



February 2004

DENTON COUNTY, TEXAS

County Judge Mary Horn, Commissioner Cynthia White, Precinct 1; Commissioner Sandy Jacobs, Precinct 2;

Commissioner Bobbie Mitchell, Precinct 3; Commissioner Jim Carter, Precinct 4

Volume VII Issue 2

The Denton County Veteran War-Zone-Related Stress Reactions: What Families Need to Know

A National Center for PTSD Fact Sheet

Military personnel in war zones frequently have serious reactions to their traumatic war experiences. Sometimes the reactions continue after they return home. Ongoing reactions to war-zone fear, horror, or helplessness are connected to posttraumatic stress and can include: *Nightmares or difficulty sleeping, Unwanted distressing memories or thoughts, Anxiety and panic, Irritability and anger, Emotional numbing or loss of interest in activities or people, Problem alcohol or drug use to cope with stress reactions.*

How Traumatic Stress Reactions Can Affect Families

Stress reactions may interfere with a service member's ability to trust and be emotionally close to others. As a result, families may feel emotionally cut off from the service member.

A returning war veteran may feel irritable and have difficulty communicating, which may make it hard to get along with him or her.

- A returning veteran may experience a loss of interest in family social activities.
- Veterans with PTSD may lose interest in sex and feel distant from their spouses.

Traumatized war veterans often feel that something terrible may happen "out of the blue" and can become preoccupied with trying to keep themselves and family members safe.

Just as war veterans are often afraid to address what happened to them, family members are frequently fearful of examining the traumatic events as well. Family members may want to avoid talking about the trauma or related problems. They may avoid talking because they want to spare the survivor further pain or because they are afraid of his or her reaction. Family members may feel hurt, alienated, or discouraged because the veteran has not been able to overcome the effects of the trauma. Family members may become angry or feel distant from the veteran.

The Important Role of Families in Recovery

The primary source of support for the returning soldier is likely to be his or her family. Families can help the veteran not withdraw from others. Families can provide companionship and a sense of belonging, which can help counter the veteran's feeling of separateness because of his or her experiences. Families can provide practical and emotional support for coping with life stressors.

If the veteran agrees, it is important for family members to participate in treatment. It is also important to talk about how the post-traumatic stress is affecting the family and what the family can do about it. Adult family members should also let their loved ones know that they are willing to listen if the service member would like to talk about war experiences. Family members should talk with treatment providers about how they can help in the recovery effort.

What Happens in Treatment for PTSD

Treatment for PTSD focuses on helping the trauma survivor reduce fear and anxiety, gain control over traumatic stress reactions, make sense of war experiences, and function better at work and in the family. A standard course of treatment usually includes: Assessment and development of an individual treatment plan, Education of veterans and their families about posttraumatic stress and its effects, Training in relaxation methods, to help reduce physical arousal/tension, Practical instruction in skills for coping with anger, stress, and ongoing problems, Detailed discussion of feelings of anger or guilt, which are very common among survivors of war trauma, Detailed discussions to help change distressing beliefs about self and others (e.g., self-blame), If appropriate, careful, repeated discussions of the trauma (exposure therapy) to help the service member reduce the fear associated with trauma memories, and medication to reduce anxiety, depression, or insomnia. Group support from other veterans often felt to be the most valuable treatment experience.

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A National Center for PTSD Fact Sheet

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Mental health professionals in VA medical centers, community clinics, and Readjustment Counseling Service Vet Centers have a long tradition of working with family members of veterans with PTSD. Couples counseling and educational classes for families may be available. Family members can encourage the survivor to seek education and counseling but should not try to force their loved one to get help. Family members should consider getting help for themselves, whether or not their loved one is getting treatment.

- Self-Care Suggestions for Families
- Become educated about PTSD.
- Take time to listen to all family members and show them that you care.

