

An Overview Of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in the College Setting

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Objectives

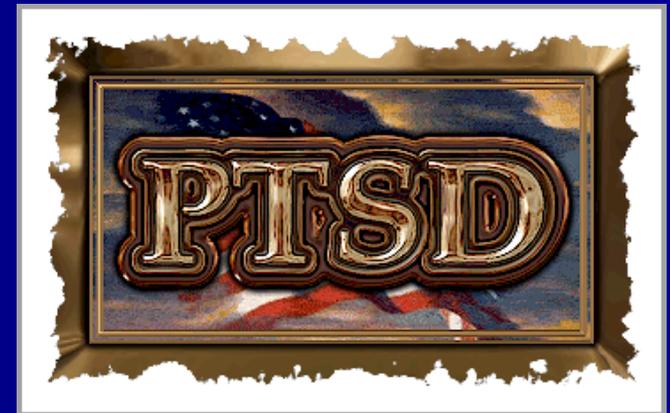
- ❑ General overview of PTSD
- ❑ Overlap between PTSD and TBI
- ❑ Overview of PTSD in College Students
- ❑ Overview of PTSD in Student Veterans
- ❑ Accommodating Students with PTSD
- ❑ Resources- Colorado, Wyoming, National

How common is PTSD?

- ❑ 60% of men and 50% of women experience at least one lifetime traumatic event.
- ❑ Approximately 8% of men and 20% of women will develop PTSD.
- ❑ Women = 2 x risk

Definition of PTSD

An anxiety disorder resulting from exposure to an experience involving direct or indirect threat of serious harm or death; may be experienced alone (rape/assault) or in company of others (military combat)



PTSD Stressors

- ❑ Violent human assault
- ❑ Natural catastrophes
- ❑ Accidents
- ❑ Deliberate man-made disasters

Symptoms of PTSD

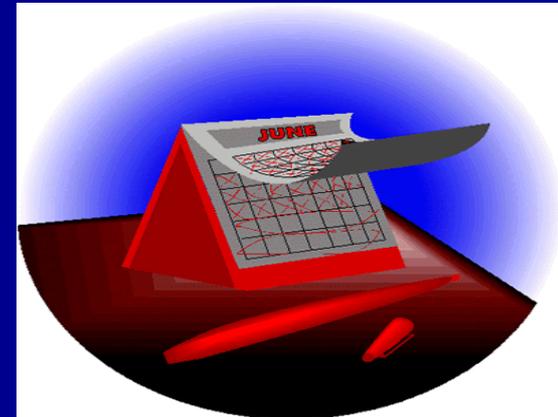
- ✓ Recurrent thoughts of the event
- ✓ Flashbacks/ Nightmares
- ✓ Emotional numbness (“it don’ t matter”); reduced interest or involvement in work or outside activities
- ✓ Intense guilt or worry/anxiety
- ✓ Angry outbursts and irritability
- ✓ Feeling “on edge,” hyperarousal/ hyper-alertness
- ✓ Avoidance of thoughts/situations that remind person of the trauma

Duration of PTSD

- To meet criteria for PTSD, symptom duration must be at least one month

- **Acute** PTSD: duration of symptoms is less than 3 months
- **Chronic** PTSD: duration of symptoms is 3 months or more

- Often, the disorder is more severe and lasts longer when the stress is of human design (i.e., war-related trauma)



PTSD is a failure to adapt

- It's adaptive for people to have strong reactions to a traumatic event.
- If you are being chased by a ferocious dog, it's adaptive if you run away.
- It's your body's way of protecting you.
- Over time we want to see these behaviors decrease. (avoidance)
- PTSD is a failure to adapt **because extreme reactions occur even when there is no threat.**

Potential Consequences of PTSD

Physiological Concerns

- ❖ Physical complaints are often treated symptomatically rather than as an indication of PTSD

Potential Consequences of PTSD

Social and Interpersonal Problems:



- Relationship issues
- Low self-esteem
- Alcohol and substance abuse
- Employment problems
- Homelessness
- Trouble with the law
- Isolation

Potential Consequences of PTSD

Self-Destructive & Dangerous Behaviors:

