
Veterans and Mental Health

Learning About PTSD

with Dr. Laura Wiedeman

Northern California VA Health Care System

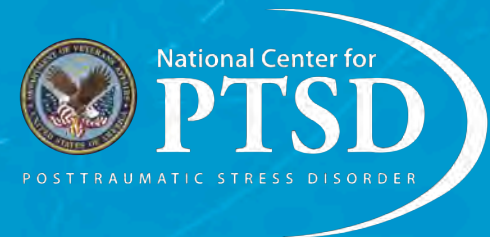
June 20, 2017



Posttraumatic Stress Disorder



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June 2017



Objectives

- Learn about PTSD epidemiology, symptoms, and recovery
- Review available resources for veterans with PTSD, including websites, educational videos, mobile apps, and VA services
- Address common misconceptions about PTSD that may be held by veterans and/or the public
- Develop a greater understanding of how to interact with veterans who may have PTSD



Objective #1:

PTSD EPIDEMIOLOGY, SYMPTOMS, AND RECOVERY

What is a “traumatic” event?

Daily hassles

Can include:

- Car breaking down
- Paying bills

Major life events

Can include:

- Losing a job
- Divorce
- Buying a new home
- Getting married

Serious traumatic events

Can include:

- War zone exposure
- Physical or sexual assault
- Serious accidents
- Child sexual or physical abuse
- Natural disasters
- Torture

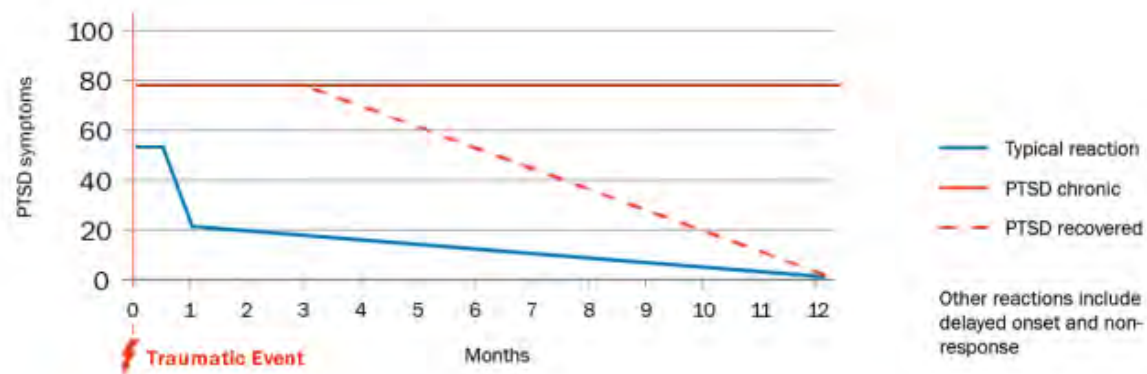
Trauma exposure is common.



Most people you meet every day have experienced a trauma.

Kessler, R. C., Sonnega, A., Bromet, E., Hughes, M., & Nelson, C. B. (1995). Posttraumatic stress disorder in the national comorbidity survey. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 52(12), 1048-1060.

How common is PTSD?



Only about 7% develop PTSD in their lifetime

Kessler, R. C., Sonnega, A., Bromet, E., Hughes, M., & Nelson, C. B. (1995). Posttraumatic stress disorder in the national comorbidity survey. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 52(12), 1048-1060.

Criterion A: Traumatic Event

- Directly experiencing a traumatic event
- Witnessing, in person, an event that happened to someone else
- Learning about the violent or unexpected death of a friend or family member
- Experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of traumatic events

Symptom Clusters



Symptom Clusters: Intrusions (Re-experiencing) (Criterion B)

- Recurrent, involuntary, and intrusive distressing memories of the traumatic event(s)
- Recurrent, distressing dreams related to the traumatic event(s)
- Dissociative reactions (e.g., flashbacks)
- Intense or prolonged psychological distress at exposure to trauma reminders
- Marked physiological reactions to trauma reminders

Symptom Clusters: Persistent Avoidance (Criterion C)

- Effortful avoidance of distressing memories, thoughts, or feelings related to the traumatic event(s)
- Effortful avoidance of external reminders (e.g., people, places, conversations, situations) related to the traumatic event(s)

Symptom Clusters: Negative changes in beliefs and feelings (Criterion D)

- Persistent, exaggerated negative beliefs about oneself, others, and/or the world
- Distorted blame of self or others
- Persistent negative emotions
- Difficulty feeling positive emotions
- Feeling detached or cut off from others
- Diminished interest or participation in significant activities
- Difficulty remembering important aspects of the trauma

Symptom Clusters: Alterations in arousal and reactivity (Criterion E)

- Irritable behavior and angry outbursts
- Reckless or self-destructive behavior
- Hypervigilance
- Exaggerated startle response
- Problems with concentration
- Sleep disturbance

Prevalence rates, by service era

11-20%

- 11-20 out of every 100 veterans who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) have PTSD in a given year

