

Post traumatic stress disorder

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Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a type of anxiety disorder. PTSD usually occurs after someone has seen or experienced a traumatic event that involved the threat of injury and death. It is commonly associated with the soldiers who have fought in wars or conflicts. All of the symptoms of PTSD are classified and categorized into three distinct groups: “reliving”, avoidance, and arousal. Some of these symptoms include flashbacks, repeated nightmares, detachment, hyper-vigilance, and being easily angered, along with many others. (PubMedHealth, PTSD)

- According to a survey conducted by the Veteran’s Administration, some 500, 000 of 3 million troops suffered from PTSD after the Vietnam War. The survey also states that rates of divorce, suicide, and alcoholism and drug addiction were higher among Vietnam veterans. ” (History, Vietnam War)
- We may never fully know how much this disorder has truly affected our troops. Most veterans are not open about their condition, however some have accepted it and open up about it. So, how much does PTSD really affect someone? The trauma that causes PTSD is just as unique as the suffering individual themselves.

Any fearful trauma can produce symptoms of PTSD. Being in the Vietnam War did not help any of this. These soldiers were torn away from the only things and the home they had ever known and dropped into a foreign place where the situation was “kill or be killed.” They had no other choice but to be exposed to the unimaginable horrors that awaited them. Cases of people with PTSD are famous for their abuse of drugs or alcohol; however, ex-

soldiers have an additional addiction that often lands them in trouble, or jail: an addiction to adrenaline.

The one thing that caused them to have this condition may very well be the one thing that decides their fate. Inside every person with PTSD is a time bomb. It is merely a matter of time before symptoms begin to show up. One may exhibit all manner of symptoms in nearly everything they do, and still live what appears to be a normal life. However, it doesn't take much to bring out full-blown symptoms of a case of PTSD. Retirement and additional stress can be a catalyst to cause the occurrence of symptoms to appear sooner than they normally would. Wellness Directory MN, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder)

- “ The war was over and there was no place in particular to go” (O'Brien, 131). Thoughts of sorrow and loss overwhelm the Vietnam veterans upon their return back home. Crushed from the horror of war, they have to come back to even bigger disappointments and sadness. Instead of the calm lives they lead before they left their country and the presence of warm and caring everyday life, most of them encounter empty beds, a cold family and overall loss. Already physically and emotionally defeated, they find betrayal instead of recuperating trust.

There is nothing to nourish them; they do not find anything to rely on. Even in instances of supportive partners, the inevitable horrors of the war haunt them in sleep or come back to them in daydreaming. They all came back with multitude of disorders, mostly with a post-traumatic stress disorder with

the common symptoms of recurring nightmares, hypersensitivity, avoidance behavior, and intrusive thoughts, feelings and memories—commonly found in war vets. “The Things They Carried” is a documentary novel written by Tim O’Brien, a Vietnam War veteran.

There are many stories within the novel that show various examples of post-traumatic stress disorder. According to O’Brien, upon their arrival home the veterans imagine, or even hallucinate, what things would have been like if they had not suffered through the war. Examples of such occurrences exist in the stories “Speaking of Courage” and “The Man I Killed.” Norman Bowker in “Speaking of Courage” dreams and fancies of talking to his ex-girlfriend, now married to another guy, and of his dead childhood friend, Max Arnold.

He lives his unfulfilled dream of having his Sally beside him and having manly conversations with Max. He cannot stop day dreaming and dwelling in the past. Unemployed and overwhelmed by inferiority and disappointment, Bowker lacks a motivating force for life. Emotionally stricken, he only finds satisfaction in driving slowly and repeatedly in circles around his old neighborhood in his father's big Chevy, “feeling safe,” and remembering how things used to be when “there has not been a war” (O’Brien, 158). These recurring events also spring memories of the beautiful lake where Norman used to spend a lot of time with his now married ex-girlfriend Sally Kramer and his high school friends. The lake invokes nostalgic and sentimental memories both of his girlfriend and his long gone - drowned - best friend, Max Arnold. Nothing fulfills Norman Bowker anymore. Instead, a

terrible confusion has taken over his mind in the form of blur and chaos. He desperately needs someone to talk to. The guys go crazy in their unsuccessful attempts to maintain healthy balance of their minds and spirits.

However, even though they might not realize it, or not at least at the time, most of the veterans end up losing sanity. They act upon and laugh at the most bizarre things. In "How to Tell a True War Story," Rat Kiley thinks of "a gore of about twenty zillion dead gook fish" as the "the funniest thing in world history" (O'Brien, 65). The result of the post traumatic experience of seeing his nineteen-year-old best friend, Curt Lemon's, body being blown up into pieces by a grenade, is that Rat Kiley takes his anger out on a baby buffalo by shooting him pieces by pieces multiple times.

He shoots the animal, until "nothing moved except the eyes, which were enormous, the pupils shiny black and dumb" at which Dave Jensen, one of the two who collected Lemon's body pieces off of the tree, gets childishly amused" (O'Brien, 76-79). Not realizing his new condition of mental imbalance, Dave Jensen goes on to make jokes and sing about the "Lemon Tree." This is a parallel to Dave Jensen's insanity, O'Brien, even after twenty years, still gets woken up by the memories of this event: "Twenty years later I can see the sunlight on Lemon's face" (O'Brien, 80).

As a consequence of PTSD, O'Brien both despises and values the war. Even though Tim O'Brien might not sound very convincing with the credibility of his own memories as a narrative, the post-traumatic stress disorder remains a scientific certainty. The results of the trauma soldiers suffered in the war,

along with the emotional baggage, (grief, terror, love, and longing) show of all of the veterans' post-war turmoil and heartache.

Sources:

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