

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

November 11 is Veterans Day; however, we should honor all Veterans who have served and are currently serving every day! This month's "Tidbits" covers possible symptoms of PTSD due to a casual conversation with one of our case managers. So that the e-mail itself is not quite so lengthy, I have attached a document listing possible accommodations for veterans with PTSD. Please feel free to print any/all of this information for future information for yourself or for employers in your area.

Because of the Global War on Terrorism, many service members are returning from Iraq, Afghanistan, and other points in the Middle East with combat-related injuries. Combat exposes soldiers to potentially traumatic events on a daily basis, which can result in psychiatric symptoms, such as those of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Many returning soldiers are filtering back into the workforce, and PTSD concerns may arise in the workplace. Employers (as well as the veterans themselves) need to be informed of the issues that may arise when readjusting to civilian life.

PTSD can manifest itself in a veteran differently than someone who has survived a catastrophic one-time event. The traumatic events that accompany combat duty occur daily (for months at a time) without warning. Soldiers endure these conditions with restricted food intake, lack of sleep, and harsh environmental conditions. Furthermore, soldiers are trained to be extra vigilant and to react quickly and decisively to environmental stimuli. Thus, readjusting to life at home can be a difficult experience for some veterans.

PTSD SYMPTOMS IN COMBAT VETERANS CAN INCLUDE:

1. Upsetting thoughts occurring frequently about the traumatic event.
2. Frequent dreams (in many cases, nightmares) about the event.
3. Suddenly feeling as though the event is reoccurring (flashbacks).
4. Environmental stimuli (olfactory, auditory, and visual) can trigger flashbacks and other troubling symptoms.
5. Detaching oneself physically and emotionally from other people/places, especially large crowds.
6. A feeling of detachment from others.
7. A feeling of foreshortened future.
8. Guilt related to being a survivor - living after the trauma when many other comrades did not. Guilt may also surface because of one's duties (having to take another human life).
9. Sleep disturbances (usually insomnia).
10. Mood swings and anger outbursts.
11. Cognitive/memory difficulties.
12. Excessive vigilance and survival-related behaviors.
13. Hyperarousal - a person may seem "jumpy," especially in the presence of unexpected noises.