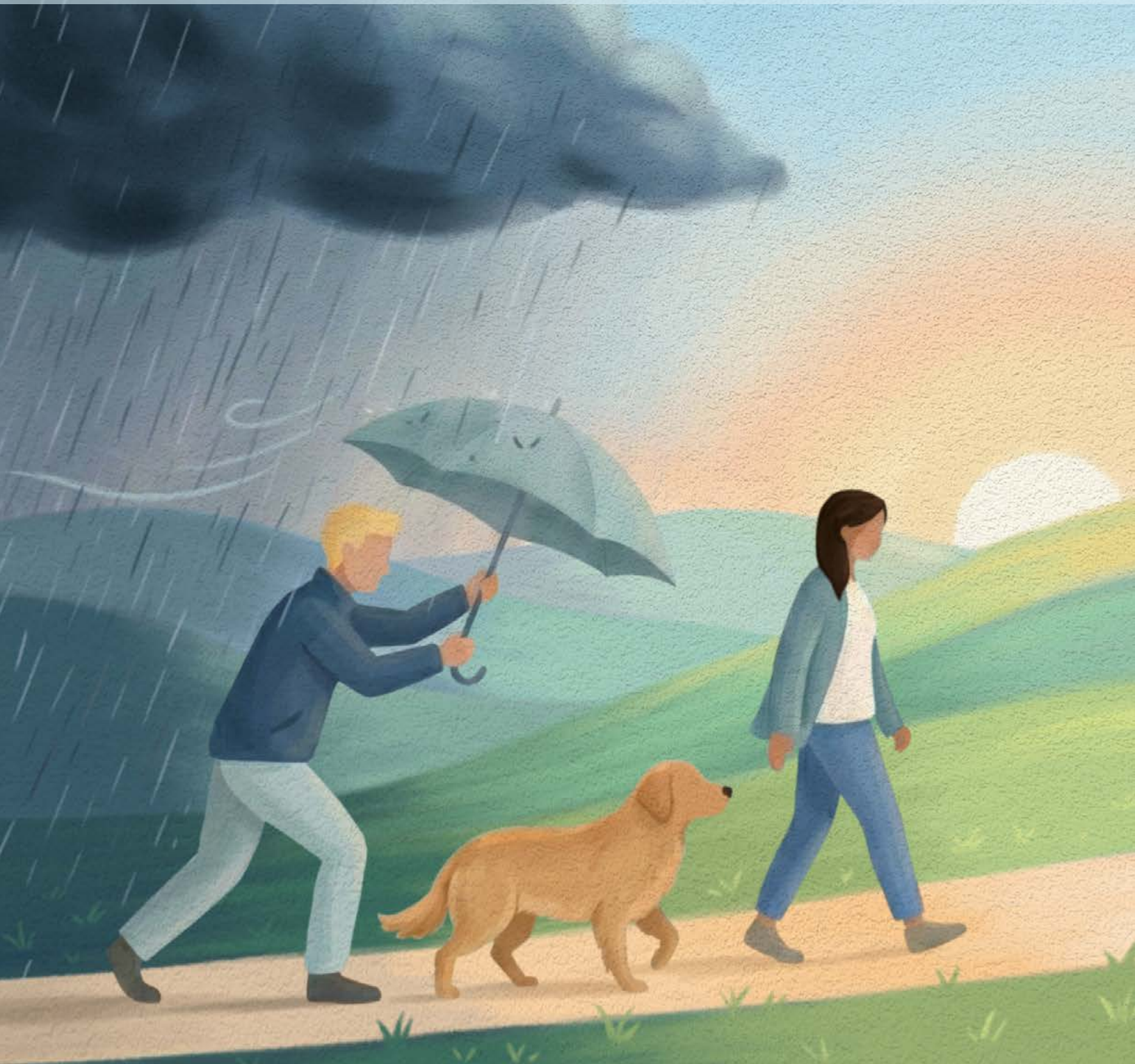




ATLAS
INSTITUTE
FOR VETERANS AND FAMILIES

A GUIDE FOR ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE VETERANS OPERATIONAL STRESS INJURIES



This resource was prepared by the Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families. The Atlas Institute would like to thank the following individuals for their contributions to this resource. Please note the names listed include only those who have explicitly consented to being acknowledged as a contributor.

