

Managing stress and anxiety to live well

Interviewee: Before I even got out of the Air Force, I had started really struggling with anxiety attacks and sleeplessness and fears.

Interviewee1: Getting out of the military was interesting and exciting and that maybe presented some of the most anxiety I ever felt. It's scary, you know, because you have this whole life that you learned. For me, it was six years active duty in an Infantry Unit. Now I have to all of a sudden go be a civilian.

Interviewee2: I didn't really notice the anxiety until actually I got back from the academy, probably just a natural reaction, but it seemed overblown to me that like getting stuck in traffic, I was just getting so angry.

Interviewee3: Well, a lot of my issues were generalized anxiety so, I have a lot of issues with like perfectionism and just, you know, putting too much pressure on myself which is definitely from the military.

Interviewee4: I think part of it was self-induced stress and I knew I was transitioning. I knew I was getting out. "What do I want to do with my life? Oh my gosh, what's that going to be like?" The big unknown.

Interviewee5: I got really nervous going to new places and places I hadn't been. I kind of say, "You know, I don't know. I don't know why." You know, I had friend that would say, "Hey, you want to go to dinner tonight?" I said, "No, I don't want to." I'd make up an excuse, like, "No, I've got homework," but really, I was kind of like, "Oh, I'm afraid if I go, I'm going to have an anxiety attack."

Interviewee6: With the anxiety, your heart races. I mean it goes just insanely fast. You sweat. You get paranoid. You keep looking over your shoulder. Insomnia; you don't sleep. Your body is so tired especially after these anxiety and panic attacks, it really feels like you ran a marathon, but you didn't.

Interviewee: I ultimately felt that my anxiety was kind of overwhelming and it was less than I needed to manage it because it was taking all of my energy to manage it. It was taking up my whole day.

Interviewee7: I had a panic attack; a full-on panic attack and I still don't know what I was doing at that time. I called one of my friends and said, "You have to drive me because I can't even drive." And that was my first time going to the VA. They diagnosed it as a panic attack and my treatment started from that point.

Interviewee5: I missed two weeks of school. I missed finals, you know, which the school let me make up later on, but after that, I said, "You know what, I really needed to get help for this." So, I went to the VA.

Interviewee4: I got referred to see a couple of Mental Health Professionals and we talked and three months after getting out, I felt more like myself than I had in years before.



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Interviewee5: I started out bi-weekly meeting with a counselor, just I mean it almost felt like we just had a casual conversation. I felt really comfortable while speaking to the counselor that I was with and it really helped out a lot.

Interviewee: One of the things that was really crucial to me was remembering that I did have a support system. Knowing that I had the capacity to reach out and ask for help.

Interviewee5: I talked to my family who I'm really close with about it and, you know, I did have I guess my own little support channel outside of the military. I wanted to do better for myself.

Interviewee7: My wife pushes me. Having that person in my relationship that pushes me, you know, along with the therapy, that's helped me out and that's what I think what's been helping me out the most, you know having that drive to get better.

Interviewee3: I definitely noticed an improvement and a difference. I would say that especially now after seeking treatment, I've been doing much better at trying to manage my symptoms and cope with them as they happen or even prevent them.

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