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.
- 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.