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Advisor

Nigel Blake, Glenda F., Tanis Giczi, H. Kelly,
RCMP Cpl (Ret'd) Sarah Lefurgey, S/Sgt. Boyd
Merrill, Dr. J Don Richardson, Shawna Stewart

Approval

Robin Dziekan, Cara Kane, Laryssa Lamrock,
MaryAnn Notarianni, Hailley White

Conceptualization

Nigel Blake, Robin Dziekan, Glenda F., Tanis
Giczi, H. Kelly, Laryssa Lamrock,
RCMP Cpl (Ret'd) Sarah Lefurgey, S/Sgt. Boyd
Merrill, Hailley White

Editing

Lori-Anne Knarr, Krystle Kung, Hailley White

Methodology

Robin Dziekan, Laryssa Lamrock, Hailley White

Production

Ghislain Girard

Project administration

Robin Dziekan, Laryssa Lamrock, Hailley White

Research and analytics

Hailley White

Supervision

Meriem Benlamri, Cara Kane, Ashlee Mulligan,
MaryAnn Notarianni

Visualization

Nigel Blake, Robin Dziekan, Glenda F., Tanis
Giczi, H. Kelly, Laryssa Lamrock,
RCMP Cpl (Ret'd) Sarah Lefurgey, S/Sgt. Boyd
Merrill, Hailley White

Writing

Hailley White

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atlasveterans.ca/contributorship



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This resource is one part of a suite co-developed by and for RCMP Veterans and Families. Visit our website to access the other resources:
atlasveterans.ca/rcmp



INTRODUCTION

This resource is for Veterans of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). We made this guide to help RCMP Veterans recognize the signs of an operational stress injury (OSI) and better understand how OSIs can impact daily life and well-being. In this document, you'll also find practical guidance for accessing professional support, building personal resilience and navigating the path toward improved well-being.

**There is hope and it's possible to make progress or recover from an OSI.
We made this guide to help you get there.**

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. **You are not alone.** There are other RCMP Veterans who can relate to your experiences.
2. **You deserve to get help.** There are services specifically for RCMP Veterans that can connect you to the support you need.
3. An OSI can arise from injuries, mental health challenges and exposure to potentially psychologically traumatic events and stressors that RCMP members encounter during their career.
4. There are many kinds of OSIs – what they all have in common is the prolonged experience of symptoms after an injury or traumatic event.
5. An OSI can impact an RCMP Veteran and their Family in many ways, across several aspects of daily life and functioning.
6. There are tools and strategies that you can employ in your daily life to help manage your symptoms and take care of yourself with compassion.



WHAT ARE OPERATIONAL STRESS INJURIES?

In the RCMP, an operational stress injury (OSI) includes a range of mental health challenges and conditions that can develop from experiences a member may have while performing their duties^{1,2}.

AN OSI:

- Is not a diagnosis, though it can **include** diagnosed conditions like posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or major depressive disorder
- Is any prolonged mental health condition resulting from operational stressors experienced while performing duties in the RCMP
- Includes mental health symptoms and experiences that may not meet the criteria for a diagnosis, but that still cause distress and interfere with daily functioning
- Can be treated with professional help
- Can be managed with tools, strategies and personal connections that support well-being



There are many different symptoms and conditions that can be considered an OSI, including anxiety, depression, posttraumatic stress, sleep challenges, substance use, anger issues, and addictive or high-risk behaviours^{2,3}.

HOW MIGHT AN RCMP MEMBER DEVELOP AN OSI?

The stressors that RCMP members are exposed to during calls or operations can lead to mental, emotional and physical challenges and symptoms that may develop into an OSI^{2,4}. If you experienced any of the following while serving in the Force, you may be more likely to have an OSI.



Exposure to potentially psychologically traumatic events^{5,6}

While responding to calls, you may have been exposed to actual or threatened death, serious injury, accidents, assault or violence. These may be events that you witnessed or that happened to you. You may have experienced several of these events on the same day, with little time or space to process these experiences between calls.



Vicarious trauma

While interviewing victims or hearing about your colleagues' experiences, you may have heard about traumatic events. Hearing about these traumatic events can still affect you, even if you didn't go through them yourself. Being exposed to the details of others' trauma can also contribute to PTSD.



Burnout

Injuries, exposure to traumatic events, heavy workload and a lack of institutional support can lead to prolonged stress which may cause other physical or mental health challenges. You may have felt exhausted and cynical about your job because of these experiences.



Grief or loss

You may have experienced grief or loss because of the traumatic events you've witnessed, or because of the injury or death of a colleague.



Moral injury⁷

You may have experienced a moral injury if you were asked to perform, witness or fail to prevent acts which conflict with your own deeply held moral beliefs and values. This can change how you feel about yourself and how you view the world.



Institutional betrayal

Institutional betrayal can come from experiences in which a person doesn't receive the support they can reasonably expect from a trusted organization. This can include a lack of appropriate support after an injury, stigmatizing treatment, being retaliated against or the organization failing to respond to or prevent harmful actions. If you believe that you have experienced an institutional betrayal, your well-being can be impacted and it may have felt harder for you to seek help⁸.

