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
- Formal relaxation
- Medication
- Informal relaxation

  "Going to the gym"
  "Guided meditation using apps"
  "Taking a Valium"
  "Relax on back deck"

Cognitive 16%
- Redirect thoughts
- Other cognitive
- Religion/spirituality

  "Focus on the positive"
  "Try to keep a level head"
  "Read Bible"

Connectedness 15%
- Family/friends
- Community
- Pets
- Social

  "Talking about it with friend"
  "Volunteer at the VA"
  "Petting my dog"
  "Go out and be among people"

Avoidance 15%
- Other avoidance
- Substance use
- Keep busy

  "Don’t talk to people"
  "Have an extra beer"
  "Busy myself with other things"

Pleasurable activities 13%
- Outdoor activities
- Indoor activities
- Media
- Music

  "Go fishing"
  "Jigsaw puzzle"
  "Watch TV"
  "Listening to music"

Achievement 3%
- Household
- Other achievement

  "Lawn work"
  "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.”