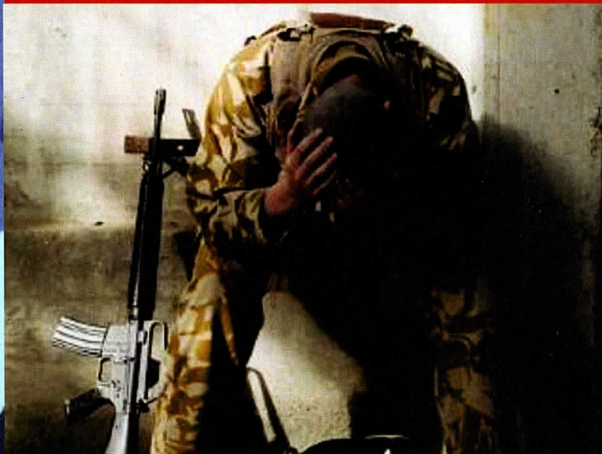


Mental and emotional trauma has become more prevalent in the Armed Forces in recent years. With the high OPTEMPO and multiple engagements around the world, more Veterans are suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and Military Sexual Trauma (MST). The VA and other organizations are trying to combat these conditions through traditional means such as therapy, counseling, and various medications.



Although counselling and medication may be helpful, for some there is a gap that isn't being covered by traditional treatment. This is where a service dog can be helpful. A properly trained dog can become their new "Battle-Buddy" providing support that is simply missing elsewhere.

How does a Service Dog help these conditions?

- Dogs are Loyal - They will never go behind a Veterans back to hurt them
- Dogs are Alert - They can alert the Veteran to danger or signify safety when they are relaxed
- Dogs Shield - They will always have your back
- Dogs are Companions - They help with general loneliness
- Dogs Need You - The Veteran gives a life back to them at the same time they help to give life back to the Veteran
- Service dogs are trained to do specific tasks which, in times of stress, help to mitigate the symptoms of these conditions.



Have more questions or want to donate or apply?

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Mental Health Information



Our Mission is to complement the traditional treatment for Veterans with PTSD, TBI, and MST, by training them and a dog to become highly effective service dog teams.

What is PTSD?

PTSD, or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, refers to a group of symptoms which are common after an individual has been through a life-threatening or similarly stressful event. Symptoms may include hyper vigilant behavior (which tends to cause problems with sleep, inability to relax and difficulty being around strangers or in crowds), difficulty with relating to others and maintaining relationships, and depression/anxiety/anger issues.



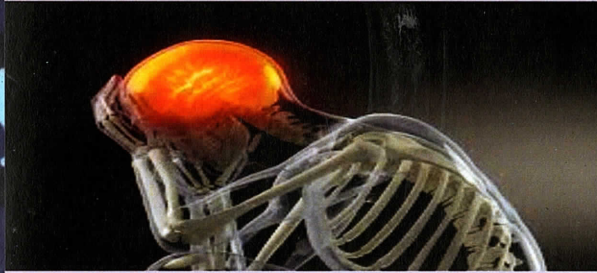
While PTSD can be the result of many factors, the treatment of military Veterans with this condition tends to present some unique challenges. These individuals have been trained to deal with imminent danger and have witnessed firsthand the fragility of life.

They were trained in groups (units, etc.) that worked, lived and suffered together and someone was always there to watch their backs. After leaving the military, these Veterans are suddenly placed into a society that is not equipped to deal with their unique problems. These people's brains have been trained to see danger everywhere and this doesn't stop when they come home. In addition, Vets have lost the support and camaraderie of the military and are left feeling completely alone and helpless. Depression and suicidal ideation are incredibly common and many of these Veterans feel completely abandoned by the country they fought for.

And TBI?

TBI is a traumatically induced structural injury and/or physiological disruption of brain function as a result of an external force that is indicated by new onset or worsening of at least one of the following clinical signs immediately following the event:

- Any period of loss of or a decreased level of consciousness (LOC)
- Any loss of memory for events immediately before or after (post-traumatic amnesia)
- Any alteration in mental state at the time of the injury (confusion, disorientation, slowed thinking, etc.)
- Neurological deficits (weakness, loss of balance, change in vision, praxis, paresis/plegia, sensory loss, aphasia, etc.)
- Intracranial lesion (bruising of the brain)



External forces may include any of the following events: the head being struck by an object, the head striking an object, the brain undergoing an acceleration/deceleration movement without direct external trauma to the head, a foreign body penetrating the brain, forces generated from events such as a blast or explosion, or other forces yet to be defined.

The above criteria define the event of a TBI. Not all individuals exposed to an external force will sustain a TBI, but any person who has a history of such an event with immediate manifestation of any of the above signs and symptoms can be said to have had a TBI.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK189784/>

What about MST?

During their service, both female and male Service members sometimes have upsetting, unwanted sexual experiences, including sexual assault or sexual harassment. "Military Sexual Trauma" or MST is the term used by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to refer to these experiences. The official definition of MST used by the VA is given by federal law (U.S. Code 1720D of Title 38). It is: Psychological trauma, which in the judgment of a VA mental health professional, resulted from a physical assault of a sexual nature, battery of a sexual nature, or sexual harassment which occurred while the Veteran was serving on active duty or active duty for training.



Sexual harassment is defined as "repeated, unsolicited verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature which is threatening in character." In more concrete terms, MST includes any sexual activity a person experienced against their will (including while intoxicated). They may have been physically forced into sexual activities. Or, no physical force may have been used but they were coerced or pressured into sexual activities.

Other MST experiences include unwanted sexual touching or grabbing, threatening, offensive remarks about a person's body or their sexual activities, and threatening and unwelcomed sexual advances. If these experiences occurred while the Veteran was on active duty or active duty for training, they are considered to be MST.

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