SYMPTOMS AND BEHAVIOURS RELATED TO OSIs

How do you know if what you are experiencing is “typical” for someone who has gone through a traumatic event or if it’s possibly an OSI?

- It’s expected that someone who has experienced a traumatic event will be affected by the experience in some way. Each person may react differently, though there are some reactions that can be more common. Typically, a person who has experienced a traumatic event will feel better with time and can continue to function.
- Not everyone begins to feel better or feels they can cope. If a person’s reactions to a traumatic event persists, cause them distress, or prevent them from living like they used to, then they may be experiencing an OSI.

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF WHAT YOU’RE EXPERIENCING IS AN OSI?

You may experience the following **common reactions to traumatic events**⁹ at first:

- ✓ Emotional changes like feeling numb, overwhelmed or disconnected from others
- ✓ Shifts in your moods or feeling angry, sad or fearful
- ✓ Feeling on edge, agitated or easily startled
- ✓ Feeling exhausted
- ✓ Changes in your sleep, like having nightmares, sleeping more or having difficulty falling asleep

It may be a sign that you **have or are developing an OSI if you also experience**:

- ✓ Persistent effects from the event
- ✓ Distress that prevents you from living the way you used to
- ✓ Finding it harder to engage in everyday life
- ✓ Changes to your outlook on life or the way you see and understand the world
- ✓ Relying on more or different coping strategies to get through the day, but it still feels like you’re only “getting by”

EVERYONE’S EXPERIENCE IS UNIQUE

For some, the symptoms may gradually build up. For others, there may be an immediate onset after an event. It’s important to note that **for any OSI, the symptoms are persistent or prolonged**.

If you are having difficulty coping, it is important to get informed about OSIs and where you can get professional help.

Remember: There is hope, no matter when you realized you might have an OSI and no matter how long you have lived with symptoms. **It is never too late to get help.** And there are many ways to get help from trained professionals or peer supports, so you can find the right path forward for you and your Family. You can find more information in the [Getting assistance for an OSI](#) section of this guide.

IMPACTS OF AN OSI

An OSI can affect many aspects of life, including your health, relationships, career, and overall functioning. Recognizing where and how you're being impacted is an important step toward developing effective coping strategies and knowing when to seek support.



The lists in this section were made by talking to Veterans like you. These are the real experiences of RCMP Veterans. It's not meant to be a list of everything that's going wrong, but to recognize how an OSI can impact your life and to validate the experiences you might be having. You're not alone.

As you read through this list, you may find it helpful to use the boxes beside each point to check off which ones you relate to. You can also use this list to talk about your experiences with a mental health professional.



IMPACTS ON YOUR DAILY LIFE AND FUNCTIONING

An OSI can make everyday life feel harder and you may notice changes in how you function. Here are some ways an OSI can impact your daily life:

☐

Everyday activities: It may be more challenging to complete everyday activities like getting groceries or cleaning. You may find it harder to do things you enjoy, like your hobbies or spending time with Family and friends.

☐

Self-care: You may notice it is harder to take care of yourself, or it takes more time to engage in routines such as managing your personal hygiene, eating well, getting enough sleep and attending to your needs.

☐

Limited energy: You may have less energy to do things you normally would. It may feel like tasks are "piling up" or that it is overwhelming to think about getting everything done. You might focus only on what feels immediately necessary.



Social isolation: You may have withdrawn from the people you care about, possibly because it feels easier to manage your symptoms alone, because you feel like a burden or because it's hard to talk about or explain what's wrong.



Sleep disruptions: You might experience changes in your sleep, including sleeping too much or not enough or having nightmares. You may not wake up feeling rested and often feel tired. It may also take time to unlearn strategies that you used to cope with night shifts or shift work, such as using caffeine or sleep aids.



Experiencing triggers: Parts of everyday life may trigger the symptoms of some types of OSIs. This might include reliving the trauma in some way, feeling anxious or "activated," experiencing changes in mood or avoiding reminders of the trauma.



Substance use and addictive behaviours: You might use substances to help you cope with your OSI symptoms or spend time gambling, browsing the Internet or playing video games. These activities may provide some relief in the moment, but over time you may notice feeling worse without them, so you begin to rely on them to feel "okay."



Symptoms of an OSI: You might experience the symptoms of an OSI in your daily life, not only during reminders of a trauma. You may experience hypervigilance at the grocery store or while driving, feel like you aren't able to relax in your own home, or find yourself low on energy to do things you enjoy. Symptoms may feel worse or better on some days or in certain situations, but they persistently show up in your life.