- Substance use
- Suicidal attempts
- Risky sexual behavior
- Reckless driving
- Self-injury

“Complex PTSD”

Long-term, prolonged (months or years), repeated trauma or total physical or emotional control by another

Concentration camps

Prisoner of war

Prostitution brothels

Childhood abuse

Long-term, severe domestic or physical abuse

Comorbid/Coexisting Problems

Individuals with PTSD are also at risk for:

- Depression and Anxiety
- Substance abuse
- Spectrum of severe mental illnesses
- Aggressive behavior problems
- Sleep problems like nightmares, insomnia or irregular sleep schedules
- Acquired Brain Injury
 - Traumatic Brain Injury

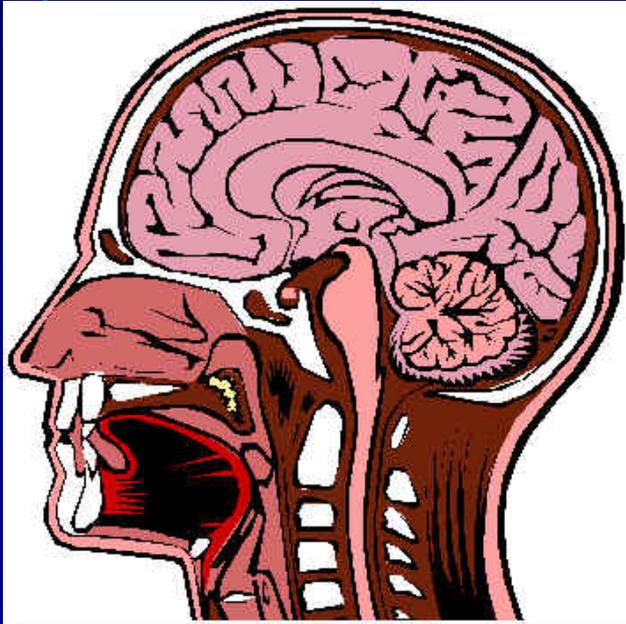


PTSD and TBI

Symptom Overlap

- Emotional lability
- Difficulty with attention and concentration
- Amnesia for the event
- Irritability and anger
- Difficulty with over-stimulation (e.g., lights, noises)
- Social isolation/difficulty in social situations

TBI → PTSD



Research shows that among TBI patients who have a memory for the event, they were **more likely** to develop PTSD than those with no memory

Psychological problems with College Students

- 38% Depression
- 40% Anxiety
- 9% Non-suicidal self-injury
- 11% Substance abuse/ dependence
- 7% Eating disorders
- 15% Suicidal thoughts & behaviors

(AUCCCD, 2011)

Trauma in College Students

- Prevalence of traumatic events 67%-84%
- Rates of current PTSD 6 – 17%
- **This is a higher rate than the general population**
- College women are at greatest risk for specific traumas such as sexual & interpersonal violence (Smyth et al., 2008)

Read et al. Study (2011)

- **66% students reported exposure to trauma**; 9% had PTSD
- 25% reported physical assault; 7% reported sexual assault (11% women, 2% men)
- Most common traumas: Life-threatening illness & sudden/ expected death of loved one (1/3 of sample)

**Now to make things even more
complicated...**

A look at Student Veterans



Impact on Colleges & Universities

- Between 1.8 – 2.1 million troops have deployed for Global War on Terror
- 900,000 OIF/ OEF Veterans have separated from active duty since the beginning of war
- 42% seeking care from Department of Veterans Affairs

Student Veterans

- Veterans and military Service Members who are active duty or in the reserves who are enrolled in postsecondary education.
- Over 660,000 undergraduate students are Veterans-- 3% of all undergraduates. (National Center for PTSD, 2012)

Student Veterans

- 215,000 undergraduate students are active duty or in the reserves--1% of all undergraduates.
- Increasing number are using GI (Government Issued) education benefits for postsecondary education.
- 40% of military Service Members were using Veteran education benefits in 2007-2008. (National Center for PTSD, 2012)

Characteristic of Student Veterans

- 73% of student Veterans are male; 27% are female.
- Only 15% are traditionally aged college students (18-23).
- **31.4% are age 24 - 29.**
- 28.2% are between the ages of 30 - 39.
- 24.9% are 40 or older. (National Center for PTSD, 2012)

What will you see?

