

MST Coping Mechanisms

We understand that not everyone is ready to talk about what happened. For that we wanted to make sure they got some assistance and support as well.

Here we are going to talk about some simple things you can do at home or anywhere for that matter (in most cases) that will help you handle the anxiety, flashbacks and any other common MST related symptoms. If you have any questions, recommendations or requests for mechanisms for a specific symptom you are experiencing please do not hesitate to send us an email or call: Info@BenefitingVeterans.com or www.militarysexualtrauma.org

I know not all of these will work for everyone as so many of us are at different stages in our coping with this. Please, if you feel you are going to hurt yourself or your loved ones, seek help from a professional or call 9-1-1 to get immediate assistance.

Insomnia

This is something we have had a lot of success with. It is a habit to get into before bed. Watch TV or listen to the radio or your MP3 player. This habit makes it so there is a specific theme song or noise that will trick your brain into going into sleep mode. It will also help you not let your brain run away with you while you're trying to get to sleep.

Pick a channel, create a play list or download or buy the DVD of your favorite show and every night as you're getting dressed or brushing your teeth turn it on. After a week (although this is different for everyone) you will notice yourself getting tired and as time goes on this pattern of behavior will help you sleep.

We also recommend a natural herbal supplement of Valerian Root. This is available at Amazon or at any Target or Wal-Mart. It is about \$6 for 2 months supply. Take two and it helps for anxiety, take three and you sleep well. There are no reported side effects but we recommend you speak to your doctor or pharmacist if you are on any other medications.

Anxiety

Writing, drawing, generally expressing your feelings do two things; first, it helps you vent and secondly, eventually as those expressions come out you will see them. Visualize them then it helps you to eventually manage them. For example, if you write in a journal, and you can do this with art as well, document a feeling that day. "I am sad." Dec. 8. Then maybe sometime later after writing that you write something you notice, "I am sad because..." or "_____ made me sad." Seeing those materialize one by one will also help you handle them one by one.

Once you start realizing these symptoms, I would recommend trying things by yourself, breathing techniques, listening to a favorite song, counting to 10, walking or even getting or playing with a pet. These may sound odd but in many cases they work. Make a note, mentally or in the journal, of what works. This will help you document the ups and downs and the possible how's and why's.

Story writing also reveals a lot of a person's inner psyche, so writing a short story may show you part of yourself hidden, even to you. This is most effective with people who have suffered and repressed for longer periods of time but has helped in many types of cases.

Social Anxiety

This is a trickier although breathing techniques, planning all activities in advance, to the last detail, helps a lot. If the anxiety is more severe than that, you will want to set goals and have a trusted friend or loved one at the end of that goal to meet you. For example, you set a goal to get the mail, if it is a problem have a friend meet you there. Then, once that has been done without the friend successfully for 10 times, you set a new goal, end of the driveway. The first time, do this with the loved one and as many times as you need that person there, then at least 10 times after that. Do this till you get to the grocery store, others' houses and slowly but surely you will find yourself back on the social scene. I would recommend valerian root here as well (mentioned in the 'insomnia' section above.)

If the above method seems less effective than you hoped, after each success, treat yourself, snack, do something you don't normally do, even find a reward that will motivate you to do it again tomorrow.

ADD and/or a Reading Relating Problem(s), Concentration Issues

ADD and the inability to focus, even in a conversation, is common. This is a symptom you may want some assistance with as it is when you are talking that it affects you most visibly. If you have a pet talk, actually speak, to them, talk about your day, what you're thinking about, what you plan on cooking, anything. Hearing yourself and where your mind scrambles helps fix it naturally. You're loved ones can help also. You don't have to say why, but tell them you are having some scatter brained moments, being forgetful, anything you want, and ask them to bare with you a bit. It has been successfully shown if you ask 'what was I saying' many times, them reminding you will easily get you back on track and you will, after some practice and self awareness, be able to correct yourself and train yourself to focus.

Reading problems are quite common, as it is an Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or dyslexia due to trauma; a remedy for that is audio. Having a book read to you by a friend, an audio book or a computer program that reads to you are all very helpful. In a pinch try and slowly read to yourself. If you practice and do your best to relax, reading problems will improve quite quickly. The key is, if you find yourself getting frustrated, put the book down. Frustration will only make you want to hate it more. *(This is for mild or moderate cases, severe focus issues)*

Note: The above text is found on the site: www.militarysexualtrauma.org. It is a great resource for information about MST and has links to other sites for information.