sheet/>

²Yale and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, 2017, <https://news.yale.edu/2017/09/28/suicidal-veterans-loneliness-deadliest-enemy>

³The Foundation for Art & Healing, The Unlonely Project, <https://artandhealing.org/unlonely-overview/>

⁴<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/fullarticle/482179>

⁵Valtorta NK, Kanaan M, Gilbody S, et al. Loneliness and social isolation as risk factors for coronary heart disease and stroke: systematic review and meta-analysis of longitudinal observational studies. *Heart* 2016;102:1009-1016.

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Important!

At Humana, it is important you are treated fairly.

Humana Inc. and its subsidiaries do not discriminate or exclude people because of their race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or religion. Discrimination is against the law. Humana and its subsidiaries comply with applicable Federal Civil Rights laws. If you believe that you have been discriminated against by Humana or its subsidiaries, there are ways to get help.

- You may file a complaint, also known as a grievance:
Discrimination Grievances, P.O. Box 14618, Lexington, KY 40512-4618
If you need help filing a grievance, call **1-877-320-1235** or if you use a **TTY**, call **711**.
- You can also file a civil rights complaint with the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**, Office for Civil Rights electronically through the Office for Civil Rights Complaint Portal, available at **<https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/portal/lobby.jsf>**, or by mail or phone at **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**, 200 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 509F, HHH Building, Washington, DC 20201, **1-800-368-1019, 800-537-7697 (TDD)**.

Complaint forms are available at **<https://www.hhs.gov/ocr/office/file/index.html>**.

Auxiliary aids and services, free of charge, are available to you.

1-877-320-1235 (TTY: 711)

Humana provides free auxiliary aids and services, such as qualified sign language interpreters, video remote interpretation, and written information in other formats to people with disabilities when such auxiliary aids and services are necessary to ensure an equal opportunity to participate.

Language assistance services, free of charge, are available to you.

1-877-320-1235 (TTY: 711)

Español (Spanish): Llame al número arriba indicado para recibir servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística.

繁體中文 (Chinese): 撥打上面的電話號碼即可獲得免費語言援助服務。

Tiếng Việt (Vietnamese): Xin gọi số điện thoại trên đây để nhận được các dịch vụ hỗ trợ ngôn ngữ miễn phí.

한국어 (Korean): 무료 언어 지원 서비스를 받으려면 위의 번호로 전화하십시오.

Tagalog (Tagalog – Filipino): Tawagan ang numero sa itaas upang makatanggap ng mga serbisyo ng tulong sa wika nang walang bayad.

Русский (Russian): Позвоните по номеру, указанному выше, чтобы получить бесплатные услуги перевода.

Kreyòl Ayisyen (French Creole): Rele nimewo ki pi wo la a, pou resevwa sèvis èd pou lang ki gratis.

Français (French): Appelez le numéro ci-dessus pour recevoir gratuitement des services d'aide linguistique.

Polski (Polish): Aby skorzystać z bezpłatnej pomocy językowej, proszę zadzwonić pod wyżej podany numer.

Português (Portuguese): Ligue para o número acima indicado para receber serviços linguísticos, grátis.

Italiano (Italian): Chiamare il numero sopra per ricevere servizi di assistenza linguistica gratuiti.

Deutsch (German): Wählen Sie die oben angegebene Nummer, um kostenlose sprachliche Hilfsdienstleistungen zu erhalten.

日本語 (Japanese): 無料の言語支援サービスをご要望の場合は、上記の番号までお電話ください。

فارسی (Farsi)

برای دریافت تسهیلات زبانی بصورت رایگان با شماره فوق تماس بگیرید.

Diné Bizaad (Navajo): Wóda hí béésh bee hani'í bee wolta'ígíí bich'í' hódíílnih éí bee t'áá jiik'eh saad bee áká'ánída'áwo'déé nika'adoowoł.

العربية (Arabic)

الرجاء الاتصال بالرقم المبين أعلاه للحصول على خدمات مجانية للمساعدة بلغتك