“Signature Injuries” from GWT:

1. Physical injuries from blasts (burns, amputations, orthopedic injuries)
2. Operational Stress Injuries/ Mental Health Injuries (PTSD)
3. Traumatic Brain Injury

PTSD in Veterans

- Of those receiving VA care, 45% have an initial diagnosis of PTSD. (Kang, 2009)
- 20% of recent Veterans experience PTSD and depression (RAND Corporation, 2011)
- 10 years of combat have resulted in escalated rates of PTSD, substance abuse, depression, and suicide

(U.S. Department of Defense, 2010).

TBI due to Blast Injuries

- Armed forces are sustaining attacks by rocket-propelled grenades, improvised explosive devices, and land mines almost daily in Iraq and Afghanistan
- Injured soldiers require specialized care acutely and over time



National Center for Veterans Studies Survey

- 1st national survey for student Veterans
- Online survey (all but 4 states)
- 628 student Veterans participated
- Exploration of their emotional adjustment, psychological symptoms, and suicide risk

National Center for Veterans Studies Survey

Results:

- 34.6 % Severe Anxiety
- 45.6% Significant symptoms of PTSD
- 23.7% Severe Depression



National Center for Veterans Studies Survey

Results:

- 46 % suicidal thoughts, 20 % suicidal plan, 10.4% "thinking about suicide often or very often"
- 7.7 % Suicide attempt in past
- 3.8 % Suicide attempt likely in future

Take Home message

- Large numbers of student Veterans are experiencing significant psychiatric symptoms
- **Considerable number of student Veterans at heightened risk for Suicide!**

**Working with students
with PTSD:
What is important
to remember?**

Remember...

- Not every student with PTSD will require adjustments or accommodations
- Others may only require a few modifications (Shea, 2010)

Remember...

- Veterans with new injuries are just **developing an understanding** of how their disability is impacting their learning
- Most do not identify with the term "disabled"
- Mental health stigma- significant within Military

Acceptance of Disability Status

- Asking for help and view of their disability is often seen as a **sign of weakness**
- Psychological process for accepting disability status may take time
- Student Veterans are also reintegrating into social and family lives while going back to school

Remember...

- May not yet have a disability rating from the VA, and **they incorrectly assume** this disqualifies them from receiving services/ accommodations.
- Bringing disability services, education, and awareness to the attention of student Veterans is **critically important.**

Factors impacting willingness to seek services

Non-combat injuries:

- Veterans who sustained non-combat injuries may be reluctant to discuss due to shame
- "I don't deserve help...my buddy was hurt in combat and I wasn't."

**Accommodations & Tips
for College Students
with PTSD**

Accommodation Considerations

Veteran integrating into care within VA →

- It can take **months** for Veterans to get appointments at VA
- Especially disability evaluation and therapy appointments
- Flexibility from professors due to these reasons will reduce stress
- These appointments are important for their care!

Accommodation Considerations

Coping with Stress →

- Additional time for assignments
- Allow students to take a **short break** (5-10 min) during class sessions
- Permit **flexibility** in class session attendance schedules as long as absences do not conflict with core class requirements

Accommodation Considerations

Dealing with Emotions →

- Provide education about college counseling services, VA services, and Vet centers to students
- Allow for a **support animal**
- Allow telephone calls to doctors, counselors
- Encourage the student to **walk away & take a break** if an unhealthy interaction is occurring



Accommodation Considerations

Panic Attacks →

- Allow for a break or place to go **to use relaxation techniques** or contact a support person
- Identify and **remove environmental triggers** if possible



General Tips- for Flashbacks

- Encourage them to keep their eyes open. Have them look around the room and notice where they are.
- Remind the student where they are, what year it is, and that they are safe.
- Have them get up and move around if necessary.
- Have them get a drink of water and splash water on face.



