



PTSD: When a Loved One is Suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress by award-winning author / stress-relief expert **Susie Mantell**

Q: Dear Susie, My husband suffers from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder... and it is tearing us both apart. His doctor explained to me that many combat veterans have seen and experienced events that we cannot even imagine. I know this is true, and my heart goes out to him, but he has become withdrawn, withholding, extremely moody, and can be pretty irritable and abusive, which is so not his nature. I hear him cry in his sleep but if I try to comfort him, he walls me out. He used to be such a devoted dad and a really fun guy. Now he doesn't seem to enjoy our kids as he used to and seldom wants to play with them. I notice that he seems a bit forgetful, drinks more than he used to, feels sick a lot, and often misses work. He's miserable and I can see that really needs some help. Is this what PTSD does? Where can I learn how to help him, and myself?

A: Few people could endure what a combat veteran has without profound impact upon psyche and spirit. Post-Traumatic Stress can also impact people in all walks of life who have experienced or witnessed such catastrophic events as acts of violence or terrorism, rape, suicide, fire, and natural disasters. What you are describing could certainly be symptomatic of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Some of the behaviors you mention could also originate from other medical and emotional conditions, so a thorough neurological and psychological evaluation is essential, as well as a routine physical including blood work. You're right that he should be addressed as promptly as possible for his sake, and that of you and your children. Sadly, thousands suffer from such difficulties, but there is real support available

Following armed conflicts of past decades in which the terms shell shock and battle fatigue were used, society, and the medical community, were ill prepared to provide necessary support for the war's traumatic impact upon combat veterans. Today, there is skilled, compassionate, psychiatric and medical help available locally, nationally and even online support. But sometimes it isn't as easy to find as one would hope. In addition to the support provided by the V.A., many families also do some research on their own to become better informed.

My own work is in facilitating stress-relief, but I am not a medical professional. In conjunction with a thorough medical evaluation by professionals knowledgeable about PTSD, I would suggest you seek out an experienced counselor with specific expertise in combat/POW-related Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Because your husband has been in combat, it would be wise for your husband to be evaluated to rule out the possibility of traumatic brain injury, as well as neurological, psychological or other medical conditions, infectious or addictive diseases, any of which can sometimes be overlooked whenever symptoms manifest behaviorally.

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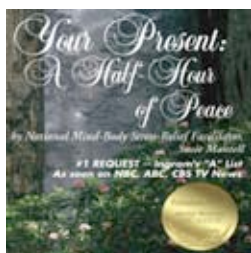
Below are just a sampling of many websites that provide information about PTSD. In addition, please visit my own website at www.relaxintuit.com and explore many specific stress-relief techniques for coping with the stress associated with PTSD, anxiety, depression, sleeplessness and other stress-related topics.

- www.mayoclinic.com/health/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/DS00246
- www.webmd.com/anxiety-panic/guide/post-traumatic-stress-disorder
- www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000925.htm
- www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/index.shtml
- www.ncptsd.va.gov/ncmain/index.jsp
- www.emedicinehealth.com/post-traumatic_stress_disorder_ptsd/article_em.htm

Whenever a question of a medical nature arises, as PTSD is, it is essential to talk with a trusted, experienced physician, and a skilled counselor who will sit face to face with you and your husband, really hear each of you, make an informed assessment and suggest how to proceed. Together, you can determine how best to address any concerns and find balance and peace for your husband and yourself. Recovery from trauma is a complex and challenging journey, but many have made it -- and it is well worth the trip.

Safety Note: If ever you, or someone you know, feels there could be a danger of hurting oneself or others, call 911 or get to an emergency room promptly for professional support.

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