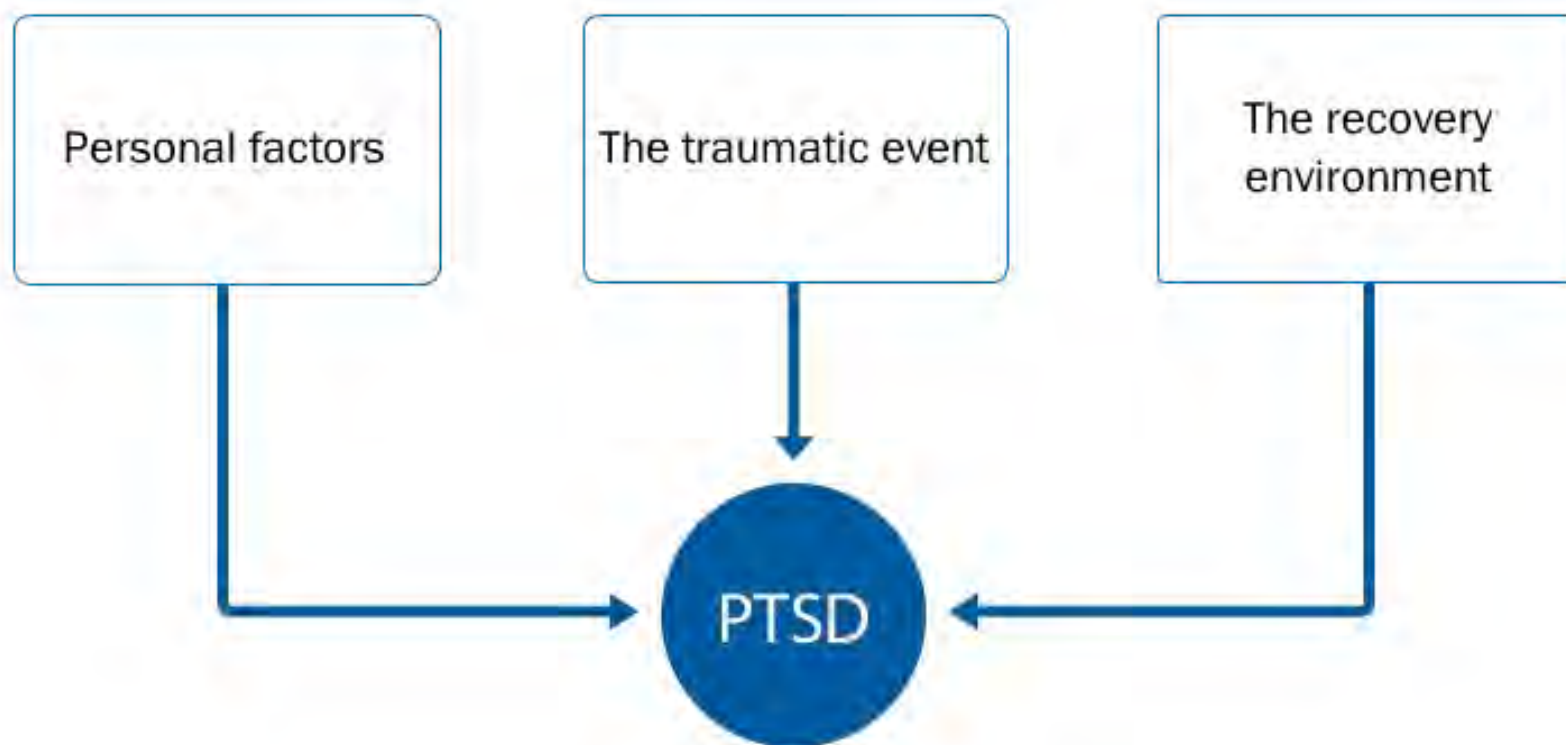
12%

- About 12 out of every 100 veterans who served in the Gulf War (Desert Storm) have PTSD in a given year

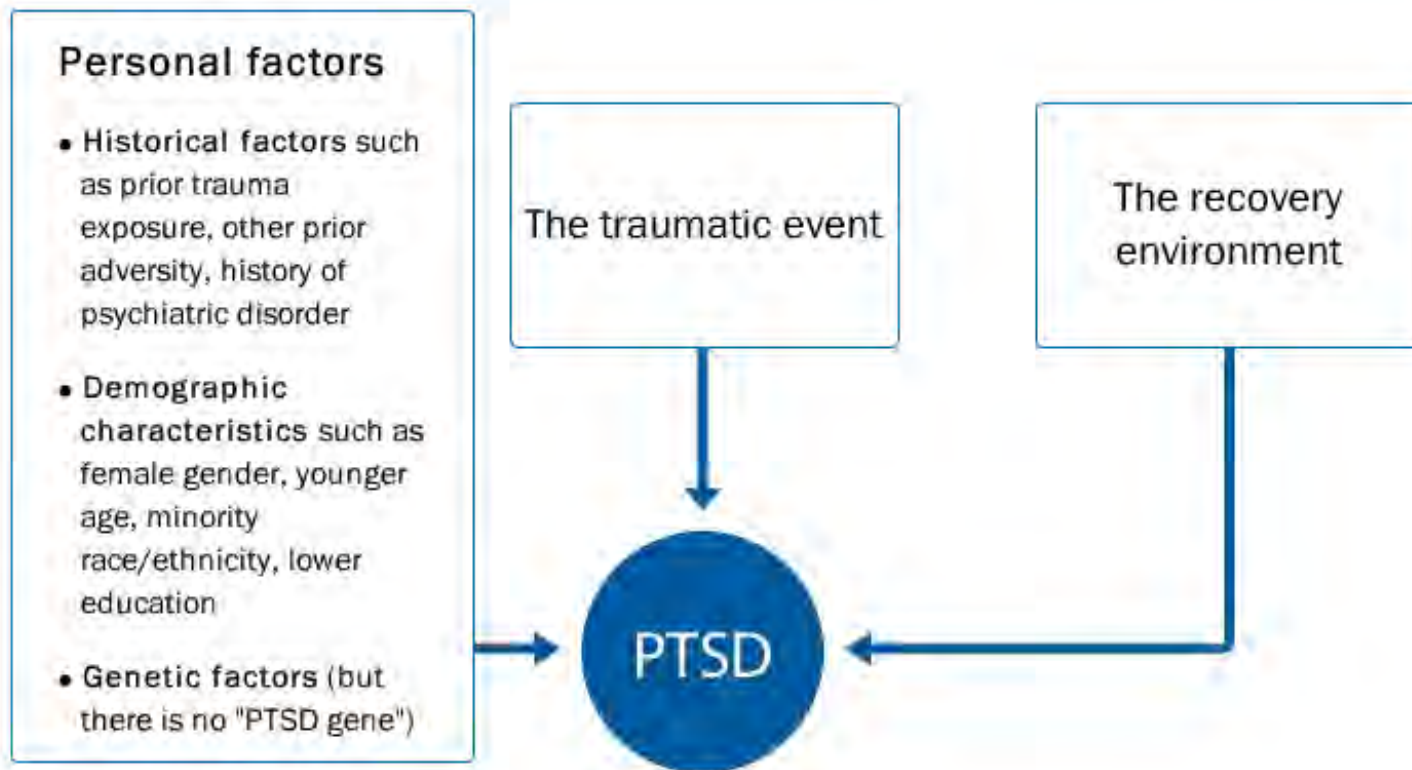
15%

- About 15 out of every 100 veterans who served in Vietnam have PTSD in a given year

Why do some people get PTSD while others do not?



