

Veteran Voices SITREP - Episode #32 - Thriving Through the Holidays

[Chris Faust]

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[Tom Faust]

These online communities and forums can also be a great way to connect with fellow veterans and share your experiences and find support and build camaraderie. Welcome to Veteran Voices SITREP with your hosts, Tom and Chris Faust. Welcome to Veteran Voices SITREP.

I am your co-host, Tom Faust. I'm here with my son, Chris, and as the holiday season is upon us, we're focusing on a topic that hits close to home for many veterans, and that is navigating the holidays while managing things like PTSD and other unique challenges that come with transitioning back to civilian life.

[Chris Faust]

Yeah, the holidays can be a, you know, joyous and happy time, but they can also bring up a mix of emotions for veterans, feelings of isolation, anxiety, you know, even grief can surface for one reason or another, and that makes it tough to fully enjoy the festivities. And that's why in this episode, we're diving into just some practical strategies for self-care, you know, building support network and recognizing when to reach out for help.

[Tom Faust]

Yeah, when the holiday season gets overwhelming, having a personal safe space is something that can really make a world of difference. You know, picture, like, a place in your home where you can escape the holiday hustle and bustle if there's other things going on that's just overwhelming for you. It's your own little, your own little area that you can feel grounded in that peace, and that could be your safe space.

It might be just a corner of the living room or maybe a dedicated room that you have just for this purpose, your little man cave in the basement or something, right? Yeah. But someplace that's comfortable where you can unwind and recharge.

[Chris Faust]

Yeah, so when creating your safe space, you want to think about what brings you comfort, you know, whether it's, you know, soft lighting, calming decorations, cozy textures, you know, things like that can make a big difference. You know, maybe even like a weighted blanket or,

you know, aromatherapy diffusers, you know, different calming scents, you know, even a playlist of soothing music to, you know, make the space your own.

[Tom Faust]

And don't forget to make it personalized, you know, surround yourself with things that are meaningful to you, photos of people you love, artwork, mementos that bring you joy. The goal is to make it a place that's uniquely yours and evokes feelings of peace and calm. And one really crucial tip would be to make it a technology-free zone.

Don't have these constant notifications and things popping up that distract you and might actually cause extra anxiety. Social media can do that, news blurbs can do that, all that kind of stuff. So try and unplug from those and take a break from the digital world.

[Chris Faust]

It can do wonders for your mental wellbeing because there's a lot of stuff out there, whether it's, you know, intentional or unintentional that can cause you to, you know, get a little more anxious or irritated at, you know, what's happening in the world, you know, just unplug from that, get away from it and just be you. Yeah. And then just make sure that you commit to creating your safe space.

You know, it's going to be an investment in your wellbeing and, you know, heck, even if you want to, you know, if you create something and it works for you, even we'd love to see it, you know, on any sort of social media or anything like that, you know, share photos of your safe haven or just, you know, something you made that brings you joy and you can use hashtag veteran voices and, you know, that'll let us be able to see it too. Sure.

[Tom Faust]

And maybe another hashtag holiday health so that any of these can be grouped together, that they're related to the holidays. And then when stress and anxiety creep in, having a healthy coping mechanism in your toolkit is essential. There's a lot of options you can explore.

And we've talked about a bunch of this in previous episodes in our previous series that we just did. But, you know, mindful movement can be incredibly grounding, things like yoga and Tai Chi or even just going out for a walk in nature. If you have a place you can just kind of wander around and get back to nature, have a lot of the green and things to look at.

If you have that available, that'd be something that can help keep you calm. And these can help connect with your body and help you release tension.

[Chris Faust]

We've also talked about it a couple of times too, but creative expression can also be a really powerful outlet for anything you're feeling, whether it's, you know, journaling what you're

feeling or what you're going through to, you know, get that out there and not bottle it up. Painting, you know, listening to certain music, you know, singing to certain music, you know, or even writing poetry can help you process your emotions and experiences. And then, you know, as my dad said before, you don't want to underestimate the calming effect of nature, you know, gardening, you know, just simply sitting under a tree even can do wonders for your mind and soul.

[Tom Faust]

And deep breathing exercises and meditation can really help calm you. So, you know, think about how these can help manage your stress and anxiety by just taking in these deep breaths and letting out slowly and just trying to relax in your mind, eyes closed, trying to block out the rest of the world if you need to. There are a lot of free guided meditations and breathing exercises available online and through apps that you can download to your phone.

Even just taking a few minutes a day to focus on your breath can have a significant impact on your overall well-being.

