

## October is National Depression Health Awareness Month

Depression can affect an Airman anywhere and at any time, regardless of rank or gender. Depressive disorders are among the most commonly diagnosed mental health issues, with Major Depressive Disorder affecting more than six percent of the U.S. adult population.<sup>1</sup> Nearly one in four active duty service members show signs of a mental health condition, which includes depression, post-traumatic stress, and traumatic brain injury. Depression rates are five times higher within the military community than within the civilian population.<sup>2</sup> There are several signs that may indicate you or someone you know is suffering from depression, such as feelings of hopelessness or helplessness, social isolation, or anxiety. If these signs apply to you or someone you know, consistently, over a two-week timeframe, encourage them to reach out for help. Unlike physical wounds, depression affects moods, thoughts, and behaviors, and often remains invisible to other Airmen, friends, and family.

## Available Treatment for Depression

Depression is one of the most common mental health conditions, and it is also highly treatable. There are many effective treatment options available to Airmen. Potential depression treatment options can involve a combination of therapy, counseling, medication, or each can be effective if applied separately. It is important that Airmen work with their mental health providers to ensure they understand the available treatment options and determine which will work best for their individual needs. To successfully support Airmen and their families coping with invisible wounds, Air Force leadership must provide an expected environment of understanding, trust, and open discourse.

### Therapy:

This method is proven to be highly effective for people with depressive disorders. There are many different approaches within this treatment, which are all centered around helping an individual learn new ways of thinking, practice positive behaviors, and take active steps to cope with symptoms.

### Counseling:

Involves teaching individuals about their depression, how to treat it, and how to recognize signs of relapse. Family psychoeducation is also helpful for family members who want to understand what their loved one is experiencing. This method also includes group counseling, which can be therapeutic to an individual.

### Medication:

Antidepressant medications work in different ways to affect the chemicals in the brain that may be associated with being depressed. They may require 2-4 weeks to take effect and up to 12 weeks to reach full effect. Most individuals will need to work with their doctor to find what best supports their individual needs.

## Depression Health Awareness Resources

If you know of a fellow Airman experiencing depression, encourage them to seek help along their road to recovery by educating them about some of the available treatment options and resources below:

**VA Depression Screener:** 11 October is National Depression Screening Day. If you have been experiencing symptoms of depression, use this resource and get the help you need.

**Military OneSource:** Provides non-medical counseling services online, via telephone, or in-person, as well as access to other mental health resources.

**Military Pathways:** Provides free, anonymous mental health and alcohol self-assessments for family members and service personnel in all branches, including the National Guard and Reserve.

<sup>1</sup> Source: AF.mil. (2017). Retrieved from: <https://www.schriever.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/1332535/fight-depression-search-for-signs/>

<sup>2</sup> Source: National Alliance on Mental Illness. JAMA Psychiatry. Retrieved from: <https://www.nami.org/Find-Support/Veterans-and-Active-Duty>

## Domestic Violence Prevention



Domestic Violence or Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is abuse or aggression that occurs between two people that are in a close relationship.

### Prevention Methods:

- Engage influential adults and peers
- Create protective environments
- Support survivors
- Teach safe and happy relationship skills

### Available Resources:

- **National Domestic Violence Hotline:** 1-800-799-7233
- **Family Advocacy Program:** Programs are available to stop abuse before it starts

## Mental Health Awareness Week



Mental Health Awareness Week takes place 7-13 October. During this week, various events are held across the country to educate and increase mental health awareness.

Find local [events](#) near you.