



Dispelling the Myths of PTSD

Presented by:
Dr. David E. Urso

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Defined

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a type of anxiety disorder.

It can occur after you've seen or experienced a traumatic event that involved the threat of injury or death.

Presentation Goals

1. Awareness and Education
 2. Basic knowledge of PTSD and interventions
 3. Common signs and symptoms of PTSD
 4. Consequences of traumatic stress
- 

PTSD Awareness

- ▶ PTSD has been called the "signature injury" of the military conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. (According to a 2008 study by the RAND Corporation.):
- ▶ Nearly one in five Veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars is currently living with depression or stress disorders

Who May Get Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?

- ▶ Car Accident Victims
 - ▶ Victims of Crimes
 - ▶ People in Disasters (Hurricanes, Floods, etc.)
 - ▶ Soldiers In Combat/Rescue Workers
 - ▶ **Some People Never Have PTSD**
- 

Origins of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

- ▶ World War I
 - ▶ Beginnings of Forward Treatment
 - ▶ World War II
 - ▶ Korean Conflict
 - ▶ Vietnam
 - ▶ Middle East
- 

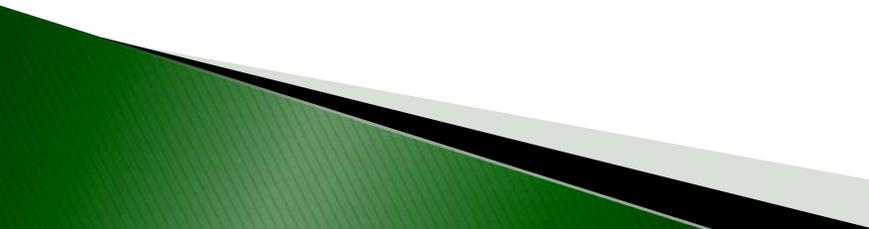
In Service/Post Service Interventions

- ▶ Promotion of positive attitude towards the mission
 - ▶ Prevention of stress related casualties
 - ▶ Treatment and early return to duty
 - ▶ Prevention of harmful stress reactions; PTSD, misconduct
 - ▶ **Post Service: No problems or counseling**
- 

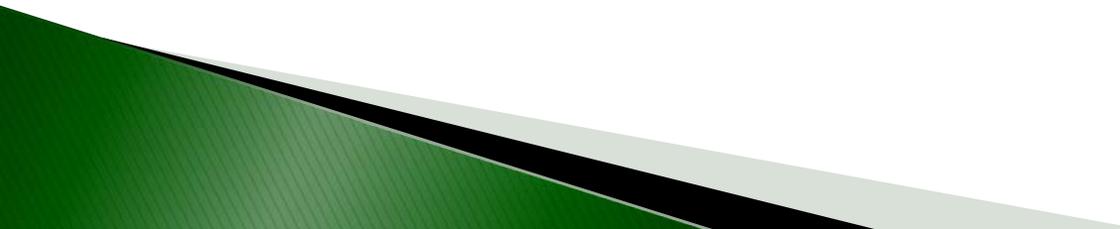
History of Combat Stress

- ▶ Civil War: Soldiers heart – homesick form of stress casualty
 - ▶ World War I: Shell shock (organic), war neurosis
 - ▶ World War II to Present: Battle fatigue; Hysteria Neurosis Syndrome
 - ▶ Vietnam: PTSD
 - ▶ Middle East: PTSD/Acute Stress Disorder
- 

Forward/Post Service Treatment

- ▶ Proximity – as close to scene as possible
 - ▶ Immediacy – as soon as possible
 - ▶ Simplicity – simple treatment, rest, food, comfort
 - ▶ Expectancy – recovery is expected
 - ▶ Post Service: no problems or pharmacology/talk therapy/group therapy
- 

Consequences of Traumatic Stress

- ▶ PTSD
 - ▶ Suicide / Depression
 - ▶ Substance Abuse–ETOH and Drugs
 - ▶ Problems in Relationships
 - ▶ Pathologic Forms of Grief
 - ▶ No Consequences–Self Resolution
- 

Impact On Employment

Although their injuries may not be visible, people with PTSD may face difficulties, especially with employment.