General Tips- for Flashbacks

- Display calmness
- Provide reassurance
- Orient to present (flashbacks will take a person to the "past")
- Allow them to take a break, or call someone as necessary



**Can students recover
from PTSD?**

Yes, therapy can work!

- ❖ People **CAN recover** from PTSD.
- ❖ Empirically Supported Trauma-Focused Therapies
 - ✓ Prolonged Exposure (PE)
 - ✓ Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)/ Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
 - ✓ Eye Movement Desensitization & Reprocessing (EMDR)

Identifying PTSD Treatment Specialists

Expert therapists



- Psychiatrists (MD/DO)
- Clinical Psychologists (PhD./PsyD.)
- Social Workers (LCSW/MSW)
- Psychiatric Nurse
- They should have **specialized experience** in treating PTSD.

Resources for Students with PTSD

- Encourage students to utilize their university counseling center (often times free)
- Encourage students to contact their insurance provider for a list of therapists who specialize in PTSD treatment
- Try to find a therapist who specializes in: Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT); Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT); Prolonged Exposure therapy (PE); or eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR).

Key Points

- PTSD is more common in college students and student Veterans compared to general population
- Suicide risk is increased with PTSD
- Accommodations can help reduce stressors improving academic success
- PTSD can be treated successfully

Resources for Student Veterans



- Veteran's Affairs services: www.va.gov
- National Centers for PTSD www.ncptsd.va.gov or www.ncptsd.org
- VA Health Benefits Service Center 1.877.222.VETS or 1.800.827.1000
- Vet Centers' national number 1.800.905.4675
- PTSD support groups can be located through VA, National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI), or About.com's trauma resource page
- Department of Health Services- in the blue government pages of the phone book

National Resources for Student Veterans



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PTSD Resources for Student Veterans in Wyoming

- **Cheyenne VA Medical**

- Phone: 307-778-7550 or 888-483-9127
- PTSD Clinical Team (PCT) Outpatient
- Irena Danczik, MD (307) 778-7650

- **Sheridan VA Medical Center**

- Phone: 307-672-3473 Or 307-672-3473
- PTSD Domiciliary (PTSD Dom) Intensive/Inpatient
- John Slaughter, LCSW (307) 675-3638

TBI Resources for Student Veterans in Wyoming

- Brain Injury Alliance of Wyoming--Casper, WY
- 307-473-1767 or 800-643-6457

- Easter Seals Wyoming--Acquired Brain Injury Program--Sheridan, WY
- 307-674-1639

- Wyoming Department of Health--Cheyenne, WY
- 307-777-7656, 866-571-0944

PTSD Resources for Student Veterans in Colorado

- **Colorado Springs Clinic**

- Phone: 719-327-5660 Or 719-327-5660

- **Women's Stress Disorder Treatment Team (WSDTT) Outpatient**

- Nancy Galbraith (719) 667-4406

- **Grand Junction VA Medical Center**

- Phone: 970-242-0731 Or 866-206-6415

- **PTSD Clinical Team (PCT) Outpatient**

- Heather Martinez (970) 263-2824

Resources for Student Veterans in Colorado

- VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System(ECHCS)
- Phone: 303-399-8020

- **Women's Stress Disorder Treatment Team (WSDTT) Outpatient**
- David Kartchner (303) 399-8020 X 3243

- **PTSD Residential Rehabilitation Program (PRRP) Intensive/Inpatient**
- Renee Labor, LCSW (303) 399-8020 X 3890

Internet Resources for Students with PTSD

- Sidran Institute Help Desk- find therapists who specialize in trauma treatment (410) 825-8888
- Anxiety and Depression Association of American- finds therapists by location and mental health disorder
- EMDR International Association finds professionals who provide EMDR

Internet Resources for Students with PTSD

- American Psychological Association (find a therapist)
- Psychology Today (find a therapist)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) offers a mental health services locator by location and type of facility (inpatient, outpatient, residential)

Hotline Resources for College Students

- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**
- 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)

- **Treatment Referral Hotline (Substance Abuse)**
- 1-800-662-HELP (1-800-662-4357)

- **National Sexual Assault Hotline**
- 1-800-656-HOPE (1-800-656-4673)

Questions?

Thank You

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