

# Post-traumatic stress disorder

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According to Lt. Col. David Grossman, wars have far more psychological casualties than they do physical ones.

Despite the high rate of PTSD among soldiers, only a small percentage of the afflicted actually seek psychological evaluation. Doctor and employee of Vermont's Department of Veteran Affairs Andrew Pomerantz reason that most veterans with PTSD do not seek treatment because they don't want to be viewed as "weaklings." Remembers Julie Proulx, the girlfriend of late marine Jeff Lucey, "He didn't want the marines to think he was weak. He was very reluctant [to seek help]." Lucey ultimately committed suicide due to the effects of PTSD and subsequent depression.

Not only do veterans fear that they will be labeled as weak, but many perceive the stigmatization of so much as seeking mental health evaluation as "job-ending." Some soldiers, such as Rob Sarra, often fear that they will be discharged as mentally unstable.

PTSD affects more than just the lives of the individuals who develop it: the disorder also takes a toll on the lives of their loved ones. The wives of returning soldiers often report their husbands to be more irritable and snippy. Sarra discusses his struggles with developing alcoholism and subsequent fights in bars. In one instance, he became so enraged that he almost killed a man, only to become re-aware of his surroundings. "If I had killed that man," he notes, "there would be no getting around that." Veteran Andrew Pogany reported that he developed anxiety and severe panic attacks, during which time he "couldn't clear [his] head."

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder is not the only psychological damage that plagues returning veterans. Some, like Sarra, suffers from short-term memory loss or "blackouts." Others, such as Lucey, become depressed or

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display signs of schizophrenia-like auditory hallucinations. Neglecting to deal with these issues —as many veterans refuse to do— can lead to tragic consequences, such as the dissolution of marriages or, in the case of Jeff Lucey, suicide.

Given the detrimental effects it has on relationships, psychological stability, and day-to-day activities, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder remains today as dangerous an enemy of soldiers as the combatants they are fighting.