IMPACTS ON YOUR FAMILY

Your experience of your injury can affect your Family members as they try to understand and adapt to the changes they're noticing in you. Understanding what Family members are experiencing can help you move forward together. Here are some ways Families can be impacted:



Change in dynamics: You may notice changes in your Family dynamic as Family members adapt to the impacts of your injury and potentially take on more roles and responsibilities (such as parenting duties). Your Family members may spend more time helping you manage your symptoms or taking care of you.



For more information to help you talk about OSIs in RCMP Veteran Families, visit our topic page: atlasveterans.ca/rcmp





IMPACTS ON FAMILY *(continued)*



Communication challenges: There may be aspects of your injury or service that you find hard to talk about or that you don't want to revisit, so you opt not to share them with your Family. This can leave your Family feeling like their lives are being impacted by something they don't understand. It may also feel uncomfortable to be asked about your injury. You may be used to being the one asking the questions, not answering them. Certain OSI symptoms (such as hypervigilance or anxiety) can make conversations harder because your body is already in an activated state before discussing a potentially challenging topic.



Emotional changes: Family members can feel emotionally strained when they feel they can't talk with you about your injury or how it impacts them or the Family as a whole. Anger, sadness and loneliness can be common as they try to adapt to the new Family and relationship dynamics after your injury.



Behaviour changes: Family members may feel the need to "walk on eggshells" around you because they don't want to make your symptoms worse or trigger you. They may not ask for your help anymore because they don't want to burden you or accidentally ask for something that is challenging for you now. You may also notice your Family members becoming involved in reducing or preventing your triggers.



Increased stress: It can be stressful for Family members to take on new roles and responsibilities while also trying to take care of you and themselves. This can often mean they have to do more with the same time and resources and may have fewer opportunities to rest and recover from daily stress.



Relationship changes: You may notice some changes in your relationships after your injury, whether that's with your romantic partner, spouse, children, friends or other Family. The change in dynamics, communication challenges and emotional strain may contribute to relationship breakdown. It may feel harder to understand each other without proper communication, which can impact how connected you feel.



For information on recognizing and addressing unhealthy relationships and intimate partner violence, check out this guide:
atlasveterans.ca/ipv-unhealthy-relationships



Housing security and financial impacts: After an injury, you may experience limitations in career options that make it harder to find or keep stable housing. Your Family may also choose not to live together because it is easier to manage OSI symptoms separately or because you're concerned about how your injury impacts your Family. Families that are not cohabiting may not receive the same benefits or services as those that do live together, which can have financial implications.



Social isolation: You may prefer to stay home because your symptoms make it harder to be in some environments like crowded or noisy places. Your Family members may also decline invitations because they don't want to expose you to questions from others or risk triggering you. It can also be hard for the Family to join activities they liked before the injury because they now feel so different from other people. While extended Family and friends may want to offer support and compassion, you may avoid them because it can feel exhausting to explain what you're experiencing.



Adaptation and resilience: However, it's possible for Families to adapt and become more resilient. Families can learn new skills and grow after an injury, which may help them navigate future challenges. For some, going through this difficult experience can help them feel stronger as they recognize their own capability to make it through stressful events.



IMPACTS ON RETIREMENT, RELEASE AND TRANSITION TO BEING A VETERAN

Having an OSI can make it harder to navigate the transition out of the Force as you cope with the symptoms of your injury while going through a big life change. Here are some ways an OSI might impact this transition:



Loss of identity and purpose: If an OSI was part of the reason you left the Force, you may feel like your career or purpose changed before you wanted it to. You may also feel limited by your OSI and that it prevents you from living your purpose in the same way or at all. Like many other Veterans, you may feel like service is part of your identity and so you may no longer feel like yourself after an unwanted change in your career.



Disenfranchisement with the RCMP: You may no longer feel the pride you once had or the desire to identify yourself as an RCMP Veteran if you didn't receive adequate support or were discriminated against for having an OSI, especially if that affected your career. You may feel anger, disappointment or betrayal. You may have distanced yourself from anything associated with the RCMP.



I spent many years learning how to be a cop...
now I'm learning how to be something else.

— RCMP Veteran



IMPACTS ON RETIREMENT, RELEASE AND TRANSITION TO BEING A VETERAN *(continued)*



Institutional betrayal and sanctuary trauma: If you experienced an institutional betrayal, you may feel shame, disappointment, vulnerability or hopelessness. These feelings may be especially strong for Veterans who were released after an injury.



Getting support and accessing services: Having an OSI may make it harder to do the required tasks to claim pension, set up an account with Veterans Affairs Canada or access mental health support or services. Some OSI symptoms make it harder to take care of yourself or complete tasks.



