

Understanding Military Culture when Treating PTSD

Presented by
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National
Center for
PTSD
Posttraumatic
Stress Disorder



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Learning Objectives

- 1.** Become familiar with military terms and demographics
- 2.** Describe stressors in military
- 3.** Describe programs offered by DoD for dealing with combat and operational stress
- 4.** Implications for VA clinicians

Military Demographics



Military Demographics

Military Branches

Military Rank

Military Specialties (MOS or NEC)

Military Duty Status

Military Branches—Personnel

- ▶ Army = Soldier
- ▶ Air Force = Airman
- ▶ Navy = Sailor
- ▶ Marine Corps = Marine
- ▶ Coast Guard = Guardian



Military Branches—Services

- ▶ Army—oldest and largest, main ground force
- ▶ Navy —2nd largest, main naval force
- ▶ Marine Corps—supports naval campaigns but may conduct land operations
- ▶ Air Force—youngest service , main aerial and cyberspace force
- ▶ Coast Guard—part of Department of Homeland Security, protects public and environment in Maritime regions

Select another demographic or move on

Military Branches

Military Rank

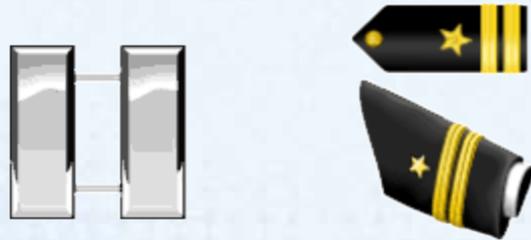
MOS/NEC (Specialty)

Military Status

Next topic

Military Rank

- ▶ Enlisted Personnel (E-1 through E-9)—includes noncommissioned officers and petty officers
- ▶ Warrant Officers (W-1 through W-5)—highly specialized experts
- ▶ Commissioned Officers (O-1 through O-10)—highest ranks, similar to managers/leaders of a company



Select another demographic or move on

Military Branches

Military Rank

MOS/NEC (Specialty)

Military Status

Next topic

MOS/NEC (Specialty)

- ▶ MOS = Military Occupational Specialty
- ▶ NEC = Navy Enlisted Classification
- ▶ The MOS or NEC indicates the type of job done in the military

Military Rank Charts

Select another demographic or move on

Military Branches

Military Rank

MOS/NEC (Specialty)

Military Status

Next topic

Military Status

Active duty

- ▶ Considered full-time employees
- ▶ During deployments of 6-15 months; may have periods of working nearly 24 hours/day, 7 days/week
- ▶ During wartime, may be separated from family for long periods even when not deployed due to long training cycles

Military Status

National Guard and Reserve

- ▶ Considered part-time employees
 - ~39 days/year
 - typically monthly drills two-week annual trainings
- ▶ May be called very suddenly to Active Duty (full time) for deployments
 - leave family, regular job, community
- ▶ Transition from Active Duty back to part-time status can be difficult because of lack of support system

Military Status

Individual Augmentees

- ▶ Active Duty members who are temporarily assigned to different units or even different branches of service to fill a need for their skill set
- ▶ Often lack their normal support system
- ▶ Deployments can be particularly sudden and unpredictable

Select another demographic or move on

Military Branches

Military Rank

MOS/NEC (Specialty)

Military Status

Next topic

Describe Stressors in the Military



Common Stressors in the Military

1. Life threat (combat/deployment)
2. Loss
3. Inner conflict
4. Wear and tear /
lack of control



Military Sexual Trauma (MST)

- ▶ Active Duty personnel (with reference to the past year) have experienced:
 - Offensive sexual behavior: 52% of women and 29% of men
 - Unwanted sexual attention: 31% of women and 7% of men
 - Sexual coercion: 9% of women and 3% of men
 - Unwanted sexual contact: 6.8% of women and 1.8% of men
- ▶ VA population (with reference to their entire military service) experienced:
 - MST: 21.4% of women (48,106) and 1.1% of men (43,693)

Military Sexual Trauma Consequences

- ▶ Compared with civilian sexual assault, MST related to:
 - More distress and mental illness
 - Lower physical health and self esteem
 - More severe PTSD symptoms
- ▶ MST has more severe consequences because:
 - It is an interpersonal trauma
 - It is perpetrated by someone who presumably is supposed to be protecting your life
 - It may not be possible to report the crime, for a variety of reasons
 - It may be coupled with combat exposure as well

Impact on Mental Health?

Based on your experience, which factor do you think has the strongest impact on mental health status?

Level of combat

Length of deployment

Number of deployments

DoD Mental Health Task Force (MHTF) (2007-08) Findings

If you answered **Level of combat** you are correct.