- Spend time with other people. Coping is easier with support from others, including extended family, friends, church groups, or other community groups.
- Join or develop a support group.
- Take care of yourself. Family members frequently devote themselves totally to those they care for and, in the process, neglect their own needs. Pay attention to yourself. Watch your diet and exercise, and get plenty of rest. Take time to do things that feel good to you.
- Try to maintain family routines, such as dinner together, church, or sports outings.
- If needed, get professional help as early as possible, and get back in touch with treatment providers if things worsen after treatment has ended.

Please visit <http://www.ncptsd.org/index.html> for more information on PTSD.



VA Seal

Here is a picture of the VA Seal.

The eagle represents the United States.

The circle of 5 stars above the eagle stands for the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard.

The flags in the eagle's claws show America's history from 13 colonies to 50 states.

The gold cord is a symbol for those who died while serving our country. The eagle is holding the cord to keep the memory of those veterans alive.



VA Motto

Lincoln's words became the VA motto in 1959

with the words, "To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and orphan." President Lincoln stated the government's duty to care for those who are hurt or died defending our Country.

President Lincoln's words have stood the test of time. This reminds us to care for those hurt in our nation's defense and the families of those killed in its service.



Student Volunteer Program

Student volunteers are an important part of the VA medical centers' treatment team. VAVS defines student volunteers as those under the age of 21. They will receive valuable experience and training which will benefit them in applying for college and jobs. The James H. Parke Memorial Youth Scholarship Award provides scholarship opportunities to students who volunteer at VA medical centers (your local VA health care Voluntary Service staff has current nomination criteria). Student volunteers are liaisons with their communities and provide a valuable element of caring for veterans.

The VA Voluntary Service program offers students excellent opportunities for:

- exploring health care career options;
- gaining experience in a health care environment;
- learning new skills;
- making new friends;
- qualifying to be nominated for James H. Parke Memorial college scholarships

There are many opportunities to explore in the Student Volunteer Program.

A wide variety of assignments are available. Volunteers are selected according to the needs of the medical center, assignment preference and skills. Training is provided by Voluntary Service at each medical facility and the supervisor of the department to which volunteers are assigned. Orientation will be conducted to acquaint you with services available at the medical center where you serve.

Contact the Department of Veterans Affairs facility nearest you. Ask for Voluntary Service. Tell their staff of your interest in becoming a VAVS Volunteer. The staff will take care of everything else including your interview, orientation, and assignment! Go to <http://www.va.gov/> find the facility nearest you.



Air Force



Army



Navy, Marine Corp and
Coast Guard

The Congressional Medal Of Honor

The Medal of Honor, established by joint resolution of Congress, 12 July 1862 (amended by Act of 9 July 1918 and Act of 25 July 1963) is awarded in the name of Congress to a person who, while a member of the Armed Services, distinguishes himself conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while engaged in an action against any enemy of The United States; while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force; or while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which The United States is not a belligerent party. The deed performed must have been one of personal bravery or self-sacrifice so conspicuous as to clearly distinguish the individual above his comrades and must have involved risk of life. Incontestable proof of the performance of service is exacted and each recommendation for award of this decoration is considered on the standard of extraordinary merit.



Distinguish Service Medal (Army, Army Air Corps)
For extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force. The DSC is our Nation's second highest

award for military valor, behind only the Medal of Honor. The Distinguished Service Cross was established in 1918 to honor heroism of the highest degree that did not quite merit the Medal of Honor. The Navy Cross (Navy, Marines & Coast Guard) and the Air Force Cross all join the DSC as our Nation's second highest military award.



Navy Cross (Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard)
For extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force. The Navy Cross is the

Navy's 3rd highest award for combat heroism and other distinguished services. On August 7, 1942 Congress made the Navy Cross a COMBAT ONLY decoration with precedence over the Distinguished Service Medal, making it the Navy's 2nd highest award ranking below only the Medal of Honor. It shares its position with the Army's Distinguished Service Cross and the Air Force Cross.