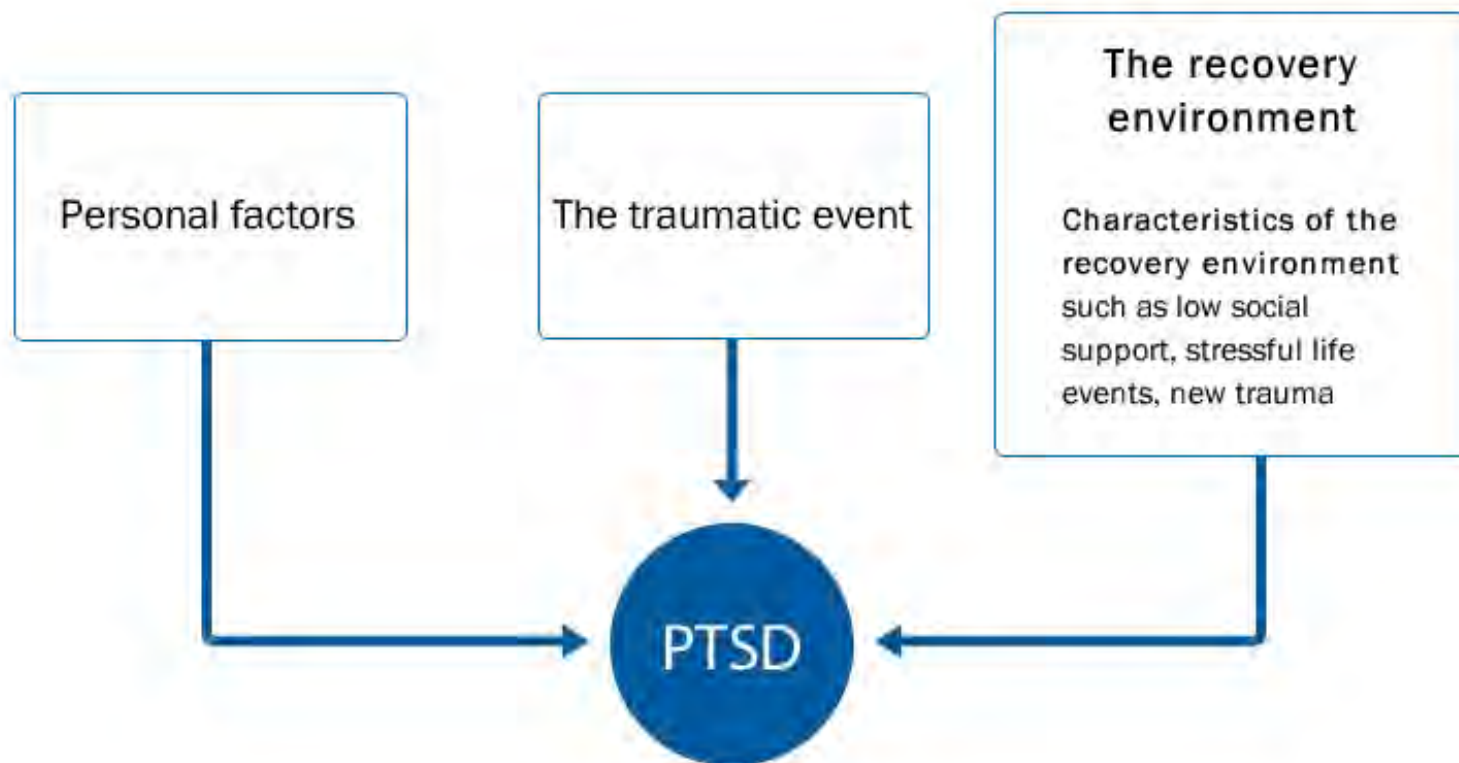
Personal Factors



Traumatic Event



Recovery Environment



Comorbidity: PTSD often co-occurs with other mental health problems.



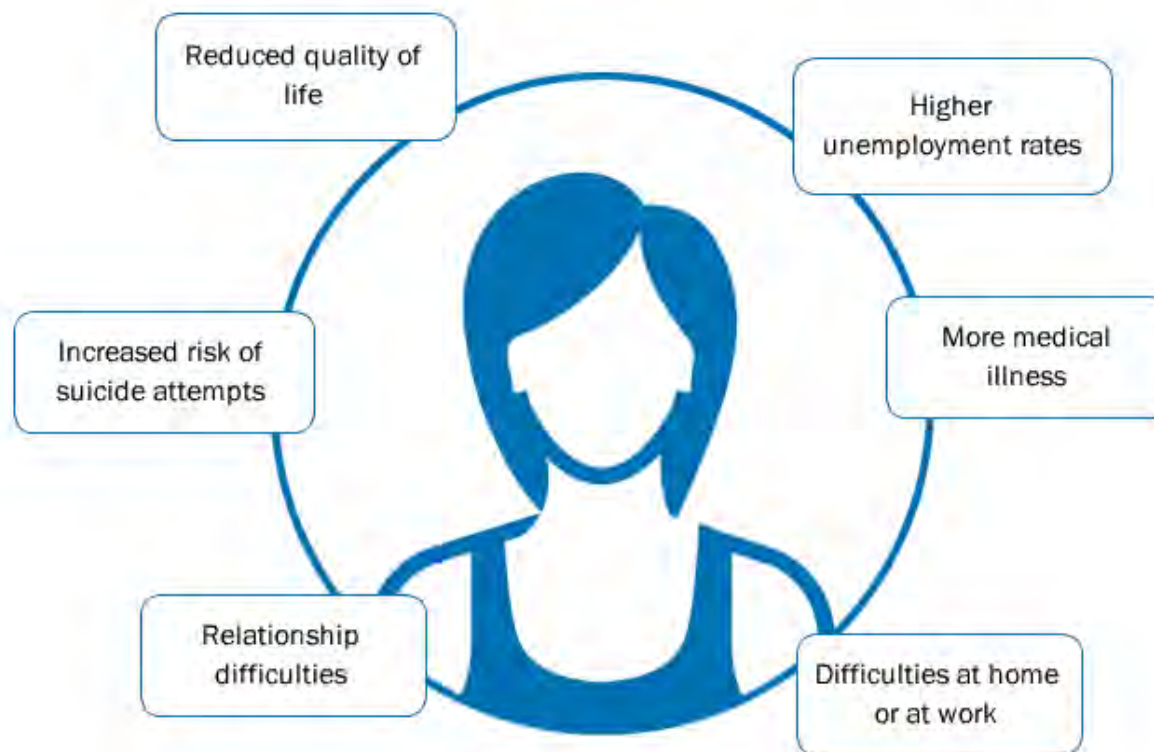
80% have one or more mental health problem

(depression, anxiety disorders, and substance use disorders)

