



How PTS Affects the Military Community

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Photo by: Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Alexander C. Kubitza

Today's Agenda

- ❖ Definition of PTS(d)
- ❖ The Evolution of PTS(d) Clinical Vernacular
- ❖ Incidence Statistics
- ❖ Diagnostic Criteria & PTS(d) Symptomatology
 - ❖ Why is it important to have the diagnosis?
- ❖ PTS vs. PTS(d)
- ❖ Signs and Behaviors
- ❖ Risk Factors
- ❖ Triggers
- ❖ What does PTS(d) feel like?
- ❖ Moral Injury
- ❖ What YOU can do
- ❖ Suggested Resources
- ❖ Where to refer

Definition of PTSD

- ❖ The American Psychological Association defines Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTS[d]) as *an anxiety problem that develops in some people after extremely traumatic events, such as combat, crime, an accident, or natural disaster.*





The Evolution of PTSD Clinical Vernacular

- ❖ Civil War-“Soldier’s Heart”
- ❖ 1940’s- “Battle Fatigue”
- ❖ 1952- DSM-1 Referred to “Stress Response Syndrome”
- ❖ 1968- DSM-2 the condition was listed under “Situational Disorders”
- ❖ The Vietnam War provided many study subjects which resulted in an increase in research
- ❖ DSM-5 ('13)- NEW category: “Trauma- & Stressor- related disorders”

DIAGNOSTIC
AND
STATISTICAL
MANUAL OF

MENTAL DISORDERS



SECOND EDITION (DSM-II)
AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION

Incidence Rates of PTS(d) in the General Population

- ❖ 70% of adults in the U.S. have experienced some type of traumatic event at least once in their lives. This equates to approximately 223.4 million people
- ❖ Up to 20% of these people go on to develop PTS(d). As of today, that equates to approximately 44.7 million people who were or are struggling with PTS(d).
- ❖ An estimated 8% of Americans – 20 million people – have PTS(d) at any given time. That is equal to the total population of Texas.
- ❖ Women are more than twice as likely as men to develop PTS(d) than men.
- ❖ 12.9% of U.S. Veterans today have been diagnosed with PTSD

Most Common Trauma events by Gender

- ❖ Women are more likely to experience sexual assault and childhood sexual abuse
- ❖ Men are more likely to experience accidents, physical assault, combat, disaster, or witness a death or injury
- ❖ PTS(d) can happen to ANYONE! It is NOT a sign of weakness



Incidence Rates of PTSD in the General & Veteran Populations & Its Impact on the Vet/Mil Community

- ❖ According to the VA, experts estimate that up to 20% of OEF / OIF Veterans, up to 10% of Gulf War Veterans, and up to 30% of Vietnam War Veterans have experienced PTSD
- ❖ According to AFSP 45,979 Americans died by suicide in 2020. In the same year, there were 1.2 million suicide attempts. ~20 per day were Veterans. Many suffered from untreated PTSD

Diagnostic Criteria

Exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or

sexual violence by:

- ❖ Directly experiencing the traumatic event(s).
- ❖ Witnessing, in person, the event(s) as it occurred to others.
- ❖ Learning that the traumatic event(s) occurred to a close family member or close friend. (Actual or threatened death must have been violent or accidental.)
- ❖ Experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event(s) (e.g., first responders collecting human remains; police officers repeatedly exposed

PTSD

Intrusive symptoms

Ways that the trauma is “re-

experienced” in the present

Avoidance symptoms

Efforts to avoid internal (e.g., thoughts / feelings) or external (e.g., situations) that remind one of the trauma.

Impact on mood and/or beliefs

Ways the trauma has impacted beliefs (e.g., about self, others, or the world)

Impacts on mood (e.g., feeling detached or numb)

Hyperarousal



The Importance of having a PTS(d) Diagnosis

- ❖ Understanding what is happening
- ❖ Identification of treatment options
- ❖ Insurance (billing)
- ❖ Benefits, including service connection:

https://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/resources_comp01.asp



Signs and Behaviors

- ✿ Irritability
- ✿ Isolation
- ✿ Avoiding crowds, lines
- ✿ Avoiding trauma-reminders
- ✿ Using drugs / alcohol to cope or avoid



Risk Factors for PTSD(d) Among People in the Military

- ❖ Lower education status
- ❖ Previous trauma/s
- ❖ Drug and Alcohol use
- ❖ Poor Social / Family Supports
- ❖ History of Mental Illness
- ❖ Genetics



Internal Triggers

- ❖ Anger
- ❖ Memories
- ❖ Feeling lonely
- ❖ Feeling abandoned
- ❖ Feeling like one has no control
- ❖ Feeling vulnerable
- ❖ Pain

External Triggers

- ❖ An argument
- ❖ The news! (Afghanistan withdrawal and Ukraine)
- ❖ Smells
- ❖ Loss of a relationship
- ❖ Holidays
- ❖ A specific place
- ❖ Fireworks
- ❖ Seating arrangements in a restaurant

