



10 Things You Should Know About... *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* (PTSD)

1. PTSD is an anxiety disorder that involves the over-activation of the fight and flight response.
2. PTSD symptoms include re-experiencing the trauma through flashbacks or nightmares, feeling constantly on edge, and avoiding people and places that may remind one of the trauma. It involves the body and the mind and the spirit.
3. Some signs and symptoms include: anger, anxiety, grief, feeling lonely or abandoned, sleep disturbances, feeling out of control, or physical signs of tension such as racing heart beat or muscle tension. People with PTSD may feel disconnected from their spiritual connection, lose their sense or meaning and purpose for living and ask “Why” they experience such suffering.
4. Potential triggers could be: an argument, media stories, loud noises, life stressors, anniversaries/holidays, or insensitive questions about combat or other traumatic experiences.
5. PTSD results from innate biological and physiological mechanisms. It is not the result of moral failing or weakness in character.
6. Not everyone who experiences trauma develops PTSD. Some of the symptoms are very normal responses to an extreme stressor and for most people, the symptoms naturally decrease over time and eventually disappear.
7. If a person has PTSD, he or she is at greater risk for developing another illness such as depression or alcohol abuse.
8. Research shows that certain psychotherapies (both individual and group) as well as psychiatric medications are very effective in decreasing symptoms of PTSD.
9. There is also increasing evidence that many people experience personal growth after experiencing a trauma. People often emerge with a greater appreciation of life, an increased sense of personal strength, and/or a deepened spiritual life.
10. Help is available to Veterans through VA Medical Centers, as well as:
 - Vet Centers, which are community based and offer a wide range of services to help Veterans make a successful transition from military to civilian life. Family members of combat Veterans are also eligible for Vet Center confidential counseling services. For more information visit, www.vetcenter.va.gov or call **800-905-4675** (Eastern)/**866-496-8838** (Pacific).
 - The VA National Center for PTSD website, www.ptsd.va.gov, contains many PTSD resources for the public and for professionals.

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Visit the **Rural Clergy Training** website for more information about caring for our Veterans,
www.ruralhealth.va.gov/ruralclergytraining.