BE PREPARED

Helping you to cope better on Remembrance day and with anniversaries



OpCOURAGE

The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service

Being prepared can help you cope

Anniversary and Remembrance Day Reactions - What are they?

If you have experienced a Traumatic Incident specific dates may act as a trigger for memories. This can be especially true for dates like remembrance day where increased media attention can make us more aware of past events and more hypervigilant to triggers. This can be a really common response and there is not one way to respond to anniversary or date reminders. Some responses you may experience are:

- Reliving the event
- Avoidance or isolating yourself
- Experiencing overwhelming or distressing emotions
- Increased Hypervigilance
- Increased feelings of loss or grief including sadness, anger, or guilt.

What can you do?

Losing people who are important to us is painful and it is important to allow ourselves time to feel all of the emotions that come with this. Offering ourselves some care and respite, not being too hard on ourselves, and remembering these feelings do pass can all be important. There are also some strategies which might help, and these might reduce the likelihood of us feeling overwhelmed.

Have a plan.

It can be important to plan ahead so that on remembrance day or an anniversary date you know what you are doing beforehand. This can be:

- Choosing an activity that helps you to feel more positive or arranging to spend time with your friends or family.
- If you do want to spend time by yourself plan your day to give yourself a break from thinking about the event.
- Participate in an act of remembrance- this might be on the day, or it might be better for you to do this at another time that is less over-whelming. There is no right or wrong way to remember those we have lost. What's important is what is meaningful for you.

Practice Self-Care and Coping Skills

Practicing coping skills and making healthy life decisions, such as eating well, exercising regularly and practicing good sleep hygiene can really help to manage distressing feelings. If you notice that you are becoming distressed or feeling overwhelmed using Coping Skills can help to ef-fectively manage and reduce these sensations. (A selection of coping skills can be found on the next page)

Limit time Watching the Media

It can be helpful to either spend less time engaging with media, either social media or news coverage, or set yourself limits to the amount of time that you are spending on these sources and give yourself breaks to engage in alternative activities.

Talk to Others

It can be helpful to talk to and connect with other people, this can be friends, loved ones, spiritual or religious support, or services that you are involved with. If you feel comfortable to do so, spend time with friends or family or speak to them about the day and discuss what support would be helpful for you at this time.

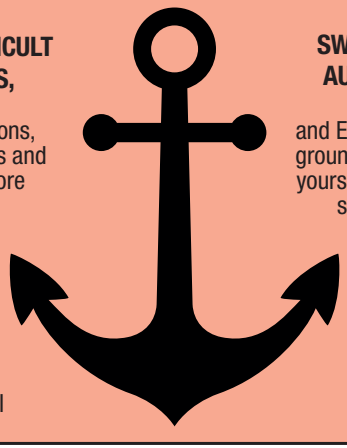
STOP SKILL

S STOP	Do not just react. Stop! Freeze! Do not move a muscle! Your emotions may try to make you act without thinking. Stay in control!
T TAKE A STEP BACK	Take a step back from the situation. Take a break. Let go. Take a deep breath. Do not let your feelings make you act impulsively.
O OBSERVE	Notice what is going on inside and outside you. What is the situation? What are your thoughts and feelings? What are others saying or doing?
P PROCEED MINDFULLY	Act with awareness. In deciding what to do, consider your thoughts and feelings, the situation, and other people's thoughts and feelings. Think about your goals. Which actions will make it better or worse?

SENSORY GROUNDING

5 SEE	Look around and identify 5 things you can see. An example could be an ornament or a rug. Think about how it looks, does it shine, what colour is it?
4 TOUCH	Focus on four things that you can feel. It may be the warmth of a radiator or the smooth surface of a mug. The key is to state the things you feel either out loud or in your head.
3 HEAR	Name three things you can hear at this moment. Traffic noises, birds singing, leaves rustling. Again state the things you can hear out loud or deliberately in your head.
2 SMELL	Notice two things you can smell right now, coffee or citric washing up liquid. If you can't then imagine smelling two of your favourite smells, freshly cut grass or fresh baked bread.
1 TASTE	Focus on one thing you can taste. Perhaps toothpaste or a recent drink. Again, if you can't, then imagine a taste of something you really like, maybe something sweet.

DROPPING ANCHOR



HANDLE DIFFICULT THOUGHTS,

feelings, emotions, memories, urges and sensations more

SWITCH OFF AUTOPILOT

and Engage in life; ground and steady yourself in difficult situations

FOCUS YOUR ATTENTION

on the task or activity you are doing; develop more self-control

DISRUPT RUMINATION

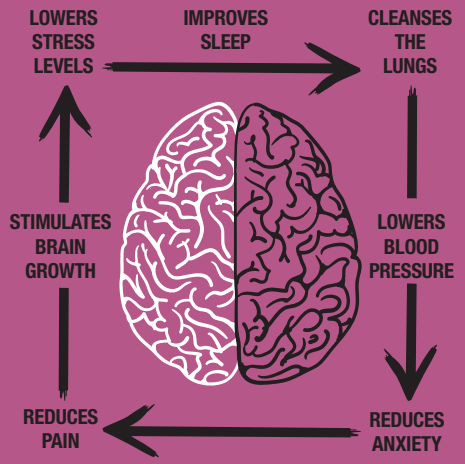
Obsessing and worrying

DROP ANCHOR IN THE MIDDLE OF ANY KIND OF EMOTIONAL 'STORM':

Flashbacks, Panic Attacks, Chronic Pain

To support and hold you steady, so you don't get swept away, allowing time for the storm to pass. To bring your focus back to what's important to you right here and now.

BOX BREATHING



THE TECHNIQUE

Box Breathing is a technique where you take slow, deep breaths while counting to four while you breathe in, hold for four, breathe out for four, hold for four.

Scan the QR to watch the video

Please don't struggle alone when you don't have to.

Call or email our service if you would like to talk or receive some support: OpCourage North England:

opcouragenorth@cntw.nhs.uk

0300 373 3332

SUPPORTED BY

OpCOURAGE

The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service

There are more resources specifically to help at this time of year via the links below.

COMBAT STRESS

FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH

www.combatstress.org.uk

WALKING WITH THE WOUNDED

Supporting Those Who Served

www.walkingwiththewounded.org.uk

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