

JUNE

PTSD Awareness

MONTH



ShieldWolf
WELLNESS

"YOUR HEALTH IS WORTH PROTECTING"

FAST FACTS

FIRST, IT'S MORE COMMON THAN YOU'D EXPECT. ACCORDING TO THE VA, 10% OF WOMEN IN THE US AND 4% OF MEN IN THE US WILL EXPERIENCE PTSD IN THEIR LIFE. THIS IS THE GENERAL PUBLIC, NOT MILITARY VETERANS.

SECOND, SOME BRAIN INJURIES CAN MANIFEST SIMILAR SYMPTOMS TO PTSD.

THIRD, THERE ARE EFFECTIVE TREATMENTS OUT THERE BEYOND SIMPLY MEDICATION.

SYMPTOMS

DEVELOP ANYWHERE FROM LESS THAN ONE MONTH TO YEARS AFTER THE "TRAUMATIC" EVENT.

FALL INTO FOUR CATEGORIES:

- AVOIDANCE
- INTRUSIVE MEMORIES
- NEGATIVE CHANGES IN THINKING AND MOOD
- CHANGES IN PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL REACTIONS

(SOURCE: MAYO CLINIC)

WHAT IS TRAUMA?

BASICALLY, PTSD IS A REACTION TO EXTREME TRAUMA.

TRAUMA IS SIMPLY UNRESOLVED OR TRAPPED STRESS. WHAT CAUSES STRESS TO BECOME TRAPPED OR UNRESOLVED IS AN INTERRUPTION OF THE HEALTHY STRESS RESPONSE CYCLE.

THE STRESS RESPONSE CYCLE IS LAID OUT IN THE TAO OF TRAUMA BY ALAINE D. DUNCAN, ET. AL.

5 STEPS OF A HEALTHY STRESS RESPONSE

- 1) AWAKEN/AROUSAL
- 2) SIGNAL THREAT
- 3) MOBILIZE RESPONSE
- 4) RESTORE COHERENCE
- 5) DIGEST THE GRISTLE

IF THIS CYCLE GETS INTERRUPTED FOR ANY REASON, WHETHER BY YOUR CHOICES, OR THE INTERFERENCE OF AN OUTSIDE PARTY, THIS CREATES TRAUMA. THE SYMPTOMS OF THIS TRAUMA WILL VARY BASED ON WHICH STEP GETS INTERRUPTED. FOR AN IN-DEPTH READING ON THIS I HIGHLY RECOMMEND THE TAO OF TRAUMA REFERENCED ABOVE.

STRESS AND TRAUMA

FIRST

STRESS IS MENTAL, EMOTIONAL, AND PHYSICAL ALL AT ONCE.

THIS MEANS THAT IF YOU HAVE STRESS STUCK IN YOUR BODY, THEN YOU NEED TO ADDRESS ALL THREE ASPECTS. WE OFTEN MEDICATE THE EMOTIONAL, NUMB THE PHYSICAL, AND TALK ABOUT THE MENTAL, BUT THEN WE WONDER WHY WE DON'T MAKE PROGRESS.

EVEN THOUGH PTSD IS CLASSIFIED AS A MENTAL HEALTH ISSUE, IT IS ALL TIED TOGETHER, AND TO MAKE PROGRESS YOU REALLY NEED TO ENGAGE ALL THREE ASPECTS.

SECOND

PAIN CAN BE A SIGN OF HEALING.

WHEN PAIN BECOMES TOO INTENSE, OUR BODY SHUTS DOWN THE RECEPTORS. WHEN YOU BEGIN HEALING, YOU FINALLY LESSEN THE PAIN ENOUGH THAT THE BODY FEELS SAFE FEELING THE PAIN AGAIN.

THIRD

YOUR BODY IS ALWAYS TRYING TO KEEP YOU ALIVE, AND YOU CANNOT OUT-REASON PHYSIOLOGY.

PTSD IS YOUR BODY AND MIND TRYING TO PROCESS AN OVERWHELMING EVENT AND KEEP YOU SAFE, AND YOU CANNOT JUST TALK YOURSELF OUT OF FEELING THAT WAY. ON A VERY DEEP LEVEL, YOUR BODY FEELS UNSAFE AND YOU CANNOT OVERCOME THAT BY TELLING YOURSELF TO GET OVER IT.

FOURTH, THE FIRST REQUIREMENT FOR HEALING IS A FEELING OF SAFETY.

