KEARNEY COUNTY
HEALTH SERVICES
Senior Life Solutions

MORE VETERANS NEED MENTAL HEALTH CARE, AND GROUP THERAPY CAN HELP



Veterans Day is a time to honor the service and sacrifice of the people who have served our country. It can also be a meaningful time to recognize the emotional health needs of older adult veterans and the families who care about them.

Many older adult veterans have spent much of their lives being dependable, disciplined, and focused on others. They may have built careers, raised families, supported communities, and carried memories from military service into each new stage of life. As they age, new experiences such as retirement, grief, chronic health concerns, reduced independence, isolation, or changes in daily routines can affect emotional well-being.

Mental health care can help older adult veterans better understand these changes, find healthy ways to cope, and feel more connected to others. For some, support may begin after a major loss or medical diagnosis. For others, it may begin when family members notice changes in mood, sleep, appetite, energy, motivation, or interest in daily activities.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs notes that older veterans may face concerns such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, substance use, grief, dementia, caregiving stress, and loneliness. The VA also encourages older veterans and their loved ones to seek care when emotional or behavioral health concerns affect daily life.

See the next page for more.

How Mental Health Care Can Help

Mental health care gives older adult veterans a place to talk openly, learn coping skills, and receive support from trained professionals. Depending on the person's needs, care may include therapy, psychiatric evaluation, medication management, education, and connection to additional resources.

Therapy can help older adults identify patterns in mood, thoughts, relationships, and routines. It can also help them practice skills for managing grief, stress, worry, loneliness, anger, sleep changes, and major life transitions. When medication may be appropriate, psychiatric evaluation and medication management can help determine what support may fit the person's symptoms, medical history, and care needs.

Mental health care can also support families. Loved ones often want to help, yet may feel unsure about what to say or when to seek additional support. Education and guidance from mental health professionals can help families better understand what their loved one is experiencing and how to respond with patience and care.

The Value of Group Therapy

Group therapy can be especially helpful for older adults, including veterans, because it combines professional support with connection to peers. In a group setting, participants can hear from others who may be facing similar concerns, such as grief, health changes, loneliness, family stress, or changes in independence.

The American Psychological Association explains that group therapy can help people recognize they are experiencing common human struggles, receive support from peers, practice new skills, and learn from others' perspectives.

For older adult veterans, group therapy may offer a sense of shared understanding. Veterans may be used to functioning as part of a team, relying on others, and contributing to a common purpose. A therapy group can provide structure, routine, and connection in a supportive environment.

Group therapy also gives participants the chance to practice communication. They can share as much as they feel ready to share, listen to others, and build confidence in expressing their own needs. Over time, this may help reduce isolation and support stronger relationships outside of the group.

Social connection is especially important in later life. The National Institute on Aging reports that social isolation and loneliness are linked with higher risks for several physical and mental health concerns, including depression, anxiety, heart disease, and cognitive decline.

A regular therapy group can help older adults build a consistent source of connection. That structure may be especially valuable for someone who lives alone, has recently lost a spouse, has stopped driving, has retired, or has become less involved in community activities.

If an older adult or veteran in your life may need extra support, remind them that mental health care is health care. Support is available for depression, anxiety, grief, stress, isolation, and other emotional or behavioral health concerns. Seeking care is brave, and it's a part of protecting overall well-being.

WE CAN HELP.

Our hospital-based outpatient program is designed to meet the unique needs of older adults experiencing depression and/or anxiety related to life changes that are often associated with aging or a chronic diagnosis. Anyone can make a referral to our program, including self-referrals, provider referrals, or community consultations.

Call us today at (308) 832-3400, Option #4