

CHANGES IN BEHAVIOR, PERSONALITY OR MOOD Following Concussion/Mild Traumatic Brain Injury

Traumatic Brain Injury Center of Excellence



PATIENTS

JUST NOT FEELING LIKE YOURSELF? EASILY IRRITATED OR ON EDGE? FEELING OVERWHELMED, ANXIOUS, SAD OR DEPRESSED?

A mild traumatic brain injury (also known as a concussion) may result in changes to your behavior, mood or personality. Other symptoms you may be experiencing—including pain, poor sleep quality and fatigue—could be aggravating these changes. You or your loved one may not understand why this is happening or know what to do. Try these tips to cope with your symptoms.

- **Keep an eye on your mood.** If you are having negative thoughts and feelings, identify the triggers and avoid them if possible or learn to use coping strategies.
- **Take a deep breath.** Breathing exercises have been found to decrease the body's reaction to stress.
- **Take care of yourself.** Eat a balanced diet. Try to exercise daily. Get at least seven hours of sleep on a regular basis.
- **Take a break.** If you are in a situation that upsets you, walk away and take a few minutes to calm down. Try to approach the situation with a clearer mind.
- **Manage stress.** Make time to do something you enjoy, especially when you feel angry, frustrated or upset. Listen to some of your favorite music, visit with a friend, exercise or work on a hobby.
- **Think before you act.** Try to teach yourself to stop and think before you say or do something that might be inappropriate.
- **Don't rush.** Give yourself plenty of time to complete tasks. Try doing one thing at a time to prevent frustration and feeling overwhelmed.
- **Ask for help.** Don't be afraid to turn to friends, family or other trusted people for support during your recovery. Use resources available to you.
- **Think positively.** Recovery is a process. Remember that over time your injuries and symptoms will continue to improve.

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WHEN SHOULD I SEEK MORE HELP?

Contact your health care provider or someone you trust if you are having the following symptoms longer than two weeks, or if they affect your daily functioning:

- Persistent sad, anxious or “empty” mood
- Feelings of hopelessness or pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness or helplessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies or activities
- Restlessness or irritability
- Decreased energy, fatigue or being “slowed down”
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions
- Difficulty sleeping, early-morning awakening or oversleeping
- Appetite and/or weight changes

CRISIS RESOURCES

Tell someone if you are thinking about killing or hurting yourself. To get help, reach out to your spouse, friend, fellow service member, health care provider, or call 911.

Contact the Military/Veterans Crisis Line: Dial 988 then press 1, send a text to 838255, or chat online at [veteranscrisisline.net](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net).

Contact Military OneSource: Call 800-342-9647 or visit [MilitaryOneSource.mil](https://www.MilitaryOneSource.mil).

Scan the code below to access VA apps



Scan the code below to access Military Health System apps



The DOD and VA provide several resources designed to reduce stress and teach new skills.

1. **Breathe2Relax**: Provides instructions on diaphragmatic “belly” breathing, which helps reduce anxiety and lower stress.
2. **Tactical Breather**: Provides guided breathing instruction to gain control over heart rate, emotions and concentration during stressful situations.
3. **Virtual Hope Box**: Contains simple tools to help users with coping, relaxation, distraction, and positive thinking using personalized audio, video, pictures, games, mindfulness exercises, activity planning, inspirational quotes and coping statements.
4. **Anger and Irritability Management Skills**: Track, address and manage anger better.
5. **Mindfulness Coach**: Learn mindfulness to reduce stress.

 **Remember to contact your health care provider about any concerns you have about changes in your behavior, personality or mood.**