



As public anniversaries approach, that commemorate the service of the men and women of our Armed Forces and the sacrifices they have made, distressing memories may surface if you or a loved one has been in the military. These memories may be triggered by the media coverage of historical war events and reporting of community commemoration services or by family and friends wanting to discuss your military service.

At this time of year you may be bothered by intrusive thoughts relating to your traumatic service experiences that just pops into your head, while at work or with family and friends. This may impact on your job performance and place strains on your relationships. Other psychological symptoms you may also experience include irritability, lethargy, lack of concentration, trouble sleeping, withdrawing from others and emotional numbing. If you suffer from service related psychological conditions, such as post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), you may find that your symptoms become worse at this time of year or near the anniversary of your traumatic experience. It is important to remember this sort of reaction is normal and there are steps to take to help you manage:

1. Try not to completely ignore public commemoration days instead plan ahead. Perhaps spend time with supportive mates who have similar experiences of what you have been through. Some people also find it helpful to plan other activities, as well on anniversary days, in order to occupy their time besides thinking about their traumatic event. A psychologist can be a helpful person to discuss planning such events and dealing with the emotions that may surface.
2. Take time out for yourself. Acknowledge this will be a difficult time for yourself, ensure you get adequate sleep and eat healthily. Avoid using alcohol or other substances to numb your experiences.

3. To cope with panic and anxiety practice breathing and relaxation exercises. You can also seek help from a psychologist to teach you effective relaxation techniques as this may be difficult to master on your own if you are overly stressed.
  
4. Let your family and close friends know what is going on for you. Even though you may feel they can't possibly understand what you have been through they may be able to offer you extra support. If you have difficulty in talking to people close to you may want to consider talking to a psychologist with experience in trauma counselling.

Finally if your stress response to the anniversary persists or overwhelms you it is advisable to seek professional help by talking to your doctor and a trained counsellor. Staff at Links Psychology are available to provide you with professional counselling services in your time of need.

Appointments can be made by ringing the office on 9354 5465. DVA treatment card holders and clients with service related psychological conditions accepted under the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 (SRCA)* or the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 (MRCA)* are welcome as are all clients with traumatic anniversary reactions. In addition Medicare Rebateable Psychological services are available if you have a referral from your GP.