



10 Things You Should Know About...

Spiritual Injury in Military Service

1. Military service may involve separation from home, multiple deployments, exposure to different cultures, different morals, or religions and may require acts of violence that have specifically been prohibited in one's religious tradition, resulting in spiritual injury.
2. Military personnel and their families rank religious organizations second only to family when it comes to providing helpful nonmilitary support.
3. Persons suffering from PTSD from recent conflicts are twice as likely as the general public to believe that God is punishing them for their sins or lack of spirituality.
4. Persons suffering from PTSD from recent conflicts are four times as likely as the general public to believe that God has abandoned them.
5. Moral and spiritual injury are often invisible injuries which go undetected because Veterans carry guilt and shame that it makes it difficult to discuss these injuries.
6. Families and military personnel may often feel forgotten or invisible in faith communities because members are simply unaware of the trials of families separated from their loved ones.
7. Families and military personnel may also often feel forgotten or invisible in faith communities because members are opposed to war and believe that attending to the spiritual needs of military personnel or their families is to support war.
8. The pain of spiritual injury and moral distress in military personnel or Veterans can be so severe that it leads to the use of alcohol or drugs to cover the suffering. Suicide attempts may be efforts to escape the spiritual suffering altogether.
9. Local faith communities can become healing agents for families and military personnel through intentional efforts to reach out during each stage of the deployment cycle. It only takes one person or a small group to make this happen.
10. Information about spiritual injury and the effects of combat is available from:
 - The My Health_eVet Spirituality Center, <http://go.usa.gov/45Ax>.
 - The website "God Understands," <http://godunderstands.americanbible.org>, created by the American Bible Society in consultation with the National VA Chaplain Center, provides healing, hope and comfort to Veterans dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and the spiritual, physical and emotional brokenness that can be brought on by active duty service.

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