

# Coping strategies of Vets with anxiety

- ⇒ Researchers with the **VA Center for Integrated Healthcare** surveyed 182 VA primary care patients with anxiety about the self-management strategies they use.
- ⇒ **98%** had used some form of self-management; **91%** of all strategies used were perceived by the Veterans as effective.
- ⇒ Below are the most **common strategies** reported. Next to each overall strategy is the percentage of Vets who reported using it. These are followed by examples, with representative quotes from Veteran respondents.  
 \*Note: Most of the strategies listed are generally healthy, **with the exception of those in the Avoidance category**—namely, substance use and social isolation, which are not recommended.

**Self-care 37%**

Exercise	“Going to the gym”
Formal relaxation	“Guided meditation using apps”
Medication	“Taking a Valium”
Informal relaxation	“Relax on back deck”



**Cognitive 16%**

Redirect thoughts	“Focus on the positive”
Other cognitive	“Try to keep a level head”
Religion/spirituality	“Read Bible”



**Connectedness 15%**

Family/friends	“Talking about it with friend”
Community	“Volunteer at the VA”
Pets	“Petting my dog”
Social	“Go out and be among people”



**\*Avoidance 15%**

Other avoidance	“Don’t talk to people”
Substance use	“Have an extra beer”
Keep busy	“Busy myself with other things”



**Pleasurable activities 13%**

Outdoor activities	“Go fishing”
Indoor activities	“Jigsaw puzzle”
Media	“Watch TV”
Music	“Listening to music”



**Achievement 3%**

Household	“Lawn work”
Other achievement	“Force myself to do things actively”



⇒ **Conclusion:** “The research highlights the opportunity that health care providers have to engage primary care patients around self-management. ... Future directions include identification of the most effective and feasible self-management strategies for anxiety to facilitate promotion of evidence-based self-management among primary care patients.”

Source: “Self-Management Strategies for Stress and Anxiety Used by Nontreatment Seeking Veteran Primary Care Patients,” *Military Medicine*, July 2017. (Infographic by VA Research Communications, August 2017. Photos © iStock)