- ▶ As noted earlier, these individuals may experience:
 - headaches,
 - vertigo,
 - balance problems,
 - anxiety and sleep disturbance,
 - among other symptoms.

Employment (Cont.)

- ▶ Possible Cognitive Symptoms including:
 - Short-term memory deficits,
 - poor concentration and
 - decision-making difficulties.
- ▶ All of these have the potential to interfere with everyday activities, in and out of the workplace.
- ▶ However, not all PTSD cases are the same, nor are all severe, and
- ▶ **many people with PTSD won't face workplace challenges at all.**

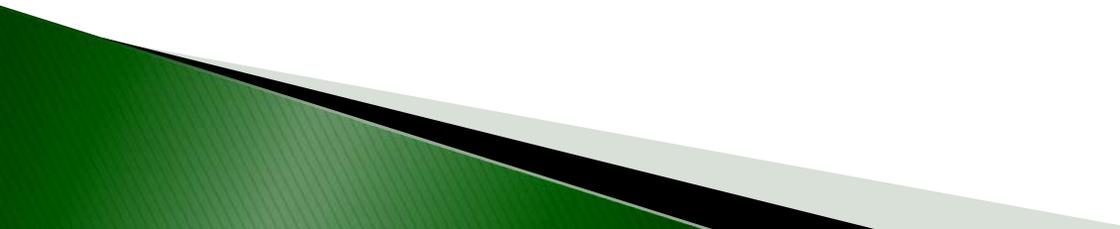
Employment (Cont.)

- ▶ Employers and co-workers should know that employment can play a very positive role in the recovery of a person with PTSD.
 - ▶ Employment enables many people with disabilities, including those with PTSD, to fully participate in society.
 - ▶ It also provides greater social interaction and connections that can reduce isolation and build social capital.
- 

Employment (Cont.)

- ▶ According to the National Council on Disability, people who regain employment following the onset of a disability report greater life satisfaction and better adjustment than do people who are not employed.
 - ▶ For these reasons, gainful employment can be one important component in the recovery and rehabilitation of returning service members with PTSD.
- 

Employment (Cont.)

- ▶ First and foremost, there are no specific jobs best suited for any "disability."
 - ▶ Jobs are best matched to a person's interests, strengths and abilities.
 - ▶ Because the effects of PTSD vary widely, there are numerous occupations that any person with PTSD can pursue.
 - ▶ Individuals with PTSD are finding jobs in a variety of settings.
- 

Employment (Cont.)

- ▶ Regular daily schedules
 - ▶ Access to memory aids (such as voice recorders, PDAs, and task checklists)
 - ▶ Tasks without a great deal of daily deviation
 - ▶ Low levels of distracting noise and light
 - ▶ Flexibility to take regular breaks
- 

Myths of PTSD

- ▶ PTSD develops differently in different people.
 - And people, by virtue of having a diagnosed PTSD condition, do not pose a direct threat to themselves or others.
- ▶ Employees who manage their symptoms (often through medication and/or psychotherapy) are very unlikely to pose a threat.

Myths of PTSD, cont.

- ▶ Managers may help reduce the overall stress in the work environment or mitigate known vulnerabilities to stress by providing an environment that is open, supportive and provides job accommodation(s) as needed.
 - ▶ Remember, most symptoms will decrease over time.
- 

Myths of PTSD, cont.

- ▶ Not all people with PTSD will need accommodations on the job.
- ▶ When they are necessary, managers should know that workplace supports are generally low cost or no cost, and simple to implement.

Myths of PTSD, cont.

- ▶ Managers have much to gain because by successfully employing a Veteran with PTSD, there are bottom line benefits from an experienced Veteran, as well as contribute to their successful recovery.
- ▶ Additionally, accommodations created for one employee often have a positive impact on the performance of other employees.

Managing for Success

Employers everywhere are experiencing the benefits of hiring people with disabilities – including Veterans with PTSD – by creating a flexible, inclusive workplace where all employees can perform their jobs effectively.

Managing for productivity is something employers do for all of their employees, regardless of disability.