Difficulties finding suitable treatment providers: You may not be satisfied with the available treatment providers because you feel they don't understand the RCMP or what you experienced during the day-to-day of service in the Force. It can feel like a burden to have to explain the basics while seeking help.



Financial impacts: An OSI may financially impact you as a Veteran because it shortened your career in the Force or affects the kind of jobs you are able to do after leaving the service.

There are help and supports available.
You are not alone.





Loss of community and colleagues: You may have noticed changes in your relationships after disclosing your OSI or possibly experienced stigma from your community or colleagues. It may be harder to stay in touch with colleagues because it reminds you of what led to your injury.



Loss of community with relocation at the end of service: Relocation after service can come with a loss of community and connections because you no longer live in the same area as your former colleagues, friends or social groups. It may also be challenging to access the same or similar services in a new area, which might delay your efforts to seek help.



Working through your injuries: Taking time to seek help and heal from your injuries may not fit your idea of what retirement would look like, especially if your career ended sooner than expected. The healing process can also come with challenges that take a toll on you even if you're noticing helpful changes in your life.



Loneliness and social isolation: It can sometimes be harder to maintain relationships while living with the symptoms of an OSI. You may have withdrawn from RCMP peer groups for many reasons, including being stigmatized, not feeling supported, not wanting to be reminded of a trauma, or no longer wanting to associate with anything related to the RCMP. However, it may also be difficult to connect with civilians as you may not feel understood by those who have not served in the Force themselves.



THERE IS HOPE.

Many RCMP Veterans find that with the right support, their symptoms improve and they are able to move forward with hope.

GETTING ASSISTANCE FOR AN OSI

If you are experiencing symptoms or have been diagnosed with a mental health condition related to an OSI, getting professional help can be an important step in your progress and recovery.



RECOGNIZING WHEN YOU NEED HELP

Here are signs that you may be in crisis and should get help right now:

- You have a plan to hurt yourself or someone else;
- You are planning to attempt suicide;
- Or you have tried to seriously hurt yourself or end your life.



If you are in distress, call or text the Suicide Crisis Helpline at **9-8-8**. If this is an emergency, dial **9-1-1** (in Nunavut, contact your local RCMP detachment or 1-867-979-1111).

Other signs that you may need support include:

- Feeling hopeless or overwhelmed, as though things will never improve or there are no options left.
- Feeling isolated or withdrawn even when you are around others or believing that no one understands what you're going through.
- Having thoughts of death, self-harm or suicide or feeling that others would be better off without you.
- Experiencing significant distress that is interfering with everyday life.
- Feeling tense, high-strung, nervous or easily startled, even in safe situations.
- Avoidance behaviours, including staying away from people, places or activities that remind you of difficult or traumatic experiences.
- Emotional numbness or detachment, such as feeling disconnected from yourself or others, or having difficulty experiencing positive emotions.
- Persistent low energy or fatigue that doesn't improve with rest.
- Nightmares, disrupted sleep or difficulty falling or staying asleep.
- Struggling with everyday tasks or noticing that regular life feels more overwhelming or demanding than it used to.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

1. **You and your Family deserve to get help.**
2. You don't need to wait for a crisis to get help.
3. It's important to seek help as soon as you realize you need it.
4. You are not taking help away from someone else by getting help for yourself.



SERVICES FOR EVERYONE

- **Primary care provider (e.g. Family doctor or nurse practitioner):** While not specific to Veterans or RCMP, a great place to seek support can be from your primary care provider. You can also use emergency services like the ones listed on the previous page. Consider booking an appointment with your primary care provider to talk about your mental health – they can get you started with support, assessments and referrals.
- **Community mental health services:** You may have access to organizations in your area that provide services, programs and support to people in the local community who are living with mental health challenges. They can sometimes provide referrals to more specialized services if needed.



SERVICES FOR RCMP VETERANS

ORGANIZATIONS THAT OFFER SERVICES DIRECTLY

Crisis numbers (available 24-7)

- **Suicide Crisis Helpline** can be reached by calling or texting **9-8-8**.
- **The Hope for Wellness Helpline** can be reached at **1-855-242-3310**. Culturally competent counsellors offer immediate help to Indigenous Peoples across Canada.
- **The Veterans Affairs Canada Assistance Service** can be reached at **1-800-268-7708**. Provides free, short-term psychological support with a mental health professional. The service is available to former RCMP members, their Families and caregivers.

Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC)

- Offers some programs to former members on behalf of the RCMP, such as disability pension awards and health benefit programs for a service-related injury.
- VAC can be reached online at veterans.gc.ca or by calling **1-866-522-2122** from Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., local time. Calling this number will connect you with a person who can answer questions about services available for RCMP Veterans and Families, how to set up a My VAC Account or how to apply for a disability pension.
- Many VAC services require a My VAC Account to access them. The My VAC Account is how you apply for benefits and services, track your application and view a summary of your benefits. Both RCMP Veterans and their Family members can register for a My VAC Account online starting on this webpage: bit.ly/my-vac-account

Royal Canadian Legion

- The Royal Canadian Legion offers many services for Veterans and their Families, including peer support, financial assistance and direct assistance with the disability claims process through VAC.
- legion.ca | **1-888-556-6222**

Wounded Warriors Canada

- Wounded Warriors Canada offers programs to trauma-exposed professionals and their Families, which includes RCMP Veterans and their Families.
- Their services include trauma resiliency programs, spousal resiliency programs, programs for couples navigating PTSD and Family programs, among others.
- woundedwarriors.ca



SERVICES FOR RCMP VETERANS *(continued)*

PEER SUPPORT

Support for Operational Stress Injury Program (SOSI)

- The SOSI program can be reached only by email at rcmp.sosi-sbso.grc@rcmp-grc.gc.ca
- The program is run by the RCMP to provide confidential peer and social support to RCMP employees and Veterans who are impacted by an OSI.
- SOSI coordinators and peer supporters can provide support and resources that a Veteran can discuss with their medical practitioners.
- SOSI coordinators are not trained counsellors or therapists and **do not** facilitate or help with completing VAC forms.



For more peer support programs, explore Atlas's peer support directory:
atlasveterans.ca/peer-support-directory



REFERRAL MAY BE NEEDED

OSI clinics

- OSI clinics provide in-person and virtual assessment and treatment to address mental health issues related to service. Their services are available to former members of the RCMP and their Families.
- There are OSI clinics across Canada. Although none of the clinics are located in rural or remote areas, many are able to provide virtual assessment and treatment so Veterans can receive care anywhere in Canada as long as they have Internet access.
- To access the services, you need a referral from a medical practitioner or a VAC case manager. Or you can send a request to be referred to a clinic through your My VAC Account.



ORGANIZATIONS THAT CAN HELP CONNECT YOU TO INFORMATION AND SERVICES

RCMP Veterans' Association

- The RCMP Veterans' Association has resources available to help former RCMP members and their Families understand and navigate pension and benefit information and services.
- The RCMP Veterans' Association primarily aims to support and advocate for RCMP Veterans as it relates to their pension, insurance, health care and benefits.
- The various guides that the RCMP Veterans' Association has created can be accessed on their website: rcmpva.org/resources-support



For more information about how to get help as an RCMP Veteran or Family and navigate the available services, visit our topic page:

atlasveterans.ca/rcmp

You can also find more services on Atlas's directory of services:

atlasveterans.ca/directory-of-services





CARING FOR YOURSELF AND BUILDING RESILIENCE

Seeking professional help, such as working with a counsellor, psychotherapist, psychologist or psychiatrist, is often an important part of progress and recovery from an OSI. These professionals can help you understand your symptoms, develop effective coping strategies and support your healing over time. In addition, connecting with other RCMP Veterans or peers who understand what you have been through can provide a sense of belonging, validation and reassurance that **you are not alone in your recovery journey**.

Alongside these supports, there are **practical steps** you can take to ease what you're feeling now and build resilience for the future.



WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

Resilience is the ability to adapt, recover and grow in the face of stress or significant challenges. It doesn't mean avoiding difficulty or never feeling overwhelmed. Rather, resilience is the capacity to navigate those experiences while maintaining or gradually returning to a sense of well-being.

CARING FOR YOURSELF



PRACTISE SELF-COMPASSION

- **Speak to yourself with the same kindness that you would offer a loved one.** Notice when your inner voice becomes critical or harsh and gently shift it toward understanding and encouragement.
- **Remind yourself that challenges are part of being human.** Struggling does not mean you are weak – it simply means you are carrying something heavy.
- **Be patient with yourself.** Healing takes time. Progress may come slowly, but every step matters.

USE STRATEGIES FOR COMING OUT OF AN ACTIVATED STATE

- **Start by noticing what activation feels like in your body.** This may include a racing heart, sweating, irritability or anger, racing thoughts or a sudden spike in anxiety.
- **Practise grounding and breathing exercises to help calm your nervous system.** Slow belly breathing, box breathing or naming five things you can see, hear and touch are effective ways to regain a sense of control.
- **Anchor yourself in the present moment.** Say out loud the date, where you are, what you can observe around you. This can help your brain shift out of threat mode.
- **Reach out to a supportive person,** like a friend, Family member, peer or a professional who can help you feel steadier and more connected.
- **Treat yourself gently through the “emotional jet lag.”** After your body comes down from activation, you may feel drained, foggy or irritable. Resting, eating or doing something soothing can help you feel better.



