

PTSD (Posttraumatic Stress Disorder)

PTSD is a serious mental health disorder/condition that afflicts great numbers of our active duty military personnel and our veterans who have served so honorably in the past. The diagnosis of PTSD arrives after an individual experiences and/or witnesses a traumatic or terrifying event where serious physical harm or trauma has been threatened or inflicted to that individual. Our military personnel that serves in combat situations are exposed to those type of threats or events on a daily basis.

PTSD is not diagnosed until at least one month has passed since that time that the individual has experienced this traumatic event. There are no specific lab tests to diagnose PTSD, but various tests may be used to rule out or confirm physical illness or other signs/symptoms as a cause.

Signs and symptomology of PTSD are numerous. Those afflicted with PTSD experience recurring memories of the said traumatic event. Sleep is disturbed with experiences of nightmares or related flashbacks during the day. There are feelings of anxiety, guilt, distrust, along with anger issues. Difficulty concentrating is another manifestation. With the anxiety, guilt, and distrust comes avoidance and can therefore lead patients with PTSD to shut themselves off in what is considered a guarding mechanism, from everyone or everything that may trigger thoughts and memories of the traumatic event. This causes a feeling of detachment from society and leads to isolation.

While these symptoms present themselves emotionally/psychologically, they can manifest physically in numerous forms, such as night sweats, chills, headaches, panic attacks, heart palpitations, nervous shaking and tremors. PTSD can be set off by triggers in normal daily activities, i.e., sounds, sights, smells that can bring back a flood of memories of the traumatic event they have experienced.

Treatment for PTSD can be integrative and comprehensive, which can consist from various medications prescribed by your PCP along with psychiatric/psychological counseling both on an individual setting or in a group setting. However, a treatment that is often overlooked or little known is acupuncture, which is a very effective modality in the treatment of PTSD.

Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine is a complete medical modality that is thousands of years old and has been time tested with empirical results and findings. The acupuncture treatment is administered to the ears in a procedure that is called auricular acupuncture. There are five needles placed in each ear that pertain to specific points that address the patient's anxiety, anger, fear, and other related symptomology. This protocol is called the NADA protocol and was founded by Dr. Smith in 1985 under the National Acupuncture Detoxification Association (NADA). In appearance, this treatment might seem very simple and that is because it is. The

points allow the spirits to open and increase the rate of recovery that the individual experiences. The results are very beneficial and extremely helpful for those battling PTSD.

The five points that make up the NADA protocol are Shen Men, Sympathetic, Kidney, Liver, and Lung.

- Shen Men: relieves anxiety/stress, calms mood swings and impatience, and decreases heart rate.
- Sympathetic: balances the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system, decreases pain and stress, and improves circulation through vasodilation.
- Kidney: relieves fear and paranoia while purifying the blood and releasing toxins through urination.
- Liver: restores emotional balance by decreasing feelings of anger, rage, and depression by correcting the free flow the qi.
- Lung: relieves sadness and grief, strengthens the immune system, and eases breathing.

PTSD is a debilitating disorder that impacts an individual's lifestyle negatively as well as disrupts their family, social, occupational and sometimes financial aspects. However, there is help and ways to combat PTSD to bring closure to some degree and to improve their lifestyle. In closing, if you or someone you know suffers with PTSD please feel free to reach out and send them to the Veteran's Clinic at National University of Health Sciences, 200 E. Roosevelt Road, Lombard IL for treatment free of charge.

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