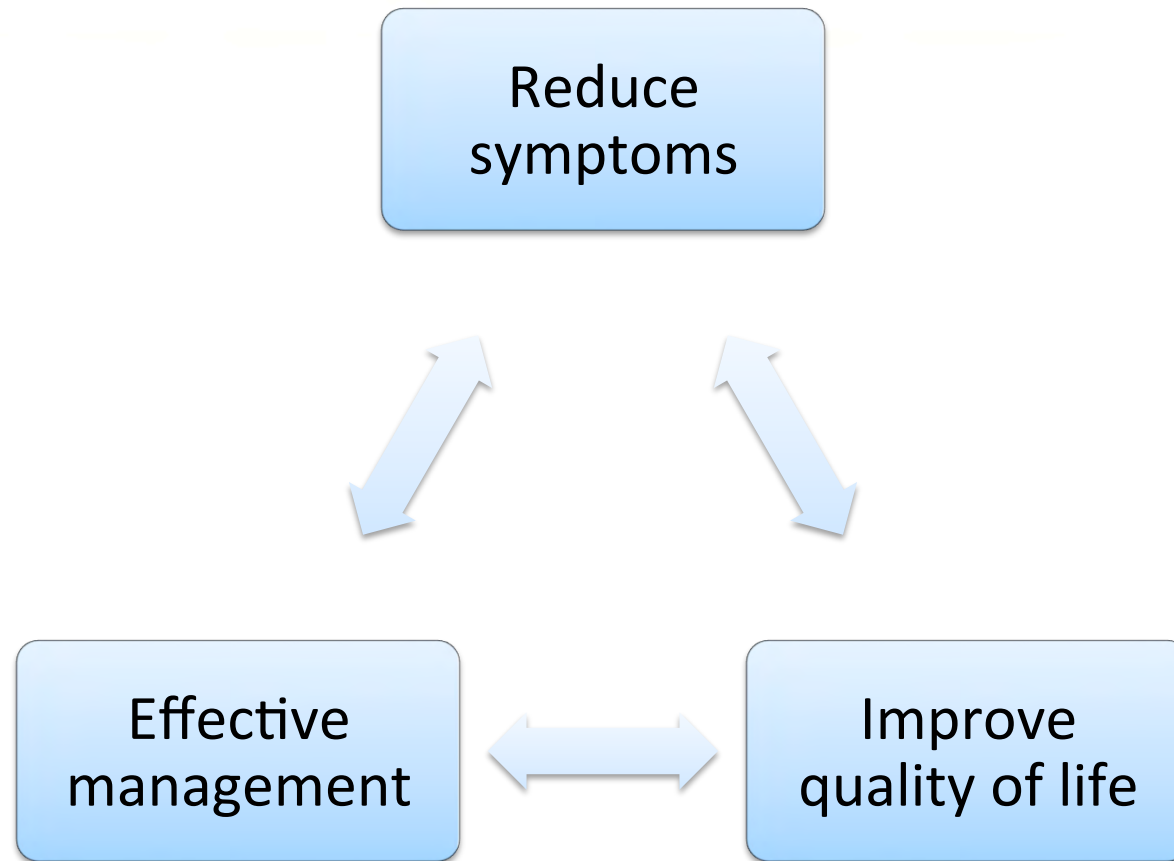
20% have no other mental health problem

Kessler, R. C., Sonnega, A., Bromet, E., Hughes, M., & Nelson, C. B. (1995). Posttraumatic stress disorder in the national comorbidity survey. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 52(12), 1048-1060.

Other Co-occurring Problems

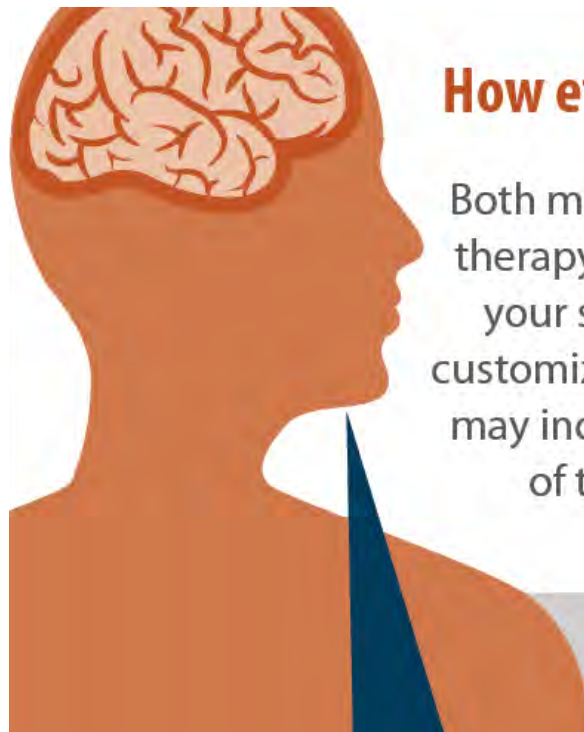


Recovery is possible!



How can PTSD be treated?

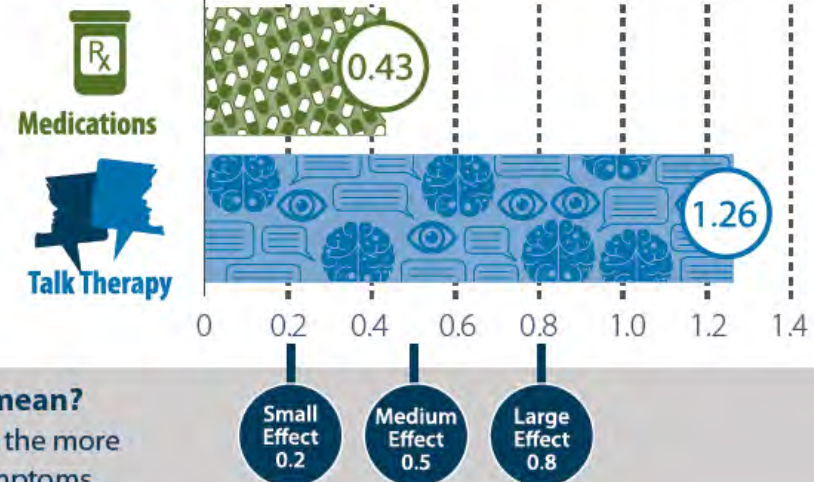
Both medication and psychotherapy are effective, but psychotherapy is more effective



How effective are these treatments?

Both medication and talk therapy can help to treat your symptoms. Your customized treatment plan may include one or more of these options.

