

# Resources

## Counselors

If possible, a person with combat stress issues should see a counselor who has specific experience with the problem. A general mental health counselor may be a very compassionate and skilled therapist, but studies show that veterans respond best in a counseling environment that is combat stress specific.

Excellent resources can be located through the US Department of Veterans Affairs. A listing can be found on the Internet at:  
[www1.va.gov/directory](http://www1.va.gov/directory)

## “Hot Line”

An extremely helpful “hot line” called MilitaryOneSource is available 24/7 at 1 800 342-9647.

## On-line

An Internet site for many different types of assistance is at the MilitaryOneSource Internet site:  
[www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com)

The services include the ability to schedule no-cost initial counseling appointments near the veteran’s home. These are completely confidential sessions.

## Chaplains and Behavioral Health Specialists

If none of the above are accessible, the base chaplain’s office or behavioral health clinic at the nearest military facility should be able to help locate care for a recent combat veteran. Military base locations and telephone numbers can be found on the Internet at:  
[www.military.com/misc/installations](http://www.military.com/misc/installations)

Look for Military Bases in the column on the left side of the page.

# Combat Stress: What Everyone in a Congregation Needs to Know

Combat stress disorders, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), are encountered by many people in high stress environments. Of course, this includes men and women in the armed forces, especially those who have served in combat operations.

Perhaps the very best way to minimize the problem is to build awareness in the general population so that the victims of combat stress may be recognized and helped at the earliest possible point. Combat stress disorders, like many other physical and mental problems, are treated most successfully by early intervention.

The armed forces of the US have become very sensitive to combat stress issues. Military organizations have very organized and extensive programs which are presented to active duty personnel when they return from a combat zone.

If the service member stays in the active duty setting, many resources will be available. However, Reserve, National Guard, and discharged service members do not stay in this environment. They return home to a civilian setting where combat stress disorder awareness may not be very great.

If an understanding of combat stress becomes widely known, there will be a greater likelihood that veterans with problems will get the help they need before the situation get to be critical.

This brochure and the companion PowerPoint Presentation are good tools for building basic awareness and providing early intervention.

## Combat Stress...

...It is NORMAL for veterans to experience some symptoms of stress from combat. For most, these will be relatively few and will begin to diminish within a month or so...and the symptoms will not significantly interfere with normal daily life.

...Symptoms may not show up for as much as a month or more after return from combat.

...If symptoms do not improve within a month or so after they emerge, some counseling or other supportive care is probably indicated.

...If the veteran develops any severe symptoms so that normal family, work, and social interactions are not possible, it is a sign that professional help may be needed.

...If more than three or four of the symptoms listed on the next page are present, that is also a sign that some professional help is a good idea.

**Not everyone with combat stress symptoms has PTSD or any other stress disorder.** Some symptoms are seen in many people who return from combat operations. It is not necessary to be skilled in diagnosing stress disorders. Simple awareness of the potential problems and a basic knowledge of the symptoms is enough.

### **The 1,2,3 of how you can provide effective help for a combat stress victim:**

1. Notice the presence of symptoms that are not getting better and are interfering with normal life.
2. Talk with the veterans to gently make them aware of what you see in terms of possible combat stress symptoms.
3. Help the veteran make contact with one of the resources listed on the back page.

## The signs and symptoms...

*Nightmares*

*Flashbacks (vivid "total awareness")*

*Intrusive memories (less intense than flashbacks)*

*Cue-related distress (gunshot type sounds may cause the victim to drop flat on the ground, for instance)*

*Physiological reactivity following the presence of reminders (increased heart rate, sweating, the shakes, etc.)*

*Sexual dysfunction (may be unusual decrease or increase)*

*Sleep disturbance/restlessness (especially the inability to achieve consistent restful sleep)*

*Extreme irritability or anger outbursts*

*Emotional estrangement from loved ones*

*Emotional numbing that prevents the interactions that were normal before*

*Decreased interest in pleasurable or usual activities such as hobbies outside interests*

*Psychogenic amnesia (blacking out some of the traumatic