WHEN YOU FEEL UNSAFE, YOUR MOST "PRIMITIVE" BRAIN IS IN CONTROL. THIS PORTION SITS RIGHT OVER YOUR BRAIN STEM AND CAN BASICALLY SHUT DOWN THE REST OF YOUR BRAIN. THIS BRAIN IS CONCERNED WITH FOOD, SAFETY, AND PROCREATION. IF YOU DON'T HAVE A STEADY FOOD SOURCE (OR MAYBE YOU ARE VERY STRICT WITH YOUR CALORIE COUNT, BUT THAT'S ANOTHER POST) OR YOU DON'T HAVE A GUARANTEE OF A ROOF OVER YOUR HEAD TO KEEP YOU SAFE AT NIGHT, OR YOU FEEL LIKE SOMEONE IS TRYING TO KILL YOU, THEN EVERYTHING ELSE GETS PUT ON THE BACK BURNER. EVEN THINGS LIKE AFFECTION AND HUMOR.

BEFORE YOU CAN BEGIN UNWINDING YOUR STRESS RESPONSE, YOU HAVE TO FIND A PLACE AND/OR PERSON THAT FEELS SAFE. FOR EXAMPLE, IF YOU FEEL UNSAFE AT A DOCTOR'S OFFICE, THEN ANY ATTEMPT TO RELAX YOUR STUCK STRESS RESPONSE WILL ACTUALLY BE RECOGNIZED AS A THREAT TO YOURSELF AND WILL LOCK DOWN EVERYTHING.

THEN, ONCE YOU HAVE FOUND THAT SAFE PLACE, YOU CAN ONLY MOVE AS FAST AS YOU FEEL SAFE - OTHERWISE YOU RISK RE-TRAUMATIZING YOURSELF.



ShieldWolf
WELLNESS

"YOUR HEALTH IS WORTH PROTECTING"

JUNE PTSD Awareness MONTH



ShieldWolf
WELLNESS

"YOUR HEALTH IS WORTH PROTECTING"

THERE IS HOPE

WITH ALL OF THESE METHODS, THERE ARE SOME COMMON RULES:

- YOU MUST FEEL SAFE WITH THE METHOD AND/OR PROVIDER
- YOU MUST BE HONEST WITH YOURSELF
- YOU MUST BE WILLING TO HEAL
- YOU NEED A GUIDE

THERE ARE OPTIONS

THESE ARE ALL TOOLS TO HELP YOU ACCOMPLISH A GOAL. THEY HELP OPEN DOORWAYS, BUT YOU STILL HAVE TO WALK THROUGH THEM.

EYE MOVEMENT DESENSITIZATION AND REPROGRAMMING (EMDR)

EMDR IS ONE OF THE METHODS FOR TREATING PTSD APPROVED BY THE VA. MY BASIC UNDERSTANDING IS THAT IT TYPICALLY USES EYE MOVEMENT TO STIMULATE BOTH SIDES OF YOUR BRAIN WHILE GOING THROUGH A COUNSELING SESSION. BY ACTIVATING BOTH SIDES OF YOUR BRAIN, IT ALLOWS YOU TO PROCESS MORE QUICKLY. IT IS PERFORMED BY LICENSED THERAPISTS, SO YOU WILL NEED TO DO SOME RESEARCH TO FIND ONE LOCAL. IT USUALLY TAKES 2-3 SESSIONS WITH THE THERAPIST BEFORE YOU ACTUALLY DO THE EMDR, SO TRY AND FIND SOMEONE LOCAL ENOUGH THAT YOU CAN MAKE THE VISITS.

EMDR REALLY DOES WORK, I'VE SEEN THE RESULTS, BUT YOU CAN ONLY COVER SO MUCH IN ONE SESSION.

SOMATIC EXPERIENCING

THESE ARE LICENSED COUNSELORS WHO ARE TRAINED IN PETER LEVINE'S METHODS. I DO NOT HAVE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH THEM, BUT THEY UNDERSTAND THAT STRESS/TRAUMA IS A MENTAL AND PHYSICAL PROCESS.

EMOTIONAL FREEDOM TECHNIQUE (EFT)

EFT IS A COMBINATION OF ACUPRESSURE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES (SEE A THEME?) THAT IS PRIMARILY USED TO REDUCE STRESS, ANXIETY, AND NEGATIVE EMOTIONS. THIS CAN BE DONE WITH GUIDANCE THROUGH AN APP OR OVER THE PHONE, SO IF YOU ARE LIMITED IN YOUR ABILITY TO GO SEE SOMEONE, THIS MIGHT BE A GOOD STARTING POINT.

AGAIN, THE TAPPING WILL STIMULATE DIFFERENT PORTIONS OF THE BRAIN, OPENING THE DOOR FOR YOU TO PROCESS WHAT IS GOING ON. IT HELPS DROP YOU OUT OF SURVIVAL MODE.