Managing for Success

When evaluating whether an employee needs a workplace accommodation, consider the following questions:

- ▶ First and foremost, has the employee with PTSD requested or been consulted regarding possible accommodations?
 - ▶ Is the employee with PTSD experiencing any functional limitations that affect their job performance?
- 

Managing For Success

- ▶ What specific job tasks are problematic?
- ▶ What accommodations are available to alleviate these limitations?
- ▶ Contact your Reasonable Accommodation Designee to begin the process:
<http://www.targetcenter.dm.usda.gov/content/ralist>

Accommodating PTSD

Memory and Concentration:

- ▶ work task checklists,
- ▶ Clipboards. and
- ▶ tape recorders,
- ▶ white noise or environmental sound machines (to help eliminate distractions)

Accommodating PTSD

Time Management and Organization:

- ▶ Schedule-reminders (telephone, pagers, alarm clocks)
 - ▶ Stop watches or timers for time management
 - ▶ Job coaches who make frequent, scheduled site visits
 - ▶ Mentoring by a co-worker or retired worker
- 

Accommodating PTSD

Dealing with Emotions:

- ▶ Desktop/computer monitor mirrors to mitigate startle response
 - ▶ Providing encouragement, moral support and a listening ear
 - ▶ Support for pursuing treatment and assistance, even during work hours
- 

Accommodating PTSD

Fatigue and Stress:

- ▶ Scheduled rest breaks to prevent stimulus overload and fatigue
 - ▶ Flexible work schedules and/or job sharing with another employee
- 

Accommodating PTSD

- ▶ PTSD and symptoms of any psychological condition may ebb and flow, and that the person may experience good days and more challenging days
 - ▶ Treatment for post-traumatic stress is a process – and one that can be effectively managed.
 - ▶ Supporting employees who have disclosed a need to regularly follow up or comply with treatment recommendations is an important part of the recovery process.
- 

Signs and Symptoms of Trauma

- ▶ **Common Physical Signs:**
 - Trouble sleeping, shock, numbness, trouble eating
- ▶ **Common Emotional Reactions:**
 - Nightmares, anger, guilt, sadness, hopelessness, anhedonia (inability to feel pleasure)

Common Signs

Physical Signs

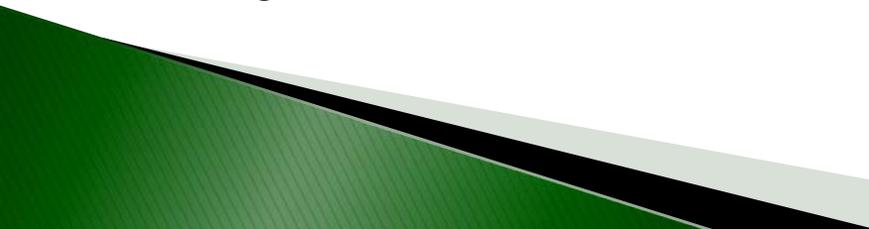
- ▶ Tension: aches, pains, trembling, fidgeting
 - ▶ Jumpiness: startle at sounds/movement
 - ▶ Cold sweat, dry mouth
 - ▶ Pounding heart, dizzy
 - ▶ Feeling out of breath, breathing too much
 - ▶ Upset stomach
 - ▶ Fatigue
- 

Common Signs (cont.)

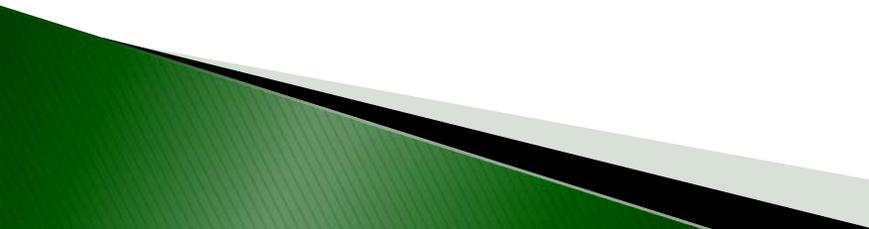
Mental and Emotional

- ▶ Anxiety
 - ▶ Irritability
 - ▶ Difficulty concentrating, thinking
 - ▶ Difficulty paying attention, remembering
 - ▶ Trouble sleeping
 - ▶ Grief
 - ▶ Anger
- 

Common Signs (cont.)

