

## Overwhelmed by the holiday season?

Free, anonymous mental health self-assessments available for military service members and their families at [www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org](http://www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org) and 1-877-877-3647

It's supposed to be "the Most Wonderful Time of the Year." However, for many military families the holiday season can be stressful, especially when a loved one is away.

Dealing with deployment can be difficult during the holidays. When everyone else seems to be talking about giving thanks and counting blessings, many military family members end up feeling lonely, angry and sad. While they are proud of their loved one for serving the country, they also deal with unique financial and emotional challenges. Often, the pressure to have the "perfect" holiday can aggravate anxiety and cause stress.

This holiday season, take advantage of the free, anonymous, online or telephone mental health self-assessments available year-round for military personnel and their families. The self-assessment contains a series of questions that, when linked together, help create a picture of how an individual is feeling and whether they could benefit from talking to a health professional. Once the self-assessment is completed, the individual receives information on how to get help including services provided through the Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs. The program, funded by the DoD, is available to families in all branches, including the National Guard and Reserve.

This holiday season, honor your family by taking stock of your emotions and seeking help if life is especially stressful. The self-assessment is the first step to helping those you love. To access the anonymous program, visit [www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org](http://www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org) or call 877-877-3647.

Tips for dealing with holiday stress and anxiety:

- ✓ **Keep holiday expectations real:** balancing the demands of the holiday season -shopping, parties and family obligations- can be very stressful. Create a realistic budget and try not to sweat the small stuff.
- ✓ **Use alcohol moderately:** Alcohol is a depressant. Excessive drinking can increase your feelings of sadness.

- ✓ **Eat right and nurture your body:** A balanced diet, moderate exercise and rest can help you to reduce stress and enjoy life.
- ✓ **Learn to identify your moods:** The holiday blues are a common response to a stressful season. However, if feelings of hopelessness and anxiety persist for longer than two weeks and interfere with your normal, daily routine, seek professional help.
- ✓ **Set a healthy holiday budget:** Overspending during the season can lead to stress and anxiety. Spend wisely and remember it is the thought that counts.

### **About the Military Pathways™**

Military Pathways gives service personnel and their families the opportunity to learn more about mental health and alcohol use through anonymous self-assessments offered online, via telephone, and through special events held at installations. The program is designed to help individuals identify their own symptoms and access assistance before a problem becomes serious. The self-assessments address PTSD, depression, generalized anxiety disorder, alcohol use, and bipolar disorder. After completing a self-assessment, individuals receive referral information including Tricare, Military OneSource and Veterans Affairs. The program is run by the nonprofit Screening for Mental Health® and is fully funded by Force Health Protection and Readiness, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Health Affairs. To take a free, anonymous self-assessment, visit [www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org](http://www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org) or call 1-877-877-3647.