ESSENTIAL OILS AND AROMA FREEDOM TECHNIQUE (AFT)

AROMA FREEDOM TECHNIQUE WAS DEVELOPED BY DR. BENJAMIN PERKIS. HERE IS A BRIEF EXTRACT FROM AROMAFREEDOM.COM:

AROMA FREEDOM IS AN ENTIRELY NEW WAY OF USING PURE ESSENTIAL OILS, COMBINED WITH PROVEN PSYCHOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES, TO QUICKLY AND GENTLY DISSOLVE THE NEGATIVE THOUGHTS, FEELINGS AND MEMORIES THAT HOLD US BACK FROM REACHING OUR DREAMS. IT USES THE PRINCIPLE OF MEMORY RECONSOLIDATION, WHICH HAS BEEN STUDIED BY MODERN NEUROSCIENCE AS THE NATURAL WAY THAT THE BRAIN UPDATES LEARNING AND PREDICTION.

BEYOND AFT, THOUGH, THE RIGHT ESSENTIAL OILS CAN HELP WITH PAIN, PROCESSING EMOTIONS, LIFTING MOOD. JUST BECAUSE IT IS PLANT DERIVED, DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF ESSENTIAL OILS - THROUGH SMELL AND ABSORPTION THEY CAN MODULATE YOUR HORMONE BALANCE, EITHER IMPROVING OR WORSENING YOUR SYMPTOMS.



ShieldWolf
WELLNESS

"YOUR HEALTH IS WORTH PROTECTING"

June

PTSD Awareness

Month



ShieldWolf
WELLNESS

"YOUR HEALTH IS WORTH PROTECTING"

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

IF YOU ARE NOT READY TO TRY A TREATMENT OPTION, THERE ARE STILL SOME THINGS THAT YOU CAN DO BY YOURSELF THAT CAN HELP YOU THROUGH YOUR DAYS.

OVERLY SIMPLIFIED, PTSD IS CAUSED BY TOO MUCH STRESS, SO FINDING WAYS TO REDUCE YOUR STRESS SHOULD HELP.

1. RECOGNIZE THAT YOUR BODY IS TRYING TO KEEP YOU SAFE.

WHEN YOU THINK YOUR BODY IS MALFUNCTIONING, IT JUST ADDS TO YOUR STRESS.

2. CUT BACK ON CAFFEINE AND SUGAR
CAFFEINE AND SUGAR BOTH CAUSE AN INCREASED STRESS RESPONSE - TOGETHER THEY CAN HELP NUMB EMOTIONS, BUT STUDIES HAVE SHOWN THAT EXCESSIVE CONSUMPTION CAN ACTUALLY REDUCE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PTSD TREATMENT.

THIS WOULD INCLUDE ENERGY DRINKS, BUT ALSO COFFEE AND DONUTS.

3. BREATHE AND MOVE

SLOWING DOWN YOUR BREATHING AND MOVING IN SYNC WITH YOUR BREATH IS VERY CALMING.

YOU CAN TAKE UP A PRACTICE LIKE TAI CHI OR QI GONG, OR YOU CAN DO LOW-INTENSITY EXERCISE, FOCUSING ON

EXHALING AND INHALING PROPERLY WITH THE MOVEMENT.

4. WALKING AND TALKING

SIMILAR TO EMDR, WALKING ENGAGES BOTH SIDES OF YOUR BRAIN, OPENING UP PATHWAYS THAT HELP YOU PROCESS THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS.

THIS IS WHY WE PACE WHEN WE ARE STRESSED. WALKING AND TALKING, EVEN TO YOURSELF, CAN PROVIDE A GENTLE MEASURE OF PROCESSING.

5. BE PATIENT WITH YOURSELF

YOU CANNOT OUT-REASON YOUR PHYSIOLOGY, SO GETTING ANGRY THAT YOU CANNOT SNAP YOURSELF "OUT" OF IT DOES NOT HELP. AT ALL.

INSTEAD OF THINKING THIS IS LIKE A KIDNEY STONE THAT WILL SUDDENLY PASS, IMAGINE THAT YOU ARE SPREADING A MOUNTAIN OF GRAVEL WITH A HAND SHOVEL.

6. TAKE CARE OF YOUR HEALTH

REMEMBER, PTSD AND TRAUMA ARE MENTAL, EMOTIONAL, AND PHYSICAL. ALSO, ALL STRESS IS CUMULATIVE REGARDLESS OF THE SOURCE. IF YOUR STRESS BUCKETS ARE FULL, EATING LOW-QUALITY FOOD IS GOING TO KEEP YOU FROM EMPTYING THEM OUT. INSTEAD, START ELIMINATING THE SIMPLEST SOURCES OF STRESS SUCH AS DIET AND EXERCISE.