- ▶ Feeling badly about mistakes
 - ▶ Losing confidence
 - ▶ PTSD can develop immediately following the traumatic event – or may take weeks, months or even years to develop.
 - ▶ The symptoms of PTSD can arise suddenly, gradually or come and go over time.
 - ▶ What is important to remember is the fact that PTSD, like other psychology health injuries, is treatable.
- 

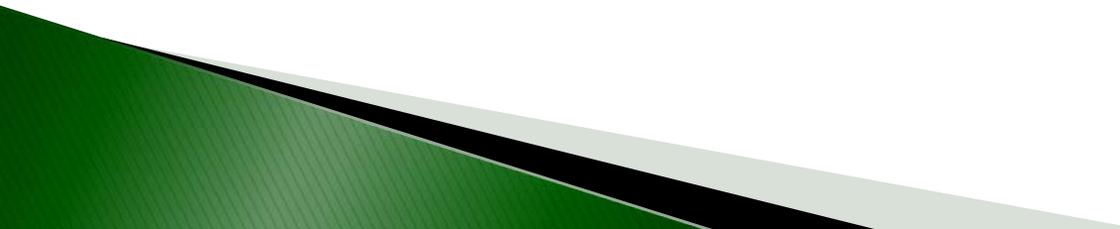
Possible Family Issues

- ▶ No issues at all
 - ▶ Feel pressured by requests for time and attention
 - ▶ Be expected to perform home, work, and family responsibilities
 - ▶ Family treating you as a child again
 - ▶ Different relationships/new behaviors with spouse
- 

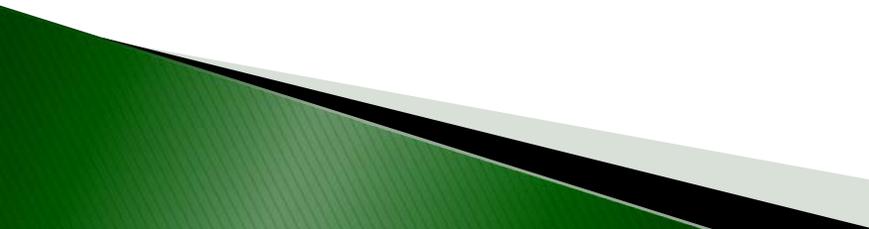
Possible Family Issues, cont.

- ▶ Confrontation by needs of the partner
 - ▶ Financial concerns
 - ▶ Readjustment to work
 - ▶ Feeling bored
 - ▶ Trouble finding work
- 

Other Family Issues

- ▶ Feeling disconnected or detached from family or partner
 - ▶ Inability to tell them what happened (not wanting to scare them)
 - ▶ Hard to express positive feelings
 - ▶ Rigid discipline may no longer be appropriate
- 

Reuniting With Family

- ▶ Adjusting relationship with your children
 - ▶ Understand their possible anger
 - ▶ Take time to discuss things–How they feel
 - ▶ Accept how they feel; Their feelings are normal
 - ▶ Re–establish routines with them
- 

Re-Entering the Workforce

- ▶ Supervisors / Managers:
 - Make use of Veterans Special Hiring Authorities
 - Communicate expectations of the position
 - Encourage the employee to communicate issues with the supervisor/manager
- ▶ Wellness Branch:
 - Provide resources for those individuals with issues, i.e. EAP, VA
- ▶ Human Resources / Civil Rights:
 - Veterans Special Emphasis Program,
 - Buddy System,
 - Special Hiring Authorities

Veterans Hiring Authorities

Veterans' Recruitment Appointment (VRA) –

The Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA) program allows certain eligible veterans to be appointed noncompetitively to federal civil service jobs that lead to a career or career-conditional appointment in the competitive service, upon satisfactory completion of two years of service.

Veterans Hiring Authorities (Cont)

30 Percent or More Disabled Veterans

Veterans considered to be 30 percent or more disabled as a result of a service-connected injury may be given a non-competitive temporary or term appointment to a position for which they are qualified. After demonstrating satisfactory performance, the veteran may be converted at any time to a career or career-conditional appointment.