[Chris Faust]

Yeah, and then you just want to, you know, try and challenge yourself during this holiday season to try a new coping mechanism. You know, you might be surprised at how much it helps and you didn't even realize it, which also kind of goes along the lines with of, you know, building a support network as, you know, what could be a coping mechanism. So you don't have to go through any of these feelings or anything alone.

You can connect with others who understand your experiences and what you're going through and that can make a world of difference, even if they don't have the exact answers for you, you know, just bouncing it off of somebody that, you know, might've gone through it or something similar can really help. And there's also incredible organizations out there that are dedicated to supporting veterans for these things.

[Tom Faust]

Yeah. Yeah. Organizations like the Wounded Warrior Project, the VFW, Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion.

These are just a few examples. There are plenty more. And they offer a range of services, including support groups where you can connect with other veterans who are going through similar experiences, peer-to-peer mentoring, a wealth of resources and topics on mental health, career transition, and education.

These online communities and forums can also be a great way to connect with fellow veterans and share your experiences and find support and build camaraderie.

[Chris Faust]

And then don't forget about your family and friends. Indeed. Open communication is going to be key to any of these things.

Let them know what you're going through and maybe how they can support you if you know what they can do or something like that. They might not always know exactly what you're, they might know that you're going through something because you can kind of get that feeling, but they might not know exactly what it is. So, let them know, ask them what they can do, tell them how they can support you, but you want to make sure you set boundaries.

Set boundaries and expressing your needs that way can strengthen those relationships and create a more, a much more supportive environment where they're not trying to force these things on you. Just set those boundaries, take what you can and just be like, hey, open communication. That's huge key in just about anything.

[Tom Faust]

And your loved ones want to support you, but they very likely don't know how. So, telling them what they can do or what they shouldn't do would be very important in that case. So, you know, in the holiday season, reach out to your support network, whether it's the veteran organizations, an online community, your loved ones, having a connection is the key to thriving.

So, remember that you're not alone. There are people who can help you, people who care and that want to support you.

[Chris Faust]

And then kind of tying it all into, you have these things that you can do, but if there's, if everything you're trying just doesn't seem to be working, you know, you want to, you know, make sure you can kind of recognize and respond to things. So, you know, it's important to remember that it's okay to be not okay. You know, if you or someone you know is struggling with, you know, any sort of mental health crisis, you know, at any time during the holiday season, you know, just, you know, please know that help is available.

[Tom Faust]

And if you're experiencing any thoughts of self-harm, suicide, please reach out immediately. There's the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline available 24-7. You can do that by calling or texting 988.

It's that simple. And you can also contact the crisis text line by texting home to 741-741. These services provide confidential support and trained counselors who can help you navigate through a crisis.

And additionally, there's the veteran crisis line, which is dedicated to supporting veterans and

their families. And you can reach them at 800-273-8255 and then just press one.

[Chris Faust]

And then, you know, as always, you know, in case of any sort of emergencies, don't hesitate to call 911.

[Tom Faust]

And just remember, there's no shame in asking for support. Your life is valuable. There's people that care about you and want to help, want you to be there with them.

So don't sell yourself short.

[Chris Faust]

And then kind of as we wrap up today's episode, you know, just, you know, remember the key takeaways, you know, create that safe space, explore your healthy coping mechanisms, lean on your support network, know that there is help out there. There are people who care about you.

[Tom Faust]

And we know that the holiday season can be challenging for many people, but it can also be a time of healing and connection. You just have to let it be that. We believe in your strength and resilience.

And we, you know, we thank you for tuning in to our podcast. And we're just honored to have you as part of the journey.

[Chris Faust]

Yeah, don't forget to, you know, share your experiences. But, you know, as always, we appreciate any time that you take to watch us, you know, watch these podcasts, you know, click like, subscribe, pass the word out, you know, just hand off to somebody who might need something because you never know what anybody's going through. And it could help them.

So please, you know, spread the word, share us, we're happy to, happy to do these things for you.

[Tom Faust]

Yeah, yeah, that reminds me of, I have a t-shirt from the Valhalla project, where it says be kind, because everyone you meet is struggling with something that you know nothing about. And it's always good to think about that we're all going through different struggles. So you're not alone in this.

And again, like Chris said, thanks for listening. We appreciate you being here. And hope you

come back and listen to future episodes.

[Chris Faust]

Yep. We'll see you. Catch you next time.

[Tom Faust]

Yep. All right. Bye.