



Combat-related Post-traumatic Stress:

Emerging Triggers & Treatments in the 21st Century

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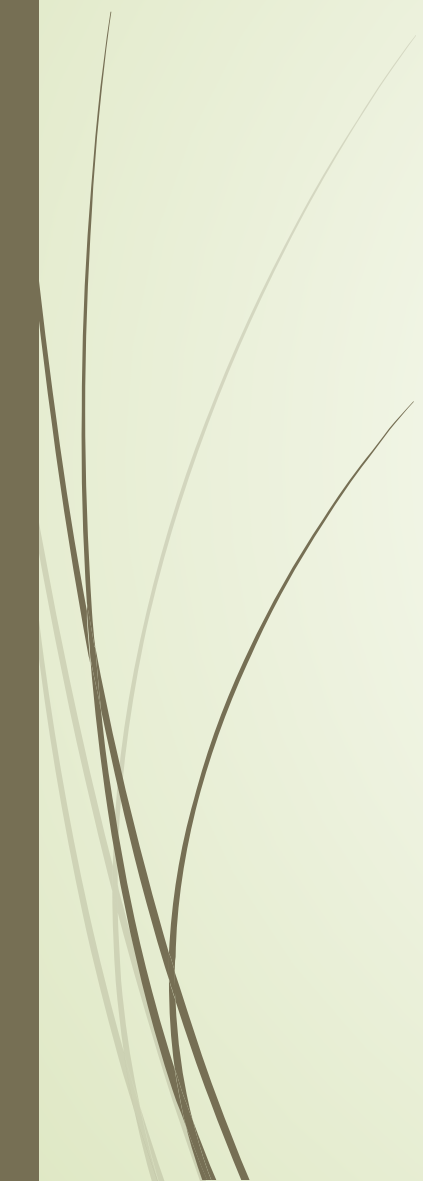
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Agenda

- A March through War Zones
 - Military Mindset
 - Warrior Mindset
 - C/PTSD Stress Cup Theory
 - Survivor Guilt & Suicide
 - Polyvagal Theory
 - Emerging Triggers & Homeland Conflict
 - Treatments & Emerging Interventions
 - Finding Meaning in Trauma
- 



Objectives



- ▶ Describe two examples of sudden encounters with countrymen of previous enemy combatants that can trigger Post Traumatic Stress-related symptoms.
- ▶ Contrast two conflicting emotions that can result from unplanned but forced contact with countrymen of previous enemy combatants.
- ▶ Identify two emerging treatment options for symptoms associated with unexpected encounters with countrymen of previous enemy combatants.

WWI - Millennial Wars

| Conflict | Society | Warfare | First Seen | PTSD |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------|---|--|
| WWI | "War to end all wars"; "Great War" | Trench; Poison gas | Global conflict; Aircraft carriers; Strategic bombings | Battle Shock; Shell Shock; War Neurosis |
| WWII | "Greatest Generation" | Front-line | Jet fighters, Radar, A-Bombs, Blood transfusions | Battle Fatigue; Combat Exhaustion |
| Korea | "Forgotten War" | Front-line | Cold War; MASH units; Helicopters | Gross Stress Reaction |
| Viet Nam | "Baby-killers" "Draft dodgers" | 360; Jungle; Napalm | "365 & a wake-up"; Hueys; TV; Drugs & Pharmaceuticals | Vietnam Combat Reaction; Post-Vietnam Syndrome; Agent Orange |
| Gulf War; Desert Storm/Shield | "100-hour War" | Chemical; Biological; | CNN live news; GPS; "Smart" technology; | PTSD; Gulf War Syndrome |
| Millennial – OIF, OEF, OND | "TY for your service" | Asymmetric; Terrorist; Drone | Air travel; Internet/Social Media; Drones; Multiple deployments | PTS; Combat-related PTS |
| | | | | |

The Military Mindset

“Once a soldier, Always a soldier”

I, *[name]*, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. So help me God.



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The Warrior Mindset

- “Warriorhood is living by an ethos – a code of honor – a creed. It is a way of living life.” (*Tick, 2014*)
- ‘My rifle is human even as I am human, because it is my life....I will always place the mission first. I will never accept defeat. I will never quit. I will never leave a fallen comrade.’



