



What is PTSD?

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a mental health issue that can occur after someone goes through a traumatic event such as war, assault, or disaster. Most people have some stress reactions after a trauma.

Each service member will have their own experiences. However, understand that almost all service members will need time to readjust after being in a war zone. This can be especially intense during the first months at home. Common stress reactions are a normal part of readjustment.

Service members may have unwanted memories of the war zone. If something happens that reminds them of a war experience, they may have a range of reactions, from intrusive images and thoughts, all the way to a feeling of reliving their experiences (“flashbacks”) that are so realistic they feel like they are back in the war.

Irritations or reacting more strongly to common family issues, anger and aggression are common war zone stress reactions. Even minor incidents can lead to significant reactions.

Reactions like these that last for months can affect relationships, work, and overall well-being if not treated. Emotional or psychological problems are not a sign of weakness. Injuries, including psychological injuries, affect the strong and the brave just like physical injuries. The stigma of mental health issues can be a huge barrier for people who need help, but knowing when and how to get help is actually part of military training.

Visit your local Vet Center (complete list of locations are on page 13) if you would like to talk to someone about what you are experiencing. You can also learn more about PTSD at

www.ptsd.va.gov.

COMMON PHYSICAL REACTIONS

- Trouble sleeping, overly tired
- Upset stomach, trouble eating
- Sweating when thinking of the war
- Rapid heartbeat or breathing

COMMON MENTAL/EMOTIONAL REACTIONS

- Bad dreams, nightmares
- Flashbacks or frequent unwanted memories
- Anger
- Feeling nervous, helpless, or fearful
- Feeling guilty, self-blame, shame
- Feeling sad, rejected, or abandoned
- Agitated, easily upset, irritated, or annoyed
- Feeling hopeless about the future
- Experiencing shock, being numb, unable to feel happy

COMMON BEHAVIORAL REACTIONS

- Trouble concentrating
- Being jumpy and easily startled
- Being on guard, always alert, concerned about safety and security
- Avoiding people or places related to the trauma
- Excessive drinking, smoking, or drug use
- Lack of exercise, poor diet, or health care
- Problems doing regular tasks at work or school
- Aggressive driving habits