

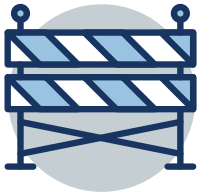


SELF-HELP EXERCISE: TALKING ABOUT YOUR COMBAT AND OPERATIONAL EXPERIENCES

INTRODUCTION

Talking about how combat and operational experiences have affected you can be very difficult. Some people avoid talking about these experiences, but having conversations with others who are in a position to help you could result in positive outcomes.

The people who care about you will want to know how you're feeling and how they can help, even though they may have a hard time relating to what you've been through. And there may be times when you feel like talking about your experiences, but people might not understand or seem open to hearing about them.



Barriers to talking about combat and operational experiences:

- ★ Others don't know what to say, and they worry that they could unintentionally make things worse.
- ★ Others don't feel like they have enough time or energy to be properly supportive.
- ★ Others feel uncomfortable talking about these topics, so they try to change the subject.
- ★ Others often want to help, but they simply don't know how.

WHAT YOU CAN DO



Be specific about what you need.

Tell your family and friends if you feel like you need space, or that you feel like talking. Keeping them clued in will help you feel less alone, and will let your family and friends know they are being helpful to you.



Not sure what you need?

Tell them that. Letting others know that it's hard for you to talk about combat and operational experiences may help them understand what you're going through. Telling them what you do and don't want to talk about will help avoid misunderstandings and resentments.



Talking about deployment experiences with younger kids and siblings: Don't avoid the issue.

Kids of all ages can be very perceptive. Even if you avoid talking to them, they have probably noticed that something has changed. Without an explanation from you, they may feel scared, confused, or isolated.

If you have kids or younger siblings, they may want to know why you seem sad or angry since you returned from the deployment. It makes sense to want to protect them from topics such as death and war, but they could probably benefit from a simple conversation about your deployment experiences in general. For very young kids, this can help them feel more secure in a situation that's out of their control and beyond their experience



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