TREATMENT EFFECTS ON PTSD SYMPTOMS



Evidence-based Psychotherapy Treatments

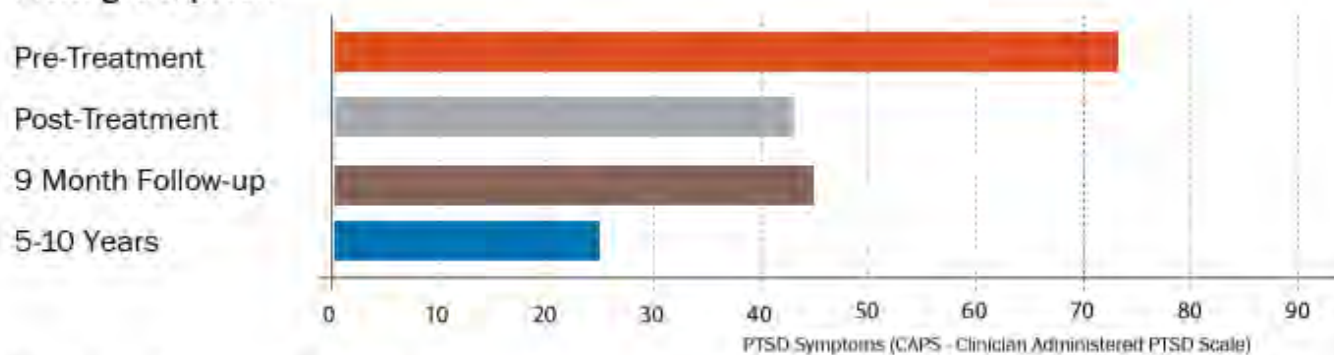
- First line psychotherapies:

A **Trauma-focused psychotherapy** that includes components of exposure and/or cognitive restructuring, such as:

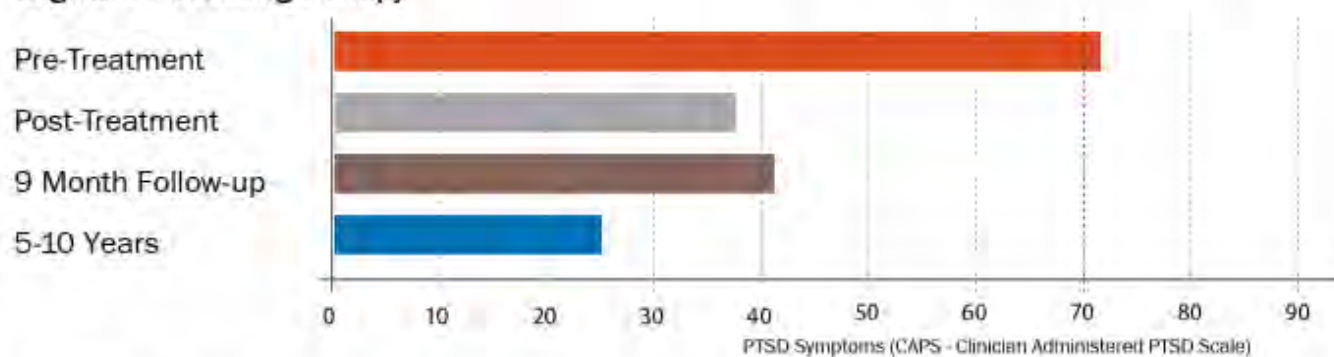
- **Prolonged Exposure (PE)**
- **Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)**
- **Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)**

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) Works

Prolonged Exposure



Cognitive Processing Therapy



Resick, Patricia A.; Nishith, Pallavi; Weaver, Terri L.; Astin, Millie C.; Feuer, Catherine A. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, Vol 70(4), Aug 2002, 867-879. doi: 10.1037/0022-006X.70.4.867

Evidence-based Pharmacological Treatments

- First line medications:
 - Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs)
 - E.g., paroxetine (Paxil), sertraline (Zoloft), fluoxetine (Prozac)
 - Serotonin-Norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitors (SNRIs)
 - E.g., venlafaxine (Effexor)
- Warning: Benzodiazepines (e.g., Xanax, Valium, Klonopin)
 - Limited efficacy
 - Increased safety concerns – potential for harm
 - Not recommended for PTSD



Objective #2

RESOURCES AND SERVICES

National Center for PTSD
<http://www.ptsd.va.gov>



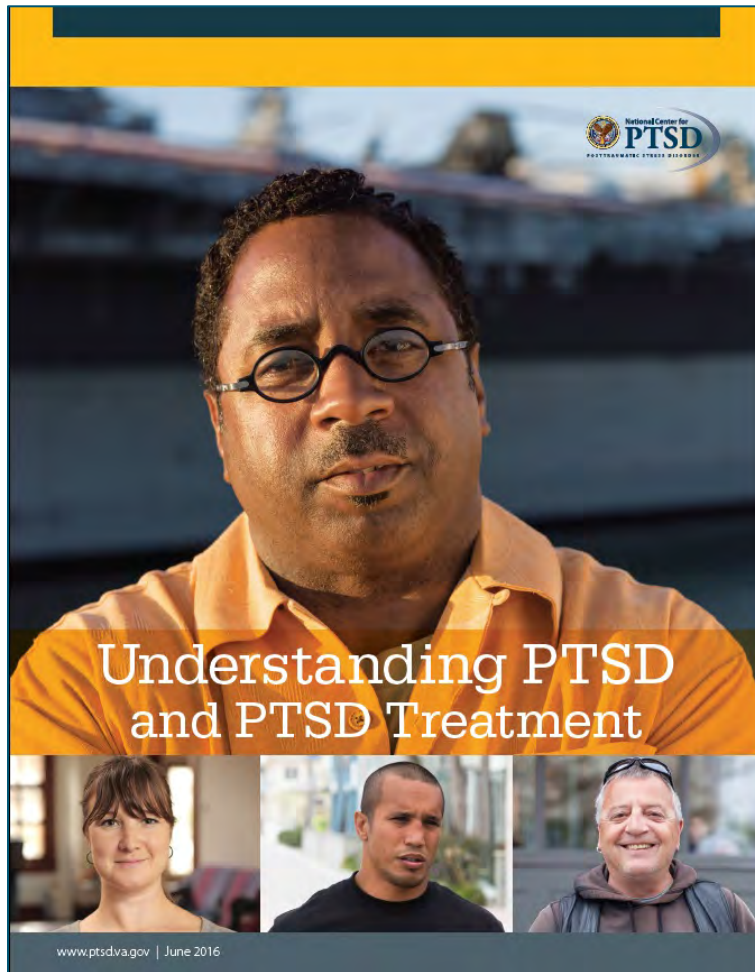
Provide **education** about PTSD and effective PTSD treatments

Make available resources to promote treatment **engagement**

Develop tools to foster **self help** and **symptom management**

PTSD Basics

http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/understanding_ptsd/booklet.pdf



- *Understanding PTSD and PTSD Treatment* is a booklet that explains basic information about:
 - What is PTSD?
 - What can cause PTSD?
 - What are the symptoms of PTSD?
 - What do I do if I have symptoms?
 - How do I know if I have PTSD?
 - Why get treatment for PTSD?
 - Common questions about treatment
 - What happens during PTSD treatment?
 - How do I choose a mental health provider?
 - Where can I go to get help?