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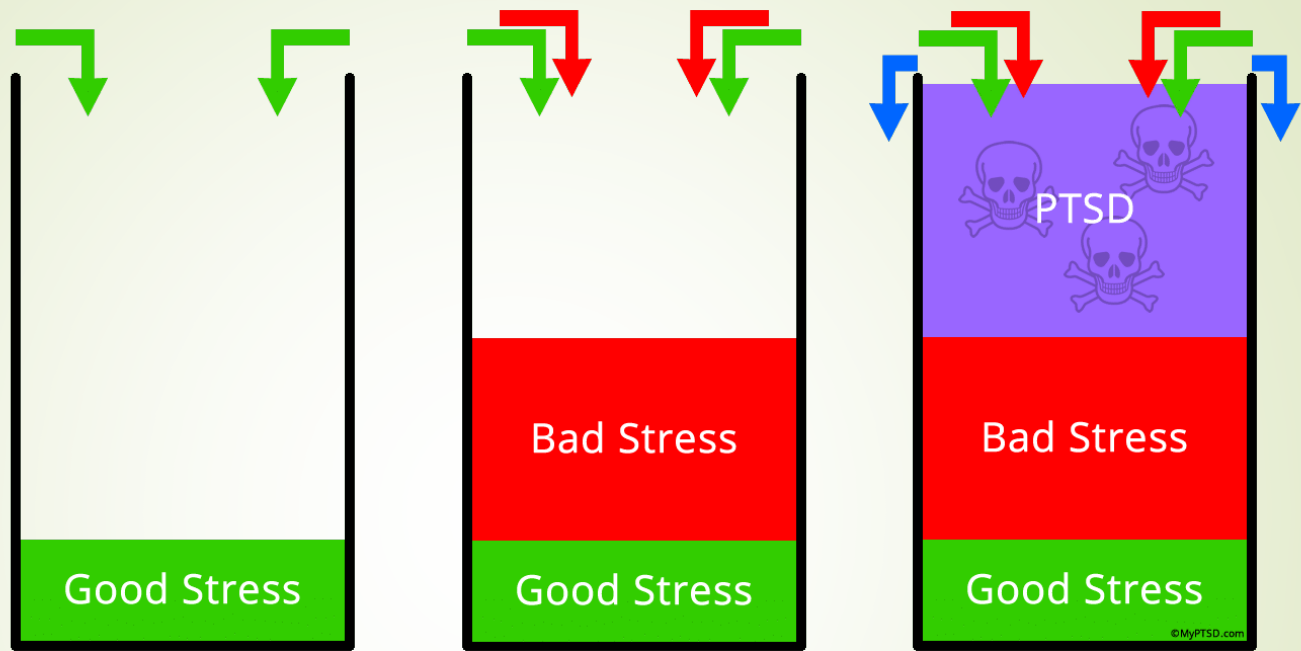


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PTSD in DSM 5

- ▶ Trauma and stress or related *disorder*
 - ▶ Not anxiety disorder
- ▶ 4 distinct diagnostic clusters instead of 3
 - ▶ Re-experiencing
 - ▶ Avoidance
 - ▶ Negative cognitions and mood
 - ▶ Arousal
- ▶ Trigger to PTSD is exposure to *threatened or actual* death, serious injury or sexual violation



PTSD Stress Cup Theory

Combat-PTSD Stress Cup Theory





Known Triggers

- Anniversary date
- Car backfire
- Combat period music
- Fireworks
- Flashbacks
- Nightmares
- Reminder of event
 - News or meeting a person
- Senses
 - Sight, Smells, Sounds



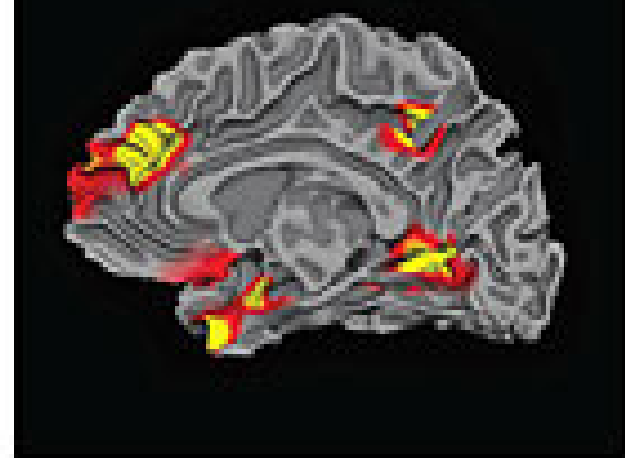
Traumatic Response

- Feel guilty for surviving or being uninjured when others were killed or injured
- Were unable to rescue someone or had to leave someone dying in the disaster
- It was not possible to overcome "the bad guys"
(Holen, 1993; Simpson, 1993)
- May feel that bad things happen to people who deserve them or because of fear that persuades us to blame the victim *(Jenkins, 1985)*

Control Subject



PTSD Patient



A magnetoencephalograph of the resting-state brain shows hyperaroused amygdala in a PTSD patient.