- Mental health status related to: Level of combat, Deployment length, Number of deployments
- Top non-combat issues: Deployment length, Family separation
- Marines had fewer non-combat deployment concerns than Soldiers
- When matched for deployment length and deployment history, Soldiers' mental health rates were similar to those of Marines
 - Soldiers/Marines with mental health problems were more likely to mistreat non-combatants

DoD Rates of Mental Health Issues (2003-2007)

- ▶ Mental Health Assessment Team Findings
 - Self-reported PTSD: 14.1%
 - PTSD, depression, or anxiety: 16.7%
- ▶ Of service members positive for mental health problems, **more than half would not seek care**
- ▶ Post-Deployment Health Assessments
 - Significant MH problems:
 - Army: 38%
 - Marines: 31%

DoD MHTF Findings

- ▶ Strains exist in family related to deployment length
 - Divorce
 - Family violence
- ▶ High marital satisfaction but problems increasing
 - OIF I (12%)
 - OIF 2004-2006 Soldiers (22%)
 - OIF 2005-2007 Soldiers (27%) and Marines (23%)
- ▶ Families are crucial for recovery
- ▶ Families are partners in developing psychological health
- ▶ Family members are often first to recognize

Describe Programs Offered by DoD for Dealing with Combat and Operational Stress



Services for Building Resilience

- ▶ Basic training
- ▶ Realistic training
- ▶ A broad safety net that includes family service centers, life skills training, and mentoring
- ▶ Army Battlemind / Resilience Training Program
- ▶ Marine Corps Combat Operational Stress Continuum

Programs

Army Battlemind
and Comprehensive Fitness Program

Marine Corps COSC

Army Battlemind

Buddies (cohesion) vs. Withdrawal

Accountability vs. Controlling

Targeted Aggression vs. Inappropriate Aggression

Tactical Awareness vs. Hypervigilance

Lethally Armed vs. “Locked and Loaded” at Home

Emotional Control vs. Anger/Detachment

Mission Operational Security (OPSEC) vs. Secretiveness

Individual Responsibility vs. Guilt

Non-Defensive (combat) Driving vs. Aggressive Driving

Discipline and Ordering vs. Conflict

Comprehensive Solder Fitness Program

- ▶ Planned collaboration with University of Pennsylvania
- ▶ Goal is to enhance physical, cognitive, social, and spiritual fitness of every Soldier and family member
- ▶ Will include cognitive behavioral interventions such as cognitive reframing

