

JUST THE FACTS:

Beating Isolation

Connecting with others can help you:

- Improve your mood.
- Decrease your boredom.
- Help your friends and loved ones feel good.
- Lower your chances of harmful coping (such as heavy drinking).
- Find meaning in what happened during your deployment.
- Understand and reduce painful deployment memories and feelings.
- Assist friends and family to better appreciate your deployment experiences.
- Remember: isolation can *increase* upsetting thoughts and feelings.

Ways to overcome isolation:

- Make plans to hang out with others and stick to the plan. For example:
 - Make at least 1 phone call a day, even if it's just 5 minutes.
 - Commit to leaving the house for at least 30 minutes a day and go somewhere around other people like a park or maybe the mall, or where people are engaging in social activities.
- Talk with people you trust so you don't feel alone. For example, you can talk about:
 - What happened during your service (the actual events that occurred).
 - Your thoughts and feelings about what happened.
 - How you're coping, including positive coping (exercising more), and harmful coping. (using recreational drugs, sleeping too much).
 - How you've grown or changed for the better.
 - Practical decisions such as how to look for a job or how to quit smoking.
 - Reactions you might be having that concern you (nightmares, heart pounding, becoming startled by loud noises, being irritable often).
- Get involved in your community. You can:
 - **Work out:** join an athletic event; take a class at a local gym or community center; try a new sport or physical activity.
 - **Start a hobby:** find a group nearby with similar interests, whether it's music, motorcycles, reading, basketball, cooking, or golf.

after deployment

- ***Participate in church, synagogue, mosque or temple:*** joining a place of worship can help you start new relationships and give you spiritual direction.
- ***Join a professional group or a neighborhood organization:*** participate in a book club at your local library or bookstore.
- ***Take a class:*** learn an instrument, take an art class, or join a community education course to meet people with similar interests.
- ***Join a veteran's organization, even while you're active duty:*** groups for veterans (such as VA's, Vet Centers, and Veterans of Foreign Wars) can be a comfortable, safe place to talk and experience a sense of belonging.
- ***Volunteer for community service projects:*** join a park cleanup detail or get involved in activities at your local hospital.
- ***Join a cause:*** get together with a group of people working toward a goal you believe in, such as an election or the protection of a natural area.
- **Be a good neighbor:** help a neighbor with a garden or home maintenance project; invite a neighbor over for coffee.