PTSD Changes your brain

The Amygdala

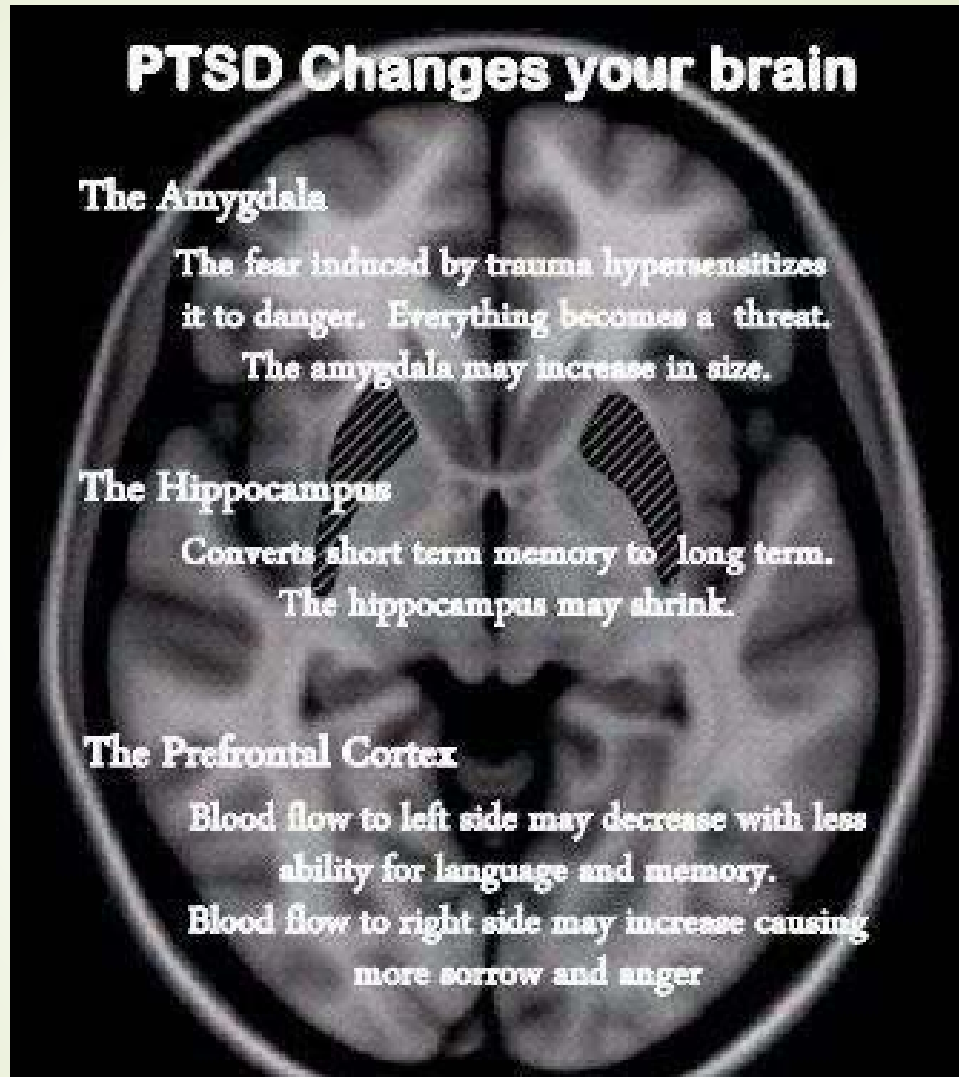
The fear induced by trauma hypersensitizes it to danger. Everything becomes a threat.
The amygdala may increase in size.

The Hippocampus

Converts short term memory to long term.
The hippocampus may shrink.