Animated Whiteboard Videos

- Short (~3 minute), engaging videos about PTSD and effective treatments

Whiteboards

Watch these short animated videos to learn about PTSD and effective treatments.

What is PTSD?



Treatment: Know Your Options



"Evidence-based" Treatment



Cognitive Processing Therapy



Prolonged Exposure



AboutFace

<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/apps/AboutFace/>

HOME WHO'S ON THE SITE PTSD PROFILES THERAPIES PREVIEWS ABOUT PTSD GET HELP

ABOUTFACE

Learn about posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) from Veterans who've experienced it. Hear their stories. Find out how treatment turned their lives around.

VETERANS CLINICIANS FAMILY

- Who I am
- How I knew I had PTSD
- How PTSD affects the people you love
- Why I didn't ask for help right away
- When I knew I needed help
- What treatment was like for me
- How treatment helps me
- My advice to you

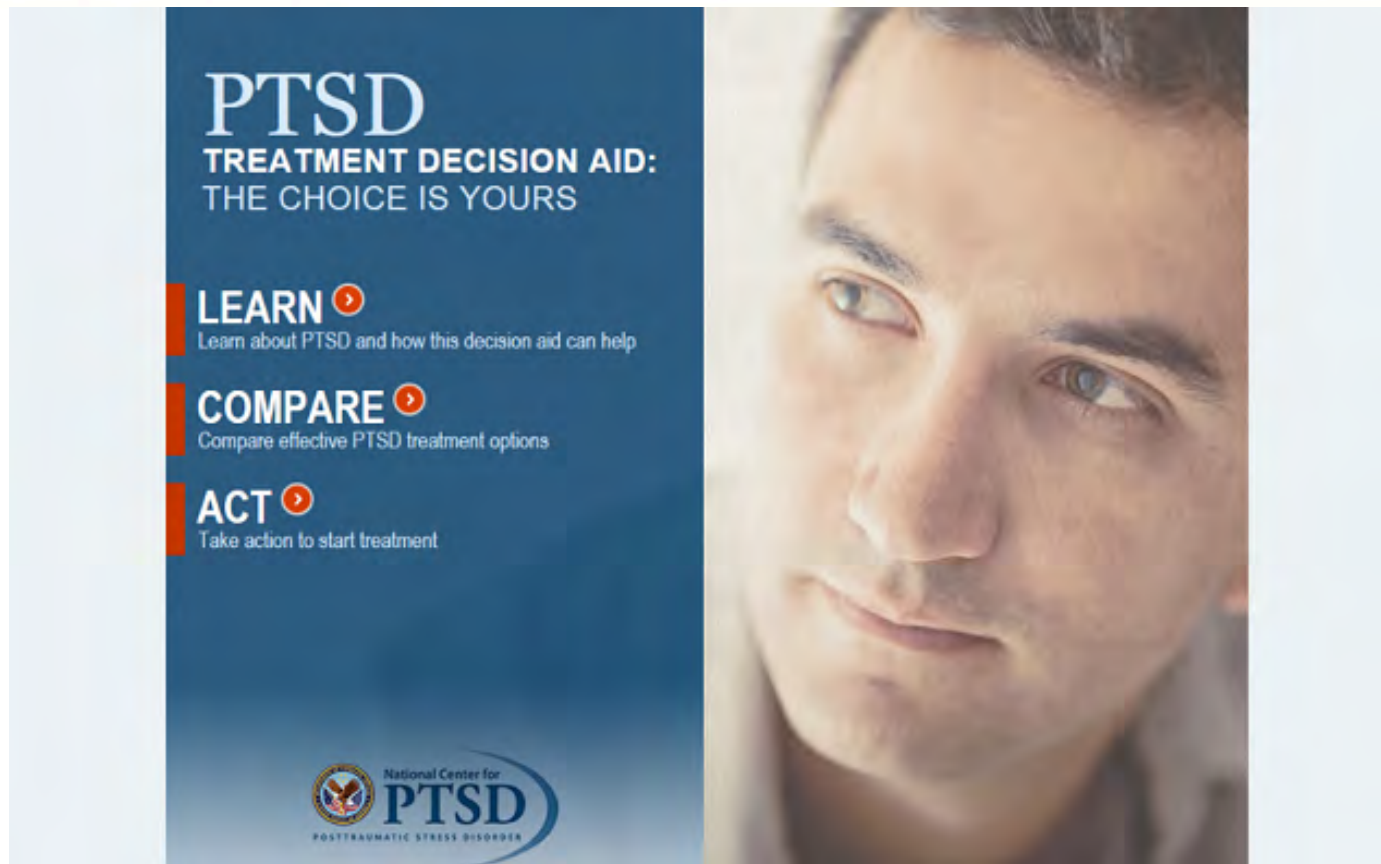
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HOW THIS SITE WORKS CONTACT US LAST UPDATED: 2016-04-01

National Center for PTSD

PTSD Treatment Decision Aid

<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/decisionaid>




PTSD
TREATMENT DECISION AID:
THE CHOICE IS YOURS

LEARN ▶
Learn about PTSD and how this decision aid can help

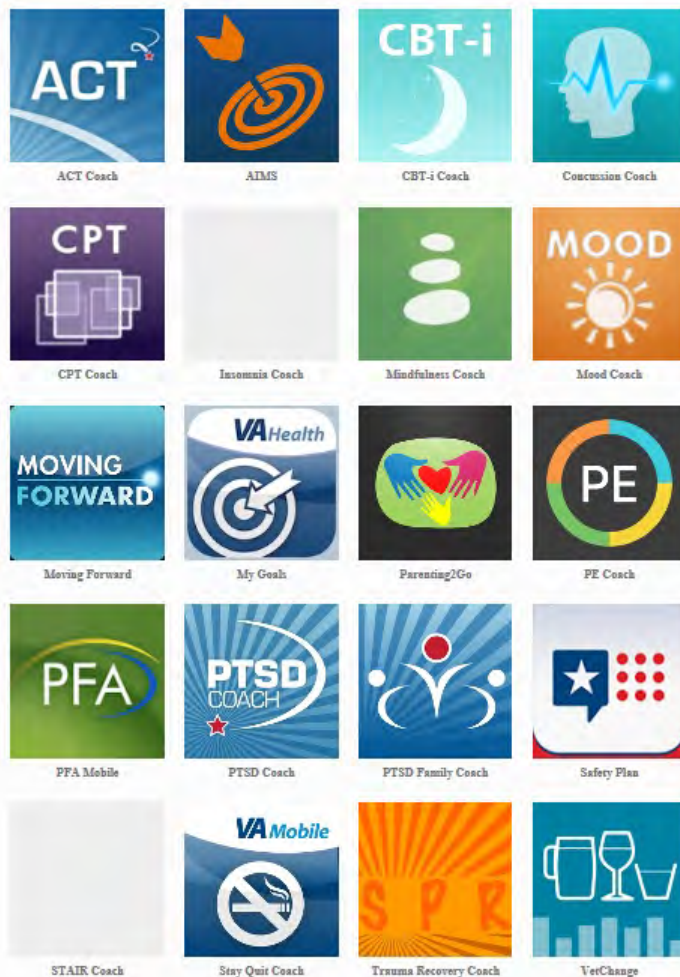
COMPARE ▶
Compare effective PTSD treatment options

