



MT. ANGEL POST NO. 89

Post Office Box 1118  
Mt. Angel, Oregon 97362

# YOU ARE NOT ALONE

VA CRISIS HOTLINE AT 800-273-8255

## Post Traumatic Stress Disorder *A guide to identification and getting help*

### What is PTSD?

Stress is a natural reaction to a traumatic or life-threatening event. A traumatic event can have such a strong impact on an individual that his or her performance of daily functions, interaction with family and friends and the ability to stay gainfully employed are greatly compromised. Without proper and timely treatment, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) may become chronic and permanent.



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The American Legion has established a committee to study PTSD to better understand and consider different treatment programs.

PTSD has been known by many names through history: Da Costa Syndrome, Soldier's Heart, Shell Shock, Battle Fatigue, War Neurosis and Vietnam Syndrome. It may occur after witnessing death, mass destruction, natural disasters, terrorism, crime,

rape and/or abuse. It can lead to other conditions like depression, substance abuse, memory and cognition issues, and other physical and mental health diagnoses.

For veterans, stressful traumatic events may include serving in combat zones that require a constant state of awareness. Such events can include involvement in peace-keeping missions, training accidents, military sexual assault and medical emergencies. Non-combat stressors – such as a death in the family, or a sexual assault – can cause the survivor to react with intense fear, helplessness, and hopelessness.

### Who suffers from PTSD?

Anyone can experience PTSD symptoms after exposure to a traumatic event. A PTSD diagnosis is not a sign of weakness or malingering. There is no way to predict who will or will not develop PTSD symptoms; it depends on how individuals perceive stressful situations.

### SYMPTOMS OF PTSD

- Recurrent, intrusive and distressing thoughts about the event.
- Recurrent dreams, nightmares (sometimes called "night terrors") about the event.
- Flashbacks (a sense of reliving the event).
- Distress caused by reminders of the event (sights, sounds, smells).
- Alienation, isolation, and avoidance of people and places.
- Emotional numbing.
- No sense of future.
- Survivor guilt (for having survived when others did not, or for behavior required for survival).
- Angry outbursts.
- Difficulty concentrating or remembering.
- Hyper-vigilant, or survivalist behavior.
- Exaggerated startled response.

These symptoms may lead to substance abuse, suicidal thoughts and feelings, or other self-destructive behavior.



Genetic or biological factors may influence how a person will react to extreme stress. It is not uncommon following a life-altering event to experience deep sadness, depression and grief. This emotional state is known as acute stress.

### **What help is available?**

It is not unusual for problems to appear months or years after the initial trauma.

There is help available. Whether you were in the military many years ago, or if you are still in uniform, there are trained professionals who understand military trauma and PTSD treatment at DoD and VA health-care facilities.

The VA offers psychotherapy treatments or "counseling," and has inpatient PTSD programs, residential treatment, and day hospital programs. In addition, VA has special programs for substance abuse, homelessness and women veterans suffering from PTSD. There are also many private clinicians or not-for-profit agencies that offer specialized treatment for PTSD similar to care provided by VA. There are clinicians, psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers who are certified trauma specialists (CTS) who are qualified to treat PTSD. If symptoms are particularly severe and persistent, medication may be necessary after careful consultations with doctors and pharmacists.

Support groups can be found online at **www.va.gov** for medical and benefits information. More than 3,000 American Legion service officers can also be contacted online at **www.legion.org/serviceofficers** to provide help.

### **How to file a claim**

When your PTSD symptoms are the result of time in service, you may be eligible for disability compensation from VA. Go to **www.legion.org/serviceofficers** to find out more about your benefits. You will need military records, such as your DD214, personnel records, and any proof of combat awards. You may need to have a VA exam if you have not seen a doctor. This exam is free.

The American Legion Claims Coach app also provides resources, information and contacts to reach service officers and understand the claims process. The app may be downloaded from **www.legion.org/mobileapps** or the iTunes or Google Play store.

You may also call the American Legion at **800-433-3318**.

**Provided by  
Mt. Angel American Legion  
Post #89**



This document is abridged from the American Legion PTSD information resource.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Department of Veterans Affairs**

Crisis Hotline.....	800-273-8255
National Center for PTSD.....	802-296-6300
Benefits .....	800-827-1000
Center for Women Veterans.....	202-273-6193
Combat Veteran Call Center.....	877-927-8387
Medical Advice & Emergencies.....	800-929-7690
Website.....	www.ptsd.va.gov
Find a Vet Center.....	www.vetcenter.va.gov

### **Department of Defense**

TRICARE Western Region.....	877-988-9378
Military One Source.....	800-342-9647
Social Security.....	800-772-1213

### **Substance Abuse**

Alcoholics Anonymous.....	212-870-3400
National Drug Abuse Helpline .....	800-662-4357

### **Child Abuse/Domestic Violence**

Child Abuse Hotline.....	800-633-5155
Domestic Violence Hotline .....	800-799-7233

### **Professional Referrals**

Association of Traumatic Stress Specialists .....	864-294-4337
International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies .....	847-480-9028
National Organization for Victims Assistance (NOVA).....	800-879-6682
National Veterans Foundation .....	888-777-4443

### **Other Programs**

Mental Health America.....	800-969-6642
Tragedy Assistance Program For Survivors .....	800-959-8277

### **The American Legion**

National Headquarters.....	317-630-1200
Washington DC Office.....	202-861-2700

**Or call toll-free.....800-433-3318**