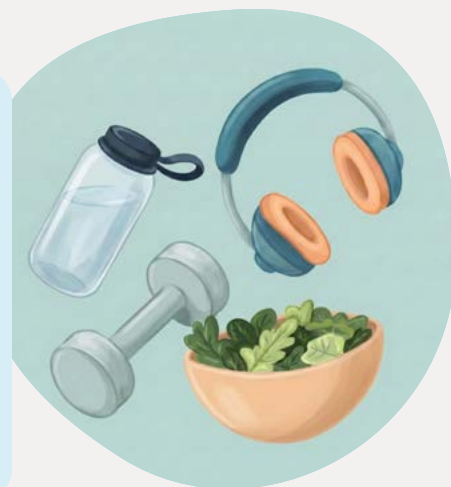


FIND SAFE, SUPPORTIVE SPACES AND PEOPLE

- **Connect with people who feel safe, calm and present.** These are individuals who listen without judgment and respect your pace.
- **Remember that rebuilding trust takes practice.** Trust does not mean others will never disappoint you – it means you believe in their intentions because they have shown consistency, care and reliability over time.

MAKE ADJUSTMENTS THAT WORK FOR YOU

- **Find strategies or workarounds for areas that feel hard.** If preparing meals is challenging, consider pre-cut vegetables, frozen meals or meal delivery services. If going outside for a walk feels overwhelming, try following a short exercise video at home or sitting by an open window for fresh air.
- **Express your limits,** for example by informing others that you need to rest or take a few minutes for yourself after spending time with others.



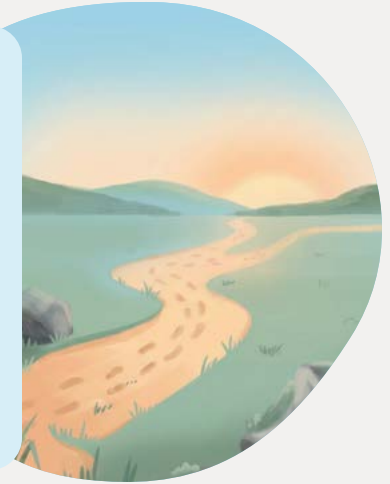
EVALUATE YOUR COPING STRATEGIES

- **Coping strategies help you get through difficult experiences, but not all of them support long-term well-being.** Sometimes we hold on to strategies because they work in the moment even if they create challenges over time.
- **Gradually add or replace strategies that may no longer be helpful with ones that support your well-being.**

EVERYDAY PRACTICES FOR MENTAL HEALTH

REMEMBER THAT IT'S A JOURNEY, NOT A RACE

- **It took time to learn how to work in the RCMP and it will take time to learn new ways of coping and living after service.** Give yourself permission to move at a pace that feels sustainable.
- **Take time to reflect on where you started,** which can help you recognize how much you've grown even when the steps forward feel small.
- **Consistent effort matters more than having "perfect days."** Focus on doing one supportive thing each day – over time, these small actions add up to meaningful change.



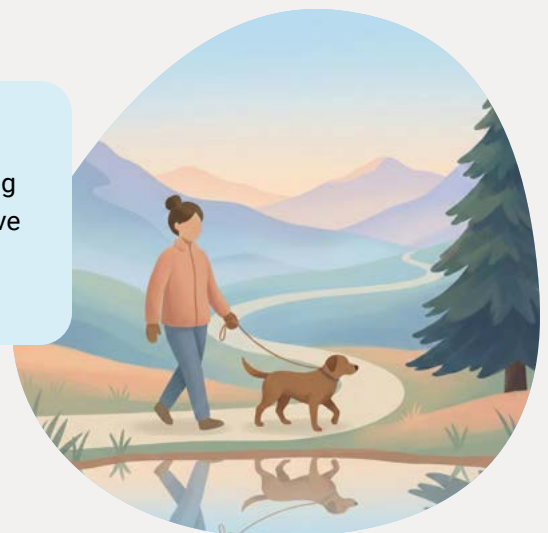
UNDERSTAND THAT PROGRESS ISN'T LINEAR

- **Recognize that setbacks are not failure, but a normal and expected part of healing.** Each setback offers a chance to learn more about your triggers, your needs and which coping strategies work best for you.
- **Build a plan for what to do when setbacks happen** (e.g. reach out to a support person or use grounding exercises) and remind yourself that progress is measured over weeks and months, not moments.