Veterans Hiring Authorities (Cont)

Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA)

The VEOA gives eligible veterans the right to compete for vacant positions offered under agency merit promotion procedures that are open to candidates from outside the agency.

Hiring Military Spouses

- ▶ OPM Statistics: 1st quarter of 2010– Only 61 spouses were hired government-wide under this special authority
- ▶ DOD hired 58 in the roles of clerks, HR, accounting, and med. support staff. DOI– hired 2 as clerks and VA– 1 as a clerk

Hiring Spouses (Cont.)

- ▶ Open to: spouse with permanent change of station, un-married widows, widows of service personnel killed on active duty,
 - ▶ Spouse of service personnel who are 100% disabled as a result of active duty
- 

Employer Incentives for Hiring Veterans

Lon O'Neil, President and CEO of the Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM)

- ▶ Conducted a survey to identify the benefits and challenges of hiring military veterans, and to outline resources for employers in recruiting and hiring veterans.
- ▶ The results are intended to assist employers in better supporting the military.

Assimilation to The Workplace

- ▶ Translating military skills to civilian job experience (60 percent);
 - ▶ Difficulty transitioning from the structure and hierarchy in the military culture to the civilian workplace culture (48 percent);
 - ▶ Post-traumatic stress issues (PTSD) or other mental health issues (46 percent);
- 

Assimilation to the Workplace

- ▶ Time it takes for these employees to adapt to civilian workplace culture (36 %);
- ▶ Combat-related physical disabilities (22%);
- ▶ Employees tend to be underqualified for the positions they apply for (18%).

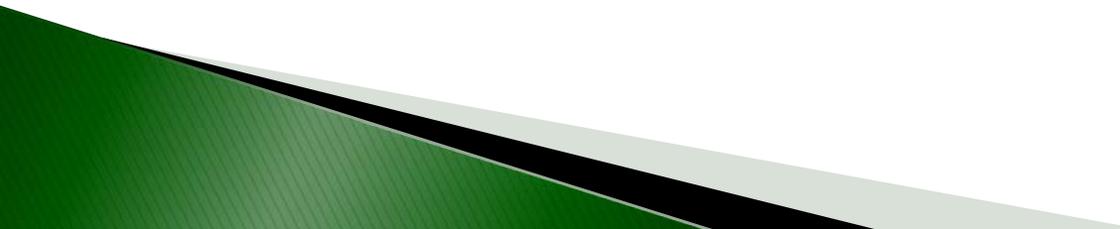
Reasons To Hire Veterans

- ▶ Strong sense of responsibility (97%);
 - ▶ Ability to work under pressure (96%);
 - ▶ Ability see a task through to completion (92%);
 - ▶ Strong leadership skills (91%);
 - ▶ High degree of professionalism (91%);
 - ▶ Strong problem-solving skills (90%);
- 

Reasons to Hire Veterans, cont.

- ▶ Ability to multitask (89%);
 - ▶ Ability to adapt to changing situations quickly (88%);
 - ▶ Ability to give back to U.S. veterans by showing gratitude for their service (88%);
 - ▶ Positive impact on the image and/or credibility of organization (86%);
- 

Reasons To Hire Veterans, cont.

- ▶ Sense of patriotism at organization (77 %);
 - ▶ Technology/information technology skills and training (77%);
 - ▶ Strategic planning/foresight (74%);
- 

Reasons to Hire Veterans, cont.

- ▶ Fulfillment of federal and/or state affirmative action requirements (73%);
- ▶ Global perspective (61%); and
- ▶ Knowledge/expertise of defense issues (60%).



The People's Department

Resources

USDA Veterans Employment Program *(Recruitment/Hiring Support)*

Monshi Ramdass (“Ram”),

Monshi.Ramadass@dm.usda.gov

Roseal Fowlkes, Roseal.Fowlkes@dm.usda.gov

USDA Disability Employment Program *(Reasonable Accommodations, Recruitment, Hiring, Retention Teams)*

Alison Levy, Alison.Levy@dm.usda.gov

QUESTIONS?

Dr. David E. Urso (301) 851-2940
David.e.urso@aphis.usda.gov