

A Veteran's Explanation of PTSD and How This Website Prevents Suicide

PART ONE:

A COMBAT VETERAN'S EXPLANATION OF PTSD

(How to prevent veteran suicides & explain why the vet is like he is)

Experience is not the best teacher, it is the only teacher

The explanation of PTSD offered by caregivers and other would-be experts who have never been in combat would fill a library but has done little good. This is because they view PTSD thru a college/university professor's eyes or from a medical person's eyes.

Some supposed "Wise man" once said "Experience is the best teacher." He lied. Experience is the *only* teacher.

This writer has experience and views PTSD thru the eyes of a combat infantry soldier who was wounded while struggling and fighting in deadly earnest amidst bodies, blood, pain, and violent death. This unspeakable, indescribable, life-changing experience was burned into my brain forever and put me in a VA hospital suffering from severe PTSD, which I overcame. I am writing this Note in the hope that my bought - not taught - experience overcoming PTSD may help other combat vets do the same.

PTSD is Forever

The bad news is that PTSD can never be cured (cured = no issues ever). The good news is that it can be overcome (overcome = overpowered, surmounted, and managed).

PTSD is acquired in an instant and lasts forever. Some combat veterans feel that their PTSD was acquired from being in combat a long time, and that "short time" combat vets and support troops out of the direct line of fire who claim to be suffering from PTSD are phony "wannabe" combat vets who do *not* suffer from PTSD. They are wrong. One rocket or one mortar or *the mere threat of danger* can create a lifetime of PTSD.

Troubled Mind and PTSD are the Same Thing

What civilian caregivers and other so-called "experts" who have never seen combat do not know is that there is no difference between having a troubled mind and suffering from PTSD. Both terms describe the same thing. To say that they are not the same is to make a distinction without a difference. *Therefore, for the rest of this Note this writer will combine the two terms into one as follows: troubled mind/PTSD.*

Vets Come Home with Troubled Mind/PTSD and do not Know It

Most combat vets come home with troubled minds because battle automatically makes your mind troubled (*if you are fighting alongside me and your mind is NOT troubled you are too stupid to be safe, so get out of here before you get me killed!*).

Having a troubled mind in combat 24/7, day after day, month after month becomes the "New Normal" and you do not think anything is wrong being that way, because it is not unusual but the usual, common, everyday condition your mind is in when fighting for your life.

The problem is that for many combat vets, including this writer, you cannot tell any difference in your head from High School to combat to back home again. To say this another way, when you try to look at the state of your mind historically, chronologically, from back then till now, many if not most people cannot see any change. Everything looks the same; it seems like your head has always been the way it is, you cannot remember it ever being any other way.

This is why you deny that you are suffering from troubled mind/PTSD. You are not dishonest; you are not a liar trying to fool somebody. You sincerely and genuinely do not know that you are.

Being Instantly Angry Over Not Much Is A Dead Giveaway You Have Troubled Mind/PTSD

There is, however, a telltale indication that you are suffering from troubled mind/PTSD. If before combat you were pretty much contented, even-tempered, not hot-tempered but maybe sort of cool, but now after combat, you are discontented, super-quick to be impatient, annoyed, displeased, and vexed. You are intensely roused to fits of anger at the slightest irritation. Your new pattern of instant anger is a dead giveaway that you are suffering from troubled mind/PTSD.

Do you see this negative change in yourself? Probably not because it seems to be the human condition not to be able to see a negative change in yourself that is quite obvious to others. Thus, you are very likely not to know that you have changed in the head. Consequently, when a loved one or a stranger respectfully suggests that maybe you have changed, and perhaps not for the better, very often you may deeply resent it and perceive them as The Enemy.

"THE BLIND SEARCH: "Vets Search for Something They Know Not What (Peace of Mind)

Many if not most vets think their troubled mind way of being is normal and spend the rest of their lives searching for something, they know not what, something that is missing in their lives.

That "something" is peace of mind and serenity but they cannot name it, cannot describe what they are looking for because they do not know that their minds are troubled and long for peace of mind in the first place.

The problem is: how can you be content to stay at home with wife and kids? How can you hold and grow a job? How can you lead a happy/satisfied life?

If you are possessed or driven by an unconscious, restless urge, a nameless, faceless, family disrupting, relationship shattering *compulsion* to go out and search for "something" you know not what and cannot name, but feel deep down inside that is missing in your life? (Hereinafter called "*The Blind Search.*")

You can't of course, so what often happens? You are discontented, get restless, bored and irritated super easy. You abuse alcohol, abuse drugs, cheat on your wife and have multiple failed relationships or marriages. And you have various other behaviors that one may look back on as regrettable.