The Prefrontal Cortex

Blood flow to left side may decrease with less ability for language and memory.
Blood flow to right side may increase causing more sorrow and anger





Survivor Guilt

- ▶ An immediate sense that one should respond according to ordinary standards, in constructive ways to halt the path of the trauma or evil or to help other people in a constructive way - neither of which may be possible during extreme trauma. At best, any response is less than the ideal expectation.
- ▶ Response to this incomplete enactment can be perpetual self-condemnation - related to that lingering failed enactment and to a residual, traumatized "self" that is still to some degree in that state of helplessness.

(Carlson & Dalenberg, 2000; Lifton, 1993)



About Suicide

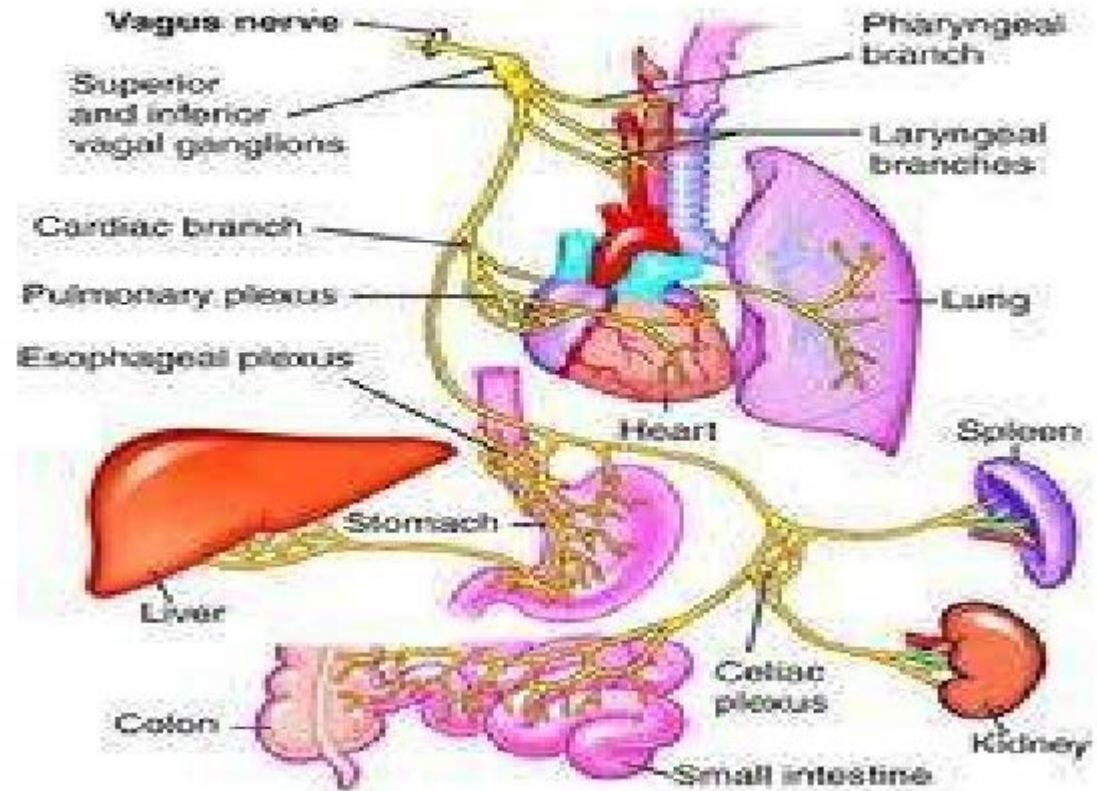
- ▶ A perceived sense of guilt can be associated with a sense of being worthless or a burden
- ▶ Survivor guilt can result in depression, loneliness, isolation, and withdrawal
- ▶ Unrecognized triggers coupled with shame can be the tipping point in the face of poor impulse control
- ▶ Soldiers and veterans have mastery of, and often easy access to firearms (the leading cause of death by suicide)

