

The following organizations can also provide information about PTSD:

National Center for PTSD
(802) 296-6300
www.ncptsd.org

National Mental Health Association
(800) 969-6642
www.nmha.org

Anxiety Disorders Association
of America
(301) 231-9350
www.adaa.org

International Society for
Traumatic Stress Studies
847-480-9028
www.istss.org

American Academy of Experts
in Traumatic Stress
631-543-2217
www.aaets.org

For additional copies of this brochure
or further information, contact:

PTSD/SA Committee
Vietnam Veterans of America
8605 Cameron Street, Suite 400
Silver Spring, MD 20910
www.vva.org

Phone (800) VVA-1316



PTSD DOES NOT
MEAN YOU'RE
CRAZY

PTSD is the normal reaction
of a normal person
to abnormal circumstances

Provided by:

VVA PTSD/Substance Abuse Committee 2004

What is PTSD?

PTSD is a set of symptoms that surface after a very dangerous, frightening, and uncontrollable traumatic event.

PTSD has many causes.

As a veteran, it is most likely the result of the experience of war.

However, you may have been the victim of another traumatic event such as a violent crime, accident, physical or sexual abuse, or a natural disaster.

PTSD symptoms fall into four categories:

AVOIDANCE—amnesia, disassociation, numbing, hyper vigilance, controlling behavior, isolation

RELIVING—flashbacks, sleep disorders, overwhelming feelings, overreacting

VICTIMIZATION—distrust, abandonment, helplessness, fear of change, blaming others

SHAME—feeling guilty, feeling as if you're crazy, feeling unworthy

REMEMBER: If you recognize any of these symptoms, you are not alone and there is help. The first step: Realize it's not your fault. The second step: Believe that you have the power and ability to change and get well. It may be difficult, but take a healthy risk and reach out for help.

Getting a Group Started . . .

Place & Time: Explore various options including Vet Centers, community centers, and churches. We DO NOT recommend meeting in a home or military environment. Consider meeting once a month to start, using an open-group format, and encourage regular attendance to establish group rapport. Take a break for 1-2 weeks after meeting for several months to allow new members to join and be less uncomfortable with strangers.

Facilitator: Use a trained professional counselor to facilitate meetings and to act as moderator to discourage cross-talking, interruptions, or a single person controlling the session.

Format & Size: The group should be no larger than 10-12, with 8 being the optimal size. Allow time for all members to share their experiences and how they handled them. Do not pressure people to share if they don't feel comfortable doing so.

Materials: There are various books that can be used to stimulate discussion. Patience Mason's *Recovering from the War* has been found to be very useful by a number of facilitators. Discussion topics are up to the group; no preset agenda is required. **DO WHAT IS NEEDED.**

Closing the Meeting: The meeting should close with a short prayer or a version of the Serenity Prayer such as: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the people I cannot change, the courage to change the ones that I can, and the wisdom to know it's me. Keep coming back. It works, and we're worth it."

Spreading the Word: Distribute a flyer in your local area that lists WHEN, WHERE, and TIME meetings will be held. As the group becomes established, referrals may come from other sources.

For Families . . .

Although there are many resources available to help veterans work through the issues surrounding their war experiences, there is not much help available to spouses and families of veterans.

Living with someone who suffers from PTSD/Substance Abuse can be traumatic. Some spouses report many years of pent up anger and frustration dealing with their veterans and feel alone. Some have totally lost themselves in their veterans' problems and are unable to deal with their own.

If you have a spouse or family member with PTSD, learn all you can about the illness and its treatment.

Associates of Vietnam Veterans of American (AVVA) has recently updated and reissued an excellent program for the spouses and families of veterans suffering from PTSD entitled "Coping Skills for Loving Your Vietnam Veteran."

For more information about this AVVA program contact:

AVVA
8605 Cameron Street, Suite 400
Silver Spring, MD 20910
www.avva.org

PTSD is not all in your head! The evidence is mounting that PTSD, particularly chronic acute PTSD, significantly changes the electrical and chemical reaction of the body on a permanent basis. This causes increased chances of heart attack, strokes, and other long-term health problems.