

DEBUNKING THE MYTHS



PUT YOUR MIND



Recent research with veterans has shown that there are a number of myths about veterans' mental health. Lets look at the real facts.

Myth: There is no connection between physical and mental health.

Fact: The relationship between physical and mental health is real. People with chronic mental health problems often suffer from poor physical health, while many mental health problems can be linked to an individual's response to a physical illness.

Myth: PTSD is the most significant mental health problem of veterans.

Fact: While PTSD has received a lot of attention over the last decade, alcohol and drug related problems, along with depression and anxiety, also have a significant impact on veterans, their families and the wider community. Many veterans experience more than one mental health problem at any given time.

Myth: All the mental health problems of veterans develop because of their military experience.

Fact: Mental health problems of some veterans are directly influenced by their military experience. Veterans are also subject to all the same varied influences that affect others.

Myth: People with mental health problems are violent and dangerous.

Fact: Overall, people with mental health problems are no more violent than others.

Myth: People with mental health problems are "crazy".

Fact: Labelling people with mental health problems as "crazy" or "psycho" promotes an unhelpful and misleading stereotype and stigma. Such words belittle and offend people with mental health problems. Those affected need help and support, not negative labels and discrimination.

Myth: Mental health problems are caused by personal weakness.

Fact: Mental health problems are not character flaws. It has nothing to do with being weak or lacking will-power. Although people with mental health problems can play a big part in their own recovery, they did not choose to become unwell, they are not lazy and they cannot just "snap out of it."



Myth: People with mental health problems are malingers and unreliable.

Fact: Many individuals with mental health problems can have difficulty coping with day to day living. Just as the symptoms of a physical health problem may affect the ability to do things, so may the symptoms of a mental health problem. This does not make someone a malingers or an unreliable person.

Myth: People with mental health problems never get better.

Fact: With the right kind of help, most people do recover and lead healthy, productive, and satisfying lives.

Myth: 'Real men' don't talk about their problems or ask for help – counselling is for wimps.

Fact: Men and women of all ages and all walks of life seek effective help from a variety of mental health professionals; including counsellors, psychologists and psychiatrists. Finding and accepting help are signs of coping and of preventing situations getting worse.

Myth: Alcohol works better than medication.

Fact: People with mental health problems need to be extremely careful with alcohol and stay within the low risk guidelines (see DVA's 'The Right Mix: Your Health and Alcohol'). The fact is, alcohol may make problems with mood and sleep worse. Also, it may interact in harmful ways with medication prescribed for mental health problems.

Where to go for more information or help

- Talk to your doctor or health professional
- Call VVCS – Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service about counselling and their group programs on **1800 011 046**
- For more information call DVA on **133 254**
- Visit **www.dva.gov.au**

More information is also available at:

www.therightmix.gov.au

www.bluepages.anu.edu.au

www.beyondblue.org.au