ACT ▶
Take action to start treatment

 National Center for
PTSD
POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Mobile Apps

<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/materials/apps/index.asp>



- The National Center for PTSD has partnered with a number of organizations to develop a variety of mobile apps.
- Apps are focused on PTSD, related health problems (e.g., insomnia, alcohol use, etc.), or general well-being.
- There are apps for patients, providers, and for use with patient-provider dyads.

PTSD Coach

<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/materials/apps/PTSDCoach.asp>



- PTSD Coach mobile app – more than 275,000 downloads in 98 countries.
- App provides:
 - Education about PTSD and PTSD treatment
 - A self-assessment tool
 - Portable skills to address acute symptoms
 - Direct connection to crisis support
- Used as stand-alone education and symptom management tool, or with face-to-face care.
- Tools are easily accessible when they are needed most.

PTSD Coach Online

<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/apps/ptsdcoachonline/default.htm>

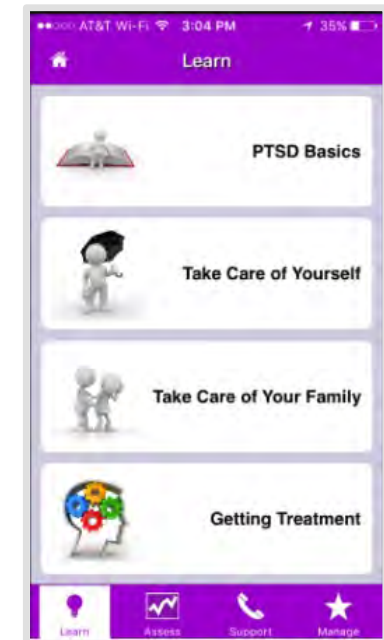
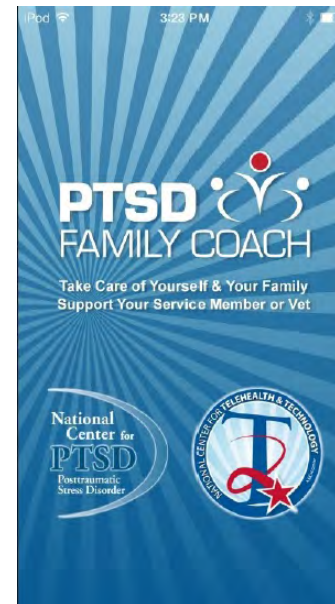
- *PTSD Coach Online* offers an expanded suite of 17 tools to help manage symptoms (e.g., problem solving, challenging cognitions).
- Users can choose a tool based upon a current problem or a full list of tools.
- Video instructions from “coaches” are available for each tool.

The screenshot shows the PTSD Coach Online website. At the top, there is a dark blue header with the National Center for PTSD logo, the text "PTSD COACH ONLINE", the VA logo, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs logo. Below the header, there are navigation links for "Home" and "FAQs". The main content area features a large image of a field with a white arrow pointing to the text "I want to work on my". Below this, it says "Choose a problem to work on from the list or [view all tools](#)". To the right of this text is a list of 17 problems: worry or anxiety, anger, sadness or hopelessness, sleep problems, trauma reminders, avoidance of stressful situations, disconnection from people, disconnection from reality, problem solving skills, and direction in life. Below the main content area, there is a section titled "Welcome to PTSD Coach Online. Tools to help you manage stress." which includes a video player showing a woman, Cybele Merrick, MA MS, and a "Meet a coach" link. To the right of the video player, there is a text box stating: "PTSD Coach Online is for anyone who needs help with upsetting feelings. Trauma survivors, their families, or anyone coping with stress can benefit." At the bottom of the page, it says "Produced by the National Center for PTSD" and "August 2013".

PTSD Family Coach

<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/materials/apps/PTSDFamilyCoach.asp>

- PTSD Coach is for family members of those living with PTSD.
- App provides:
 - Education about PTSD and self-care
 - Information to help take care of your relationship and children
 - Resources to help a loved one get treatment for PTSD
 - Tools to manage stress and build social networks
 - Tracking for stress level over time




Printable Materials to Share

http://www.ptsd.va.gov/about/press-room/Materials_for_Printing.asp


- A variety of handouts, posters, brochures, and flyers
- Intended for veterans, families, and general public knowledge
- Emphasis on understanding PTSD, co-occurring conditions, treatment, as well as more general readjustment issues

ADVANCING SCIENCE AND PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING OF TRAUMATIC STRESS

Trauma and PTSD
ONLINE RESOURCES
for Veterans, General Public, Family and Friends




ABOUT
An online video collection dedicated to Veterans talking about living with PTSD and how PTSD treatment turned their lives around.



What is PTSD?
Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can occur after someone goes through a traumatic event like combat, assault, or disaster. Most people have some stress reactions after a trauma. If the reactions don't go away over time or disrupt your life, you may have PTSD.

Mobile Apps
Free for iOS and Android. Download to learn new skills in handling stress or to assist in therapy. Other apps are available for smoking, sleep habits and parenting.




Online Resources
Understanding PTSD and PTSD Treatment — Don't let PTSD get in the way of your life, hurt your relationships, or cause problems at work or school. Learn about PTSD and treatment choices to find out what is best for you. PTSD treatment can help.





PTSD Coach Online — Our video coaches will help you. Self-help tools to deal with problems, such as sleep, anger and isolation. Choose from 17 self-help tools.

Returning from the War Zone — This guide can help family members with reintegration following war.

Whiteboard Videos — A series of short, animated videos describing PTSD and PTSD treatment.



