

## *From Our Constituent Services Desk*

National PTSD Awareness Day is June 27; and, if you or a loved one has ever served in the military, you likely know someone with PTSD. It's quite possible you are suffering from PTSD, but may be afraid to say anything.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) first came to the forefront of America in the 1980s when the American Psychiatric Association added this health issue to its diagnostic manual of mental disorders. However, PTSD has actually been in existence since almost the beginning of time. You may have heard of it as shell shock, soldier's heart, combat fatigue, or war neurosis.

Regardless of the name, PTSD is a mental health condition that occurs when someone witnesses or experiences a severely traumatic event. It can occur after any traumatic event; a serious accident, a natural disaster, terrorism, etc., but most commonly we associate it with veterans who've experienced war and/or combat.

PTSD symptoms may include nightmares, memories of the trauma, avoidance of situations that bring back those unwanted memories, being easily agitated or irritable, exhibiting self-destructive behavior or social isolation. For some, these symptoms may subside over several months or years. For others, it can take a lifetime. Talking with your doctor or a counselor can help begin the recovery process.

For some, there can be a little known co-occurring condition known as Moral Injury. The VA describes [Moral Injury](#) as "... Events are considered morally injurious if they "transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations" (1). Thus, the key precondition for moral injury is an act of transgression, which shatters moral and ethical expectations that are rooted in religious or spiritual beliefs, or culture-based, organizational, and group-based rules about fairness, the value of life, and so forth." In these cases, speaking with religious leaders or religious counselors can be the catalyst needed to begin healing.

If you think you or a loved one is suffering from PTSD or Moral Injury, there are a lot of resources to help.

- There are [self-help apps and treatment companion apps](#) available for iOS and Android users. Click the link to see the list available on the VA website.
- There are excellent videos available from the [National Center for PTSD](#), from [Psych Armour](#), as well as, [PsychHub](#) to learn about PTSD, its symptoms and treatment options.
- [AboutFace](#) is a series of videos from Veterans, family members, and clinicians who share their experiences with PTSD and PTSD treatment.
- Civilians, Veterans, Service Members and their families can locate a local therapist through the [National Center for PTSD](#).

For veterans, there can be an added stressor in feeling their family won't understand, so they keep feelings and thoughts to themselves. In this case, you might encourage the veteran to join a Veteran Service Organization like the DAV, VFW or American Legion. They can also seek help through a [VA Vet Center](#). VA VET Centers are community-based counseling centers that provide a wide range of social and psychological services, including professional readjustment counseling to eligible veterans, active duty service members, including guard and reserve components and their families. It is a safe place to share feelings and thoughts with others who have seen and experienced the same types of trauma. From the VA's website:

*Life isn't always easy after a deployment. That's where Vet Centers can help. Vet Centers across the country provide a broad range of counseling, outreach, and referral services to combat Veterans and their families. Vet Centers guide Veterans and their families through many of the major adjustments in lifestyle that often occur after a Veteran returns from combat. Services for a Veteran may include individual and group counseling in areas such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), alcohol and drug assessment, and suicide prevention referrals. **All services are free of cost and are strictly confidential.***

In closing, it is critical to talk about what you are feeling or experiencing. Veterans and service members may call toll-free at 800-273-8255 and press "1," text 838255, or [you can chat online with a counselor](#). Calls, texts, and chats are **free, anonymous and confidential** resources available 24/7/365 to any Service Member, including guard and reservists, and any veteran, even if you've never sought treatment from the VA before.

If you have questions, or a specific problem with the Department of Veterans Affairs, please contact our office at [caseworkga11@mail.house.gov](mailto:caseworkga11@mail.house.gov) or 770-429-1776. We look forward to serving you, should you need our assistance.