

MILITARY MENTAL HEALTH FOLLOW UP

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT ON EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

When we think about emotional support, we tend to think of lending a sympathetic ear or being a shoulder to lean on, and that's an important part of it. But what do you do if no one's in crisis? Can you still be an emotionally supportive supervisor? Of course you can.

Think about your current service members. Would you be able to tell if something seemed off? Would you feel comfortable saying something if you did? Are your service members comfortable coming to you with concerns? This is where emotional support behaviors factor in. At its core, emotional support is about fostering a sense of trust and rapport between you and your service members, so you both can proactively address issues as they arise, and that begins with personal connection. The best way to do this is simply by increasing your face-to-face contact with each service member. This can be in an informal setting or schedule check-ins, and in a pinch, a phone call will do. The important thing is to create time for your service members and use that time effectively.

Check in on how your service members are doing and communicate genuine interest in their lives and well-being. Make sure you understand their family and personal demands. Express your appreciation for their work in the unit and celebrate their personal successes. The point is, get to know your service members because the better you understand the people you work with, the easier it will be to tell if something's not right. If you notice a service member is particularly agitated, sleep deprived or just not themselves, talk to them about it, ask open-ended questions in a way that clearly conveys your intentions. "Something like I've noticed you haven't been yourself lately. What can I do to help?" Make sure you have enough time and privacy to engage in a real conversation, whether it's a sympathetic ear or connection to resources, helping a service member get what they need to handle their personal demands at an early stage can help prevent a crisis later on.

Despite the challenging atmosphere and extreme self-reliance valued in the military, the personal connection and support between service members and their supervisors is unparalleled. Emotional support can aid resilience and foster human readiness by reducing stress and by providing leadership with the opportunity to detect problems before they arise, leading to efficient solutions between soldiers and their leaders. Demonstrating emotional support can lead to favorable outcomes in terms of mission success, increased trust and leadership, and maintaining workplace engagement. This week, look for ways to increase your contact with each of your soldiers and think about what you can do to help them feel heard and to show that you know and understand their family and personal demands. This is emotional support, as you learned in the result face to face training.