Polyvagal Theory



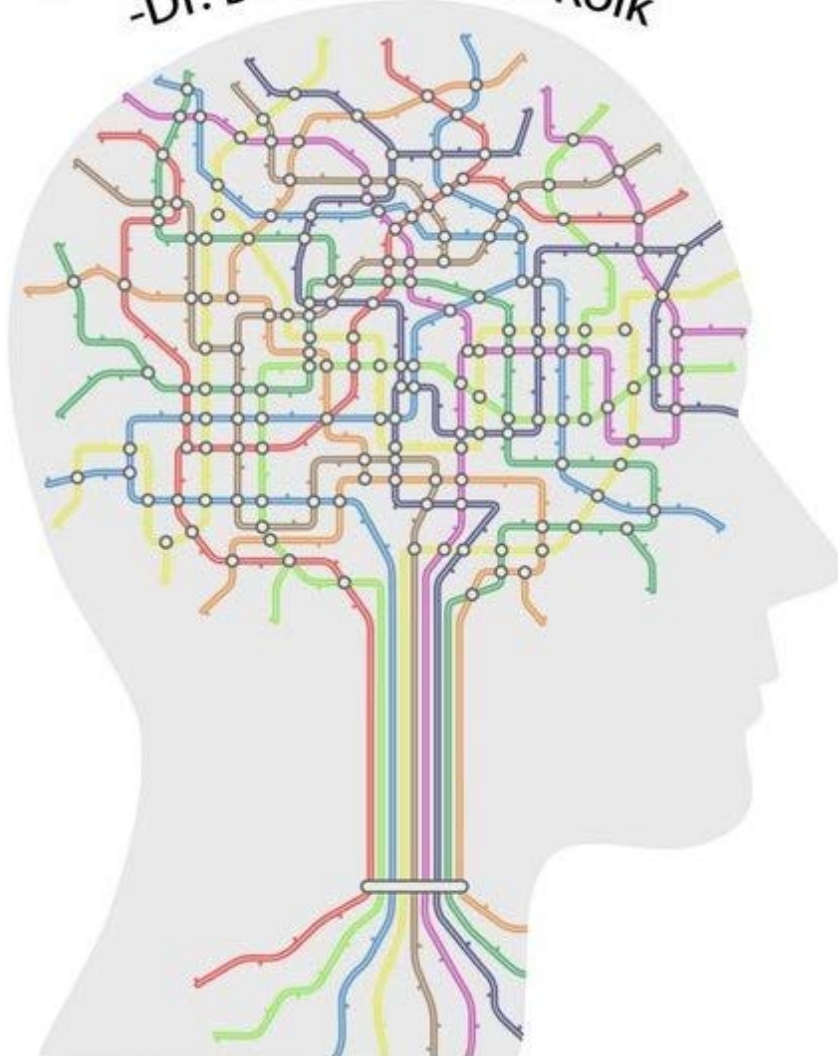
(Stephen Porges, 2004)

