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EMORY HEALTHCARE
Veterans Program

10 YEARS 2014 Healing & Growth 2024

**Anniversary Series: 10 Years of Healing & Growth** | **April 2025**

## April Spotlight

April marks **Stress Awareness Month**, a timely reminder that mental wellness is just as vital as physical health—especially for those who serve, care for others, or walk alongside veterans and service members on their healing journeys.

In this month's issue, we'll spotlight simple, meaningful ways to reduce stress. Whether it's taking a mindful pause, talking with a trusted colleague, or simply showing up with kindness, small steps can make a big difference.

Service members and veterans face unique mental health challenges, including the effects of **post-traumatic stress, traumatic brain injury, and the stressors of transitioning into civilian life**—a struggle our featured program graduate, Army veteran Antonio, knows all too well.

Let's use April as an opportunity to lead by example as we prioritize self-care, support our loved ones, and promote mental strength.

## An Army Veteran's Journey to Healing



*Antonio speaking on stage at the Bob Woodruff Foundation Stand Up For Heroes benefit in November 2024.*

Antonio served a distinguished 24-year career in the military and was just months into civilian life when he began feeling overwhelmed by stress. He struggled adjusting to life with a new job and even daily events like going to the grocery store would cause him to feel extremely anxious.

When the stress led him to begin thinking about ending his life, he knew something had to change.

He first began a series of weekly therapy sessions at a local medical facility, but right away he knew he needed something different from than an occasional check-in. He was referred to the Emory Healthcare Veterans Program and, without hesitation, Antonio enrolled in the two-week accelerated treatment program. He described the first few sessions of prolonged exposure therapy as some of the hardest moments he's ever faced. "It felt like I was forced to clean out my closet," he said, confronting trauma he thought he had already buried. For the first time, he found the courage to speak openly about painful memories and began to understand that what happened to him wasn't his fault.

The impact of treatment was almost immediate. When he got home, Antonio walked into a grocery store but instead of feeling intense anxiety and panic, he used the stress-reducing techniques he learned during the program. "I didn't leave without what I needed," he said with pride. "My distress levels weren't as high as before treatment. I could feel the difference."

Today, Antonio works as a mechanic for an airline and enjoys being back in a structured, supportive environment. He continues working on his mental health through anger management and says his mood is better than it's been in years. "I can handle traffic better. My anger is calming down. I'm not living in that constant state of rage and anxiety anymore."

When asked what advice he would give to others who may be struggling with invisible wounds, he shared this: **"Be open to change. Don't fight it. It's going to get rough before it gets easier—but it does get easier."**

## Simple Ways to Reduce Stress



**#1 Moment of Mindfulness**
Feeling overwhelmed? Mindfulness might be the reset button you need. It's all about slowing down, tuning in, and being fully present—whether you're sipping your morning coffee or taking a short walk. No special equipment required—just a few deep breaths and a moment to notice what's around you.

Be Mindful



**#2 A Good Night of Sleep**
Stressed out? Start with sleep. Quality rest is one of the most powerful ways to reset your mind and body. When you sleep well, your brain processes emotions more effectively, your body recovers, and your stress levels naturally drop.

Sleep Better



**#3 Gentle Yoga**



Looking for a calm way to shake off stress? Gentle yoga might be just what you need. With slow movements and steady breathing, this practice helps release tension from both your body and mind. No need to be flexible or experienced—just roll out a mat and move at your own pace.

Stretch to Destress

## How you can help continue our mission:

### Transform Lives

Your donation today makes healing possible for post-9/11 veterans and service members in need.

Give Here

### Share Hope With Others

Spread the word about our mission and inspire others to join us.

Share Our Story

### Celebrate With Us

Mark your calendar for November 13, 2025, and celebrate a decade of healing and growth with us!

Save the Date

### Get Help

If you or someone you know is struggling, take the first step toward healing. Call 888-823-4014 to speak with a veteran care coordinator or fill out this confidential form and we will contact you.

Get Help Today

Keep an eye out for these monthly emails, highlighting a new veteran or service member in each edition.

## Read Our Impact Report



We heal our nation's heroes. Learn more about the transformed lives our graduates enjoy in our Impact Report.

Read Now

EMORY HEALTHCARE
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