PRACTISE MENTAL HYGIENE

- **Use daily habits** (e.g. exercise, mindfulness practices, spending time in nature, setting boundaries) to help preserve and improve your psychological well-being in the same way brushing your teeth protects your physical well-being.





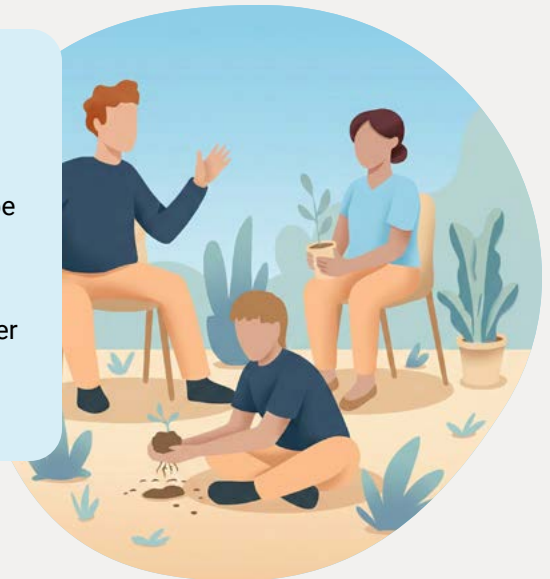
GATHER TOOLS FOR YOUR MENTAL HEALTH TOOLBOX

- **Use this guide and other resources to develop a personal toolbox of supportive strategies.** You won't need every tool all the time and different situations will call for different approaches. The more options you have, the more adaptive and resilient you can be.
- **Consider creating separate sets of tools:** one for emergencies (e.g. crisis lines, contact numbers for supportive connects and grounding exercises), one for setbacks (e.g. journal prompts, reminders of past successes, breathing techniques), and one for everyday life (e.g. routines, hobbies, mindfulness exercises).

CREATING YOUR WELLNESS ACTION PLAN

FIND WHAT'S NEXT AFTER SERVICE

- **Although the way you serve has changed, it is still possible to reconnect with the passion, commitment and pride that originally inspired you to join the RCMP.** These qualities can be expressed in many forms beyond policing.
- **Consider what activities, roles or interests** might allow you to live out the values that first guided you into the service, whether that's helping others, protecting your community, building connections or contributing to something meaningful.



STAY OPEN TO NEW OPPORTUNITIES

- **Adopting a beginner's mindset allows you to approach new activities, relationships and routines with curiosity rather than pressure.** This mindset can reduce fear of mistakes and open the door to learning and personal growth.
- **Consider what new experiences or opportunities you might engage in that could be important building blocks in your life after service.** Is there a hobby or sport you've always wanted to try?

CREATING YOUR WELLNESS ACTION PLAN *(continued)*

PARTICIPATING IN COMMUNITIES

- **You may find it helpful to connect with groups and communities that have nothing to do with your service and search for groups that reflect your personal interests, hobbies, passions or values.** These spaces can help you rediscover aspects of yourself outside your professional identity.
- **You might also explore new ways of contributing to your broad community** such as volunteering, joining local organizations or committees, mentoring or participating in community events.
- **Finding ways to participate in community can help you feel supported and connected while reinforcing your sense of purpose.**



LEARN ABOUT POSTTRAUMATIC GROWTH

- **Posttraumatic growth refers to positive psychological changes** that can emerge from working through a traumatic experience, not because the trauma was beneficial but because you have adapted, learned and discovered new strengths in its aftermath.
- **Growth can occur alongside the difficult impacts of trauma.** You do not need to “feel good” or be fully healed to experience moments of insight, resilience or personal transformation.
- **These changes can involve shifts in self-perception, renewed appreciation for life, deeper or more authentic relationships and greater self-awareness.** You may also discover strengths you didn’t know you had or find new directions and possibilities.

A WELLNESS ACTION PLAN CHECKLIST

You can use the following checklist as a guide for your next steps.

- ☐ Read through the information about what can contribute to an OSI in RCMP Veterans
- ☐ Check off the experiences you relate to in the Impacts of an OSI section
- ☐ Use the list of services to find a professional who can support you and book your first appointment
- ☐ Consider bringing the list of impacts to an appointment to help you talk about your experiences
- ☐ Try out a strategy from the Caring for yourself and building resilience section
- ☐ Participate in an activity connected to your interests or hobbies
- ☐ Reach out to a safe or trusted friend, Family member or peer



INSPIRATIONAL WORDS TO COME BACK TO

Complete these sentences to make them yours.

I am not alone.
I am stronger than I know.

I will not give up because
_____ .

When _____ shows up,
I will remember: it's the injury, not me.

Cut or tear along the dotted line to keep this page as a handy reference

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