1. It is only natural for you to think ill of yourself for being caught up in these kinds of behaviors.
2. You keep wandering endlessly in a fog of confusion wondering what is "wrong" with you for being like you are.
3. You come to the conclusion that you are a NOT OK person, which causes feelings of un-worthiness, feelings of being alone in this world, and so on.
4. If these negative feelings about yourself spiral down into a self-hatred so virulent that life becomes a living hell, then thoughts of "ending it all" to obtain blessed relief from this poisonous self-loathing start to seem reasonable. This is a description of someone who is a suicide risk.
5. This troubled-state-of-mind can be managed, however. How? The answer is quite simple and is only eleven words long: "*Explain why the vet is like he is, save the vet.*"

Explain *Why* The vet is Like He Is and Save the Vet

1. Once you know *why* you are like you are, that most of your troubles stem from, and are caused by, "*The Blind Search*" for the peace of mind or serenity that you lost in the military, and are NOT caused by some defect in you and are NOT caused by some flaw in your character.
2. A light goes on in your head and you realize that you are OK and NORMAL for what you have been thru, repeat, OK and NORMAL (This is a description of someone who is no longer a suicide risk;

3. This happy realization lifts the heavy iron manhole cover of confusion and self-accusation from atop your head, thereby allowing you to climb out of the darkness of self-doubt about your worthiness as a human being
4. In to the bright sunlight of OK'ness and NORMALCY, which empowers you to *manage* your PTSD instead of it managing you.

Towards Explaining the Silence of Veterans

In war, it is understood that you give your word of honor to dance with Death instead of running away from it. This suicidal waltz is known as "*Doing your duty.*"

When you do your duty despite desperately desiring to flee the screaming hell all around, you earn honor.

Earning honor under fire is an unspeakable, indescribable, life-changing experience because your dance partner Death picks you up and hurls you with hurricane force to a different world. This brave new world is so far from home that when you came back you feel like a stranger in your own home town, alone in a crowd of those you once knew, a visitor from another planet. You are, the Warrior's World, far beyond the sun.

Although you did your duty, survived the dance, and returned home, not all of you came back. Your heart and mind are still in the Warrior's World. They will always be in the Warrior's World, far away as Mars.

They will never leave; they are laying in a junk yard there – bent and twisted forever into "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder" (PTSD). The sameness, the commonality of this invisible, bloodless wound is why veterans mostly think and do the same things.

While earning honor under fire damaged you beyond repair, it also welded you and other veterans into a "Band of Brothers", that is, Men of Honor worthy of respect who instantly feel warm camaraderie when we meet. We easily talk to each other, never about struggling and fighting in deadly earnest amidst bodies, blood, pain, and violent death, only about the wild and wacky things that happened during our military service. In social settings, vets virtually never talk about actual combat, but in therapy sessions they may open up about it if there is someone in the room they can trust, respect, and relate to who will understand and not judge them.

Although we are able to talk to other veterans, many if not most of us vets have a hard time thinking of something to say to civilians. Why? Because they are standing here on Planet Earth while our hearts and minds lay in a junk yard on planet Mars.

QUESTION TO VETERANS: What are you able to say after you say "hello" to someone who is not even standing on the same planet you are?

ANSWER: Not much

PART TWO: THE SUICIDE ICEBERG – ONLY 10% OF VET SUICIDES ARE REPORTED

It is my experience that troubled mind/PTSD seems to fall into two categories:

1. Non-Lethal
2. Lethal

Non-Lethal troubled mind/PTSD

Non-thrill-seeking examples:

- Waking up screaming back in battle.
- Feeling guilty for living while friends died.
- Feeling naked and vulnerable without a gun close to hand.
- Never entering a store, restaurant, movie theater or bar without compulsively scoping out something to hide behind if bullets start flying.
- Always the “if” there might be a threat.
- You must sit with your back to the wall or the skin on your back will crawl with fear.
- You automatically duck, hide head in arms at unexpected sounds, and so on.

Thrill-seeking examples:

- Being discontented, getting restless, bored and irritated super-easy
- Drinking to excess; drugging.
- Doing dangerous but thrilling sports and other thrilling non-sport activities.
- Have thrilling hobbies.
- Live a thrilling life style.
- Cheat on your wife.
- Have multiple failed marriages.
- And various other behaviors that one may look back on as regrettable, and so on.