Vagus nerve

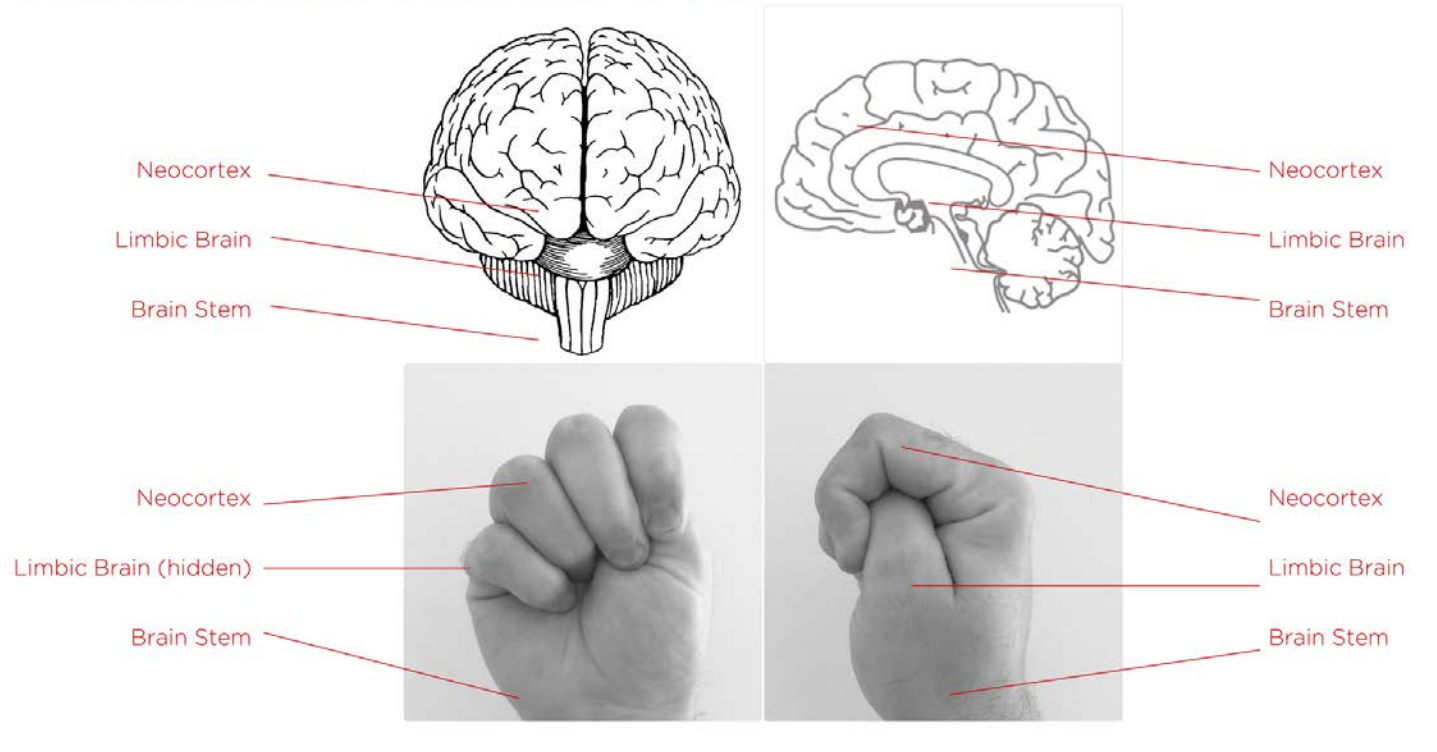


The Body Keeps the Score
~ Bessel van der Kolk

**"Our brains continually form maps
of the world - maps of what is
safe and what is dangerous."
-Dr. Bessel van der Kolk**



Dan Siegel's handy brain anatomy model



~Triune Brain~



What Soldiers Tell Us

- “I don’t know if my military service was worth anything.”
- “I don’t understand why they’re not defending their own country. What are they doing over here?”
- “Our country is going in the wrong direction.”



Emerging Triggers

- Globalization
 - Immigration
 - Internet
 - Politics
 - Refugees
 - Manufactured items from combat arena
 - Social media
 - Workforce diversity
- 



Current Treatments

- Psychotherapy
- Power Therapies
 - EMDR, PE, CPT, V/R D, Hypnotherapy
- Mindfulness Meditation
- Relaxation
- Service Animals
 - Dogs, horses, parrots
- Medical Marijuana



Validation

- Literature & Experience of War (LEW)
 - Poetry
 - Films/DVDs
 - Book discussion groups

- Journaling
 - Togus (ME) VA
 - Individual

- Storytelling
 - Retreats
 - Publication



Man's Search for Meaning

“Everything can be taken from a man but one thing:
the last of the human freedoms – to choose one’s
attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose
one’s own way.”

➤ *Viktor Frankl (1946)*

Questions



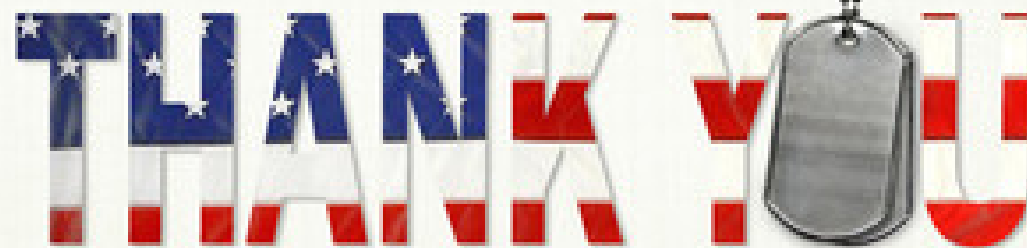
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PTSD Resources

- www.apna.org
- www.dcoe.mil
- www.giftfromwithin.org
- [http://mghcme.org/page/from the war zone to the home front](http://mghcme.org/page/from_the_war_zone_to_the_home_front)
- www.ptsd.va.gov
- www.pwht.org
- www.veteranscominghome.org

1-800-273-TALK (8255)



THANK YOU

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