Air Force Cross (Air Force)
For extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force. The Air Force Cross was established in 1960 to honor heroism of the highest degree that did not merit the Medal of

Honor. Previously airmen of the Army Air Corps were awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for such actions. The Air Force Cross became the unique award of the United States Air Force to replace the Army Award for members of their own branch of service. The Navy Cross (Navy, Marines & Coast Guard) and the Distinguished Service Cross (Army) all join the Air Force Cross as our Nation's second highest military award.



FISHER HOUSE

The Fisher House program is a unique private-public partnership that supports America's military in their time of need. The program recognizes the special sacrifices of our men and women in uniform and the hardships of military service by meeting a humanitarian need beyond that normally provided by the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs. The Fisher House program is a unique private-public partnership that supports America's military in their time of need. The program recognizes the special sacrifices of our men and women in uniform and the hardships of military service by meeting a humanitarian need beyond that normally provided by the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs.

Because members of the military and their families are stationed worldwide and must often travel great distances for specialized medical care, Fisher House Foundation donates "comfort homes," built on the grounds of major military and VA medical centers. These homes enable family members to be close to a loved one at the most stressful times - during the hospitalization for an unexpected illness, disease, or injury. Because members of the military and their families are stationed worldwide and must often travel great distances for specialized medical care, Fisher House Foundation donates "comfort homes," built on the grounds of major military and VA medical centers. These homes enable family members to be close to a loved one at the most stressful times - during the hospitalization for an unexpected illness, disease, or injury.

There is at least one Fisher House at every major military

medical center to assist families in need and to ensure that they are provided with the comforts of home in a supportive environment. Annually, the Fisher House program serves more than 7,000 families, and have made available more than 1,500,000 days of lodging to family members since the program originated in 1990. Based on a comparison of fees at a Fisher House (the average charge is less than \$10 per family per day, with many locations offering rooms at no cost) with commercial lodging facilities in the same area, it is estimated that families have saved nearly \$60 million by staying at a Fisher House since the program began.

In addition to constructing new houses, Fisher House Foundation continues to support existing Fisher Houses and help individual military families in need. Families and friends of patients at any of the military's hospitals can now receive up-to-the-minute reports on a loved one by going to the patient's own customized web page, thanks to new services provided through CaringBridge. We are also proud to administer and sponsor Scholarships for Military Children and co-sponsor the Newman's Own Award for Military Community Excellence. In addition to constructing new houses, Fisher House Foundation continues to support existing Fisher Houses and help individual military families in need. Families and friends of patients at any of the military's hospitals can now receive up-to-the-minute reports on a loved one by going to the patient's own customized web page, thanks to new services provided through CaringBridge. We are also proud to administer and sponsor Scholarships for Military Children and co-sponsor the Newman's Own Award for Military Community Excellence.



Fisher House Foundation and the Fisher House program depends on public donations to continue its important work. You can help! Making a donation through our secure server is fast and easy, and when we receive your donation, we will send you an acknowledgement in the mail for tax purposes. Fisher House Foundation and the Fisher House program depends on public donations to continue its important work. You can help! Making a donation through our secure server is fast and easy, and when we receive your donation, we will send you an acknowledgement in the mail for tax purposes.

Donors who give \$30 or more will receive a military-style Fisher House coin featuring the Fisher House of their choice. Coins for every house are available with the exception of Walter Reed and Tripler Army Medical Centers. If no specific coin is requested, we will send a coin of our choice. Shown above is the special coin commemorating the dedication of our second house in support of Landstuhl Regional Medical Center. Landstuhl is the military's only major medical center in Europe and provides critical support for Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Donors who give \$30 or more will receive a military-style Fisher House coin featuring the Fisher House of their choice. Coins for every house are available with the exception of Walter Reed and Tripler Army Medical Centers. If no specific coin is requested, we will send a coin of our choice. Shown above is the special coin commemorating the dedication of our second house in support of Landstuhl Regional Medical Center. Landstuhl is the military's only major medical center in Europe and provides critical support for Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Visit <http://www.fisherhouse.org> for donation information.