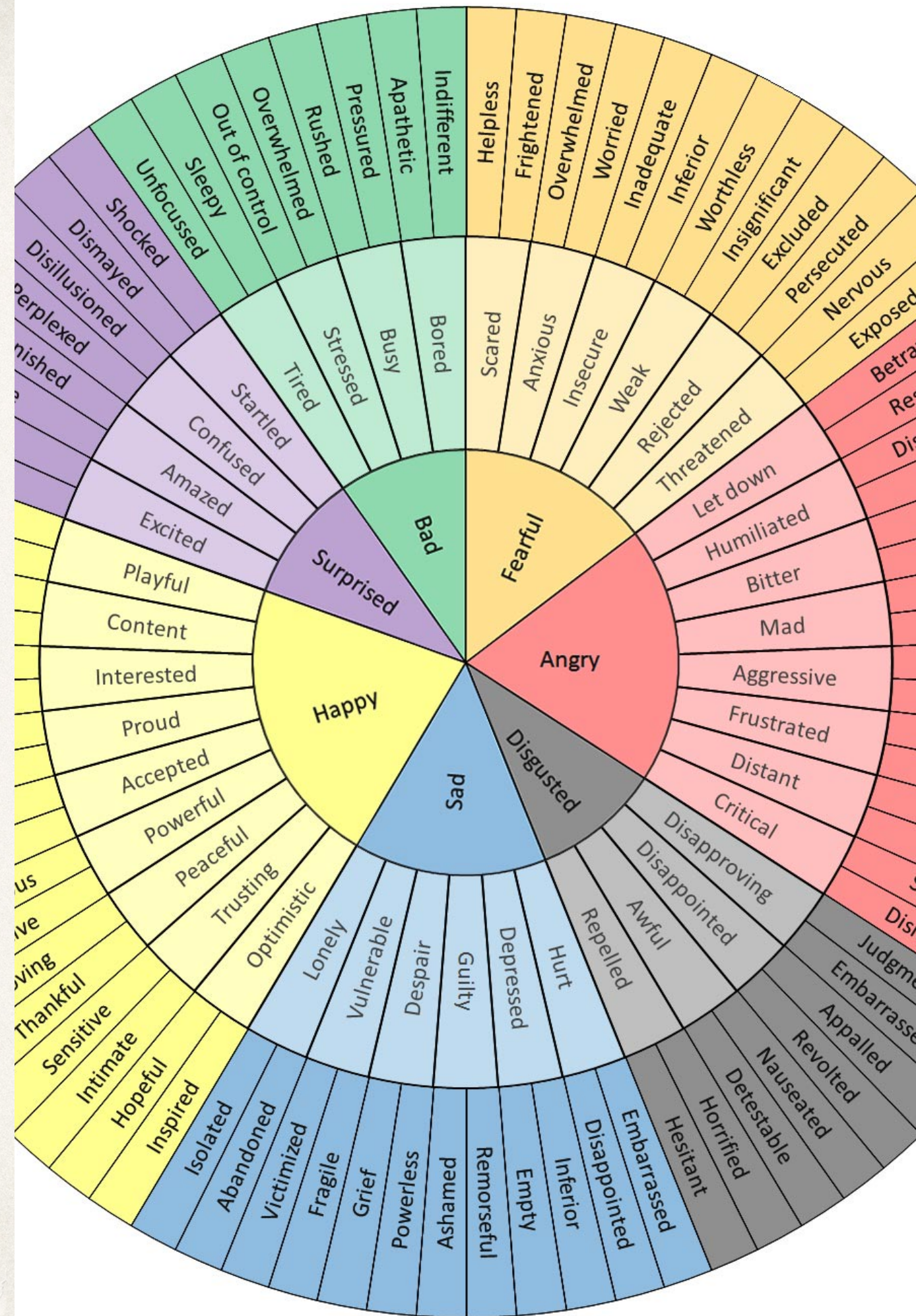
What does PTS(d) feel like?

“You know that feeling you get when someone jumps out and scares you and you are on high alert for a few minutes? That alertness never goes away for me.” — **Holly M.**

“You’re constantly on guard. You can never rest without thinking about something. I get panicked at the slightest thing that wouldn’t bother anyone like loud bangs or someone’s footsteps, or someone calling my name and I don’t know where it’s coming from.” — **Ross R.**

“It’s like being trapped in a time capsule. Your surroundings change, but you’re forever in the state of your trauma — flashes of memories through all five senses, body memories, nightmares — it consumes your entire being and never by choice!” — **Corey L.**

“It’s like living in a slideshow instead of a video. Everything is choppy and confusing. There’s doubt, chaos and terror night and day.” — **Adele E.**





What is “moral injury?”

Moral Injury

- ❖ The distressing psychological, behavioral, social, and sometimes spiritual aftermath of exposure to traumatic events
- ❖ People may have perpetrated, witnessed, or failed to prevent an event that contradicts deeply held beliefs, morals, and expectations

What can YOU do?

- ❖ You could review what the research says
- ❖ You could take further training to specialize in EBP's for treating PTS(d)
- ❖ This is what a few people who are struggling with PTS say they need from us:

<https://themighty.com/2016/03/22-ways-to-support-someone-with-ptsd-from-people-who-have-it/>

Suggested Resources

- ❖ VA's National Center for PTSD
- ❖ Anxiety & Depression Center Association of America
- ❖ NAMI
- ❖ DSM-5-TR
- ❖ On Combat, On Killing- Lt. Col. Dave Grossman
- ❖ TRIBE: On Homecoming & Belonging- Sebastian Unger
- ❖ Social Work Practice with Veterans- Dr. Gary Dick (UC!)



Where to refer Veterans for Specialized Support

- ❖ Cohen Veterans Network
- ❖ VAMC
- ❖ Headstrong
- ❖ Vets4Warriors
- ❖ Many other resources available!

Sources

- ❖ <https://www.verywellmind.com/ptsd-triggers-and-coping-strategies-2797557>
- ❖ <https://themighty.com/2017/01/what-ptsd-feels-like/>
- ❖ <https://themighty.com/2016/03/22-ways-to-support-someone-with-ptsd-from-people-who-have-it/>
- ❖ <https://afsp.org/suicide-statistics/>
- ❖ <https://www.apa.org/topics/ptsd>

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