Lethal Troubled Mind/PTSD – The Hidden, Super-Sneaky Death Wish

This writer calls lethal troubled mind/PTSD the “*Death wish.*” The question naturally arises: how many veterans suffering from troubled mind/ PTSD have a death wish? It is my opinion, guess or hunch, that many do and are not aware of it. If they don’t know that they are driven by an unconscious, restless, *compulsive* search for serenity and

peace of mind, how likely is it that they would know they have a hidden “death wish”? Not very.

Vets drink and drug to excess, drive cars like Hollywood stunt-car drivers, ride motorcycles like mad maniacs, etc., and think they are doing it for the “thrill” of it all. This is true, they are doing it for the thrill because virtually all combat vets come home basically “*thrill-crazy*” as discussed in the Code. This is the light-side of the thrill-seeking coin.

It has another side however, the dark-side where a hidden death wish may be piggybacking on top of the light-side “thrill” thing. To illustrate or offer proof of why I say this, I quote a man who is very knowledgeable on this subject.

Most Death Wishes Are Disguised as So-Called “Accidents”

“Dear writer of the Warrior’s Code of Honor. I have just finished my first reading of the Code. I say first because I knew, after reading it the first time, that it would require subsequent readings and thoughtful analysis. I am a retired 26-year veteran. I wrote to thank you for this great insight into the combat veteran.

I work as a civilian safety manager for Army Forces Command and see on a daily basis the struggles that combat vets are succumbing to. Yes, the adrenaline rush that leads to the fast bikes, high speed driving, substance abuse and ultimately – very, very sadly – the so-called ‘accidental’ death of those warriors.

Please know that I will spread these words of the Code for I feel they are what we need to stop, or at least slow down, the loss of our heroes. Remember, just because an “accident” hasn’t happened doesn’t mean it isn’t about to. Thank you very much. ”

Mario Gabriel Jr.
Aviation Safety Program Manager, Safety Awards Manager.
U.S. Army Forces Command – Ft. Bragg.

Writer’s Questions to Vets: Is The Moment Of Death A Surprise?

- Do you think that the vets who had the fatal “accidents” Mr. Gabriel mentioned above knew they were going to die that day?
- Or were they in denial that they had a death wish and at the moment of death were surprised?
- I invite the vet reader to think on it – if your thrill-crazy adrenaline junky behaviors are inching ever-more dangerous, you may be in for a “surprise”, orchestrated by your hidden, super-sneaky death wish.

The Suicide Iceberg – Only 10% Of Vet Suicides Are Reported

The sad truth is that the combat vet death wish is acted out far more often than is commonly known. To clarify this rather murky situation, it may be helpful to think of suicide as an iceberg. At the tiny 10% top of the iceberg sticking out of the water, are the death wishes acted out without disguise, like doing yourself in with a gun, etc. These are visible, thus are "news" and reported as such.

But out of sight in the 90% of the iceberg down below the waterline are all the death wishes disguised as fatal "accidents." Since these suicides are not visible, they are not "news" and go unreported.

This under-reporting is why the American people have no idea just how bad the vet suicide situation is now, and how bad it soon will be when the huge tidal wave of PTSD hovering over America blocking out the sun, fully crashes down upon this unsuspecting and totally unprepared nation.

This brings us to the purpose of this website — I am doing my best to help out.

The Truth About the Severity of the Writer's PTSD – What One Man Can Do Another Can Do

In the interests of full disclosure, I hereby revise and extend my remarks regarding my personal PTSD experience. At the beginning of this Writer's note, I stated that I was once in a VA hospital with severe PTSD. I sort of left out that it was the Psycho Ward of the hospital. I was locked down behind bars and kept heavily sedated 24/7 for a long time because I was a high suicide risk.

From that dark bottom of the PTSD hole in the ground, I clawed my way up and out into the bright sunlight of recovery to write the Warrior's Code of Honor. (See the Post: *How and Why the Warrior's Code Was Written, A Step-by-step Guide How to Get Out of PTSD and Into Serenity* for a full discussion of this topic.

I close this note with a universal truth as old as mankind. In modern times it was expressed in the famous Kill the Bear scene from the American movie "The Edge" starring Anthony Hopkins and Alec Baldwin:

"WHAT ONE MAN CAN DO; ANOTHER CAN DO"

Signed,

Paul R. Allen

© 2013 by Paul Allen. All rights reserved