WWW.PTSD.VA.GOV

Veterans Crisis Line

<https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>

- 24/7
- Phone support
- Text messaging
- Online chat



**Confidential help for
Veterans and their families**

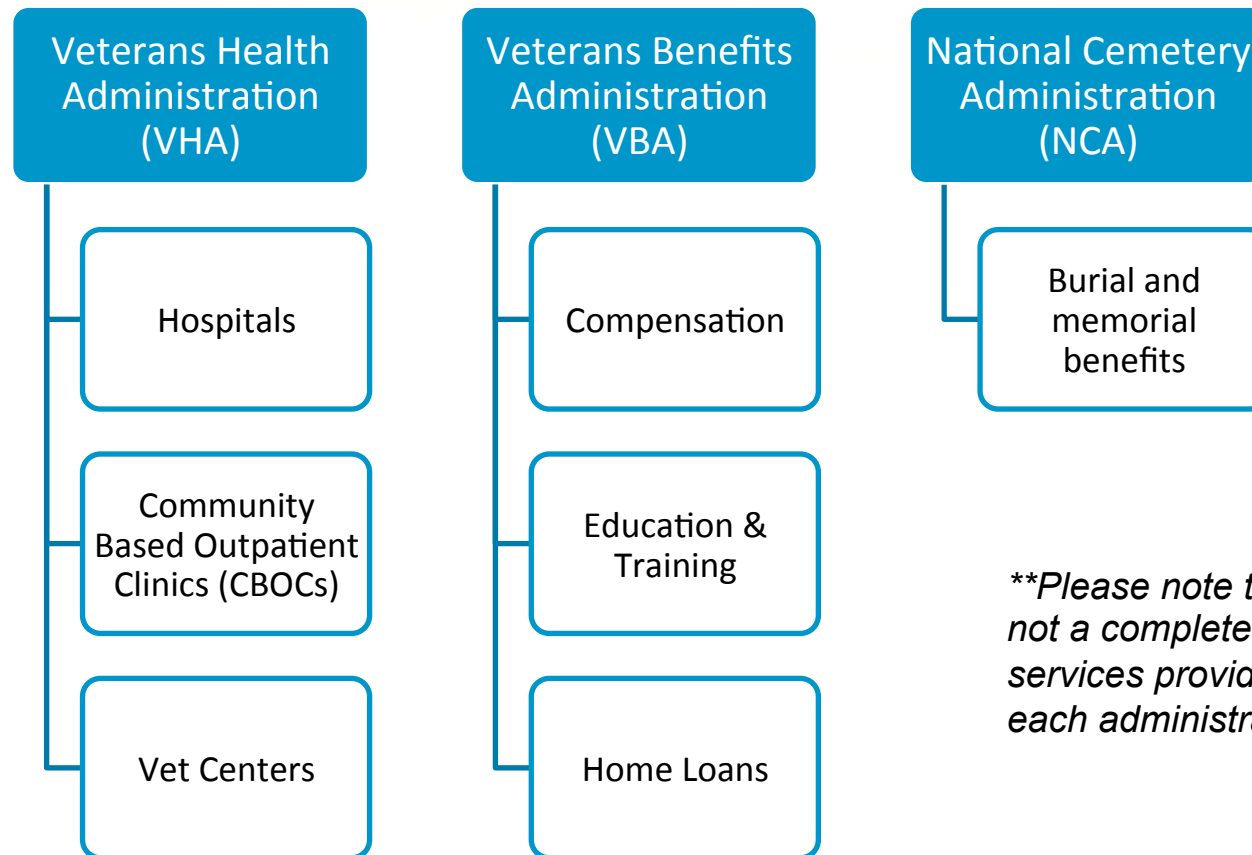
Make the Connection

<http://maketheconnection.net>

- “*MakeTheConnection.net* is an online resource designed to connect Veterans, their family members and friends, and other supporters with information, resources, and solutions to issues affecting their lives.”
 - Information about common life challenges, problems, and conditions
 - Extensive video gallery with good sorting options
 - Information and resource locator
 - Self-assessments and self-help

**MAKE THE
CONNECTION**

Where to Get Help: US Dept. of Veterans Affairs



***Please note this is not a complete list of services provided by each administration*

Where to Get Help: Benefits (VBA)

- Connect to your local Regional Benefit Office
 - Locator: <https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/state.asp?STATE=CA&dnum=3>
 - CA locations: Oakland, Los Angeles, San Diego
- Find your local County Veterans Service Officer (CVSO)
 - Assistance and advocacy in connecting veterans and their families with service sand benefits
 - County locations:
<https://www.calvet.ca.gov/VetServices/Pages/CVSO-Locations.aspx>

Where to Get Help: Health Care (VHA) Eligibility & Enrollment

- Eligibility Criteria: <https://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/apply/veterans.asp>
 - Served in the military
 - Separated under any condition other than dishonorable
 - Minimum duty requirement (24 consecutive months)
- Enrollment
 - Complete VA Form 10-10EZ
 - <https://www.vets.gov/>
 - For assistance:
 - Call 1-877-222-VETS (8387) for help completing the form
 - Contact the Enrollment Coordinator at your local VA health care facility
 - Contact a National or State Veterans Service Organization

Where to Get Help: Health Care (VHA) Locations

- Hospitals and Community Based Outpatient Clinics
 - Hospital & Clinic Locator:
<https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/division.asp?dnum=1>
- Vet Centers
 - Readjustment Counseling for veterans and their families
 - For those who served in a combat theater or area of hostility, experienced MST, provided mortuary services, operated unmanned aerial vehicles in support of combat operations
 - Bereavement counseling
 - CA Locations:
<https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/state.asp?dnum=ALL&STATE=CA>

Where to Get Help: Health Care (VHA) PTSD Treatment

- All VA Medical Centers provide PTSD care, as well as many VA clinics
- Some clinics have specialized PTSD programs
 - VA PTSD Program Locator: <https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/PTSD.asp>
 - Within CA: https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/state_PTSD.cfm?STATE=CA
- PTSD services may also be provided over telehealth
- Comprehensive resource list: “Where to get help for PTSD”
 - <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/where-to-get-help.asp>





Objective #3

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

Common Misconceptions

About trauma exposure and/or having PTSD:

- You can only have PTSD from combat
- PTSD is a lifelong, chronic disease
- Having PTSD means I am weak, crazy, broken, or damaged

About recovery:

- It is too late for me to recover
- Everyone who served in combat has PTSD

About services:

- I am not eligible for VHA services because I am not service connected
- I can only get treatment for PTSD at a VA hospital



Objective #4:

INTERACTING WITH VETERANS WHO MAY HAVE PTSD

Interacting with Veterans with PTSD

- Many veterans will not know or disclose if they have PTSD
- Provide information and assistance connecting them to VBA benefits and VHA services
- Focus questions on ways they need help – what do you need to know in order to help them?
 - Talking about specifics of military service, including deployments, may be personal or triggering
 - Trauma exposure or details are not needed
- Be mindful of personal space (e.g., approaching from behind, physical touch, sudden movements)
- Offer validation, normalization, and gratitude
- Instill hope

Thank you!



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