

At 2.5 million strong, **The American Legion** is the largest veteran service organization in the world.

Are you giving back?

Join the ranks of America's veterans who are still serving their communities, become a Legionnaire. Contact a Legion Post in your area or call 1-800-433-3318, Ext. 321

### **Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) Program**

TFA was established by The American Legion to assist veterans with dependent children meet the costs of shelter, food, utilities and minor health expenses when they are not able to do so. This cash assistance is in the form of a grant and as such is non-repayable. For more information about TFA, please contact your local American Legion Post or call the National Headquarters at 1-800-3318

### **For more information:**

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation  
The American Legion  
1608 "K" Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20006  
(202) 861-2700 [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org)

The American Legion  
Department of Missouri Service  
Office:

We assist Veterans and their Families with the VA Claim and Appeal Process. We are professional lay advocates, which means we are veterans (with specialized training helping veterans).

*We do not charge a fee for our services*

We have Service Officers to assist you at each of the VA Medical Centers in Missouri.

We are also co-located at VA's Regional Office in St. Louis. Our mailing address is:

The American Legion @ VARO  
400 South 18<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 106  
St. Louis, MO 63103

314-552-9884 phone  
314-231-7463 fax



# **Guide to Posttraumatic Stress Disorder**

# Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Guide

Not all wounds are visible.

Invisible injuries can remain long after the battle is over; depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and traumatic brain injuries among them. The symptoms aren't always clear, and may not be what you think. Like any wound, they can fester and worsen if ignored. They can get in the way of being a spouse, parent, sibling, soldier, friend and co-worker.

If untreated, invisible injuries can lead to an onslaught of problems including domestic violence, alcoholism and even suicide. Rates of each run high among vets compared to the civilian population.

It doesn't have to be this way. Seeking help sooner rather than later can spare you and those around you a lot of pain.

Many vets learn to cope with these wounds, and come away stronger. One Iraq vet who fought to get his life back on track describes a renewed sense of purpose. "You know, I almost died, so I figured there's a lot of stuff I need to do." He went on to start a nonprofit outdoor adventure group for disabled people.\*

You may be wondering if you have symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

\*Special thanks to Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America at <http://iava.org/content/invisible-injuries>



Bob Strong/Reuters

## Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

**(PTSD)** is an anxiety disorder. PTSD can occur after you have experienced a traumatic event. Anyone who has gone through an event such as combat can develop posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). More specifically, PTSD develops after being exposed to a traumatic event in which the person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others...AND the person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror.

PTSD symptoms usually start soon after the traumatic event, but they may not happen until months or years later. They also may come and go over many years. If the symptoms last longer than 4 weeks, cause you great distress, or interfere with your work/home life, you probably have PTSD. Symptoms of PTSD include reliving the event, avoiding places or things that remind

you of the event, feeling numb, and feeling keyed up (also called hyperarousal).

Although most Veterans will readjust smoothly, the **most common** mental health problems faced by veterans are posttraumatic stress disorder and depression.

If you think you have PTSD, it is important to get treatment. There are good treatments available for PTSD – **treatment can help you get better.**

## Claims Process

**Don't do it alone.** The VA Claims process can be extremely complicated. Contact a professional American Legion Service Officer for assistance with filing a VA disability claim. This service is free of charge and not dependent on membership. To locate a service officer in your state, call 1-800-433-3318 or visit [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org)

## Get help:

- Contact your health care professional
- Find your nearest VA hospital by calling 877-222-VETS
- Check out the Vet Center Readjustment Services [www.vetcenter.va.org](http://www.vetcenter.va.org)
- Call or contact The American Legion for support services; [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org) or 1-800-433-3318
- VA Suicide Hotline – (800) 273-8255