Advance to Marine Corps COSC or the next topic

Marine Corps COSC

Next topic

Marine Corps Combat Operational Stress Continuum

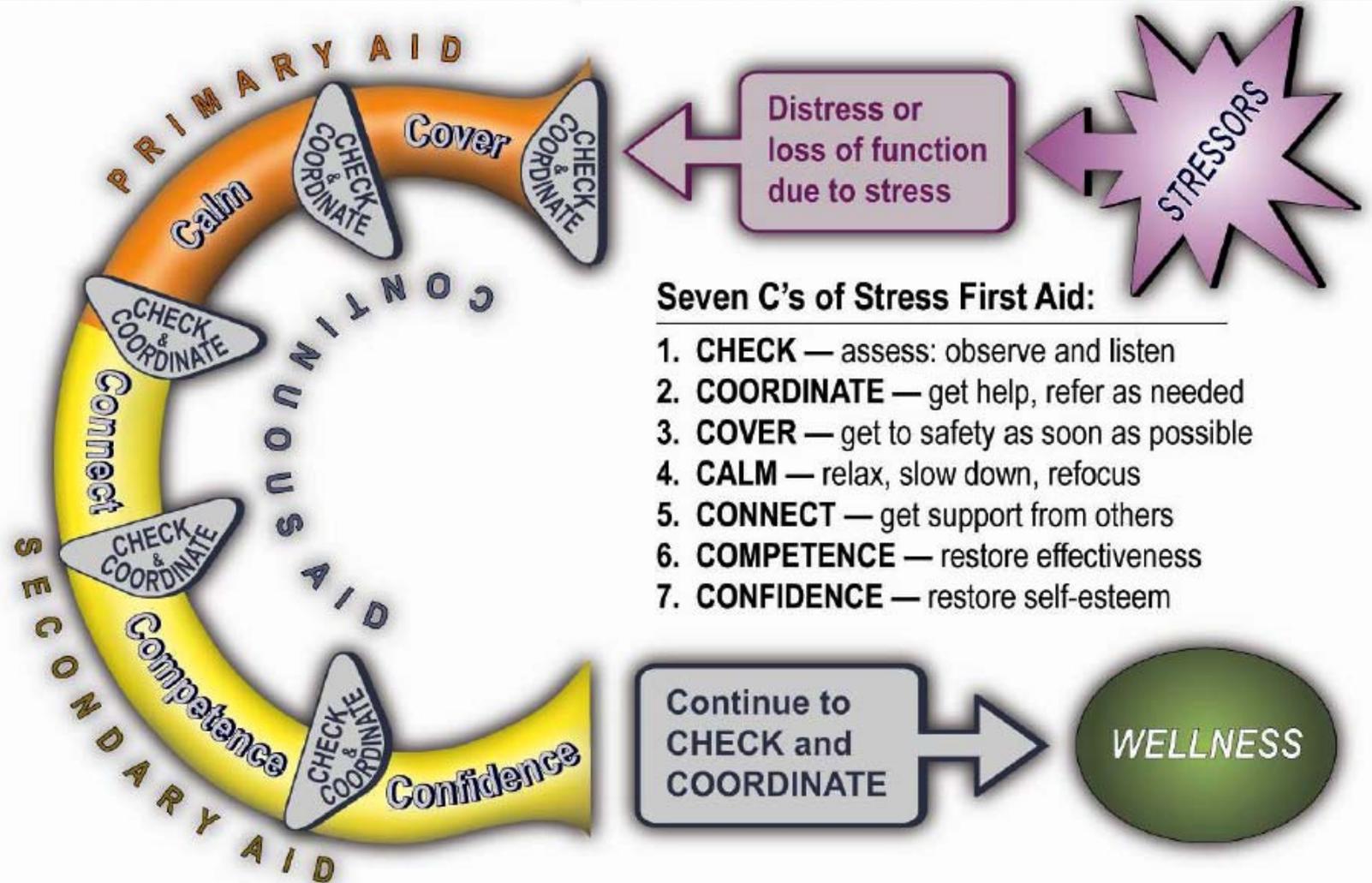
Deployment cycle training

- ▶ Warrior preparation: 30 days prior to deployment
- ▶ Warrior transition: within 7 days of returning home
- ▶ Warrior transition 2: 60 -90 days post-deployment
- ▶ Leadership tools
 - After action reviews
 - Rest or rotation
 - Memorial services
 - Ceremonies and celebrations

Marine Corps Combat Operational Stress Continuum



Marine Corps Combat and Operational Stress First Aid (COSFA) Model



Marine Corps Core Resilience Functions for Military Leaders



Advance to Army Battlemind or the next topic

Army Battlemind

Next topic

Army vs. Marine Corps Intervention

| | Army | Navy / Marine Corps |
|---------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| Prevention | Battlemind | Combat Operational Stress Continuum |
| First Line Interventions | Battlemind Debriefing PIES (Primacy, Immediacy, Expectancy, and Strengthen) | COSFA PIES Leadership |

Army vs. Marine Corps Intervention

| | Army | Navy / Marine Corps |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| Prevention | Battlemind | Combat Operational Stress Continuum |
| First Line Interventions | Battlemind Debriefing PIES | COSFA PIES Leadership |
| Secondary Interventions | Mental health treatment Chaplains Family service centers TRICARE Military OneSource | Mental health treatment Chaplains Family service centers TRICARE Military OneSource |

Army vs. Marine Corps Intervention

- ▶ Branches are focusing on evidence-based interventions for PTSD
 - Cognitive processing therapy (CPT)
 - Exposure-based interventions
- ▶ Interventions include provisions for 6 to 12 months of in-service treatment before considered for medical board

Implications for VA Clinicians



Assessing Exposure History

How would you ask? **Select your answer**

Directly: “Were you exposed to trauma?”

Indirectly: “Did you have any particularly intense or difficult experiences that stick with you?”

Via third person: “Were there any events that your fellow service members found really challenging?”

Assessing Exposure History



"Were you exposed to trauma?"



"Did you have any particularly intense or difficult experiences that stick with you?"



"Were there any assignments or events that your fellow service members found really challenging or stick with you now?"

Assessing Sexual Trauma

Ask:

“While you were in the military, did you receive uninvited and unwanted sexual attention, such as touching, cornering, pressure for sexual favors, or verbal remarks? Did someone ever use force or the threat of force to have sexual contact with you against your will?”



Implications for the VA Clinician

Ask about:

- ▶ Length in service and deployment history
- ▶ Other adversities
- ▶ Education / treatment while on active duty
- ▶ Discharge type
- ▶ Military / Veteran identity



Implications for the VA Clinician



Implications for the VA Clinician

Active duty seeking care at VA (cont.)

- ▶ Post-deployment/pre-deployment overlap
 - Is the therapist treating post traumatic stress or pre-deployment anxiety?
 - Or both?
- ▶ Fitness for Duty request
 - VA looks to therapists records
 - Seek guidance from a med hold case manager



Implications for the VA Clinician

Compensation and Pension

- ▶ Assessment
- ▶ Release of records
- ▶ VA providers are not supposed to do C & P evals; however, the board may ask to see case notes
- ▶ Contact a Veterans Service officer for guidance on your role and obligations



Conclusion

- ▶ Military terms and demographics
- ▶ Stressors in military
- ▶ Programs offered by DoD for dealing with combat / operational stress
- ▶ Implications for VA clinicians



Resources

Referenced in this presentation

- ▶ [Military Culture Course from essentiallearning.net](http://essentiallearning.net)
- ▶ [Military Rank Charts](#)
- ▶ [DoD Mental Health Task Force Findings](#)

Available on the NCPTSD website (ptsd.va.gov)

- ▶ [Military Resources](#)