



Characteristics of PTSD

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is an anxiety disorder which can develop after exposure to a terrifying event or ordeal in which grave physical harm occurred or was threatened.

PTSD resulting from the trauma of military combat is of special concern due to the prolonged exposure to the trauma, the greater number of events experienced, along with the fact that the warrior has been both a victim and perpetrator of violence during combat.

For a veteran of war, long-term exposure to extreme stress causes key hormonal and chemical responses in the brain. Recent research on PTSD and its impact on the brain shows how these extreme stressors actually alter the brain's chemistry and functions, resulting in certain characteristics associated with PTSD.

Characteristics of PTSD:

- **Hyperarousal and abnormal startle responses**
- **Irritability and/or jumpiness; constantly on guard**
- **Hypervigilance**
- **Nightmares, insomnia, and night sweats**
- **Recurrent traumatic memories or flashbacks**
- **Intrusive memories**
- **Overwhelming waves of emotions**
- **Survivor guilt**
- **Feeling detached and/or emotionally withdrawn from others**
- **Fragmented sense of self and identity**
- **Panic attacks**
- **Shame**
- **Despair**
- **Lethargic or lack of motivation/interest in life, work, and family**
- **Fear**
- **Avoidance of thoughts, activities, or feelings associated with military combat**
- **Memory and concentration problems or difficulty planning**
- **Sadness and hopelessness about the future**
- **Control issues**
- **Anger**
- **Drug and alcohol abuse**
- **Self-destructive behavior**
- **Health/physical issues including rapid heart rate and breathing, increased blood pressure, muscle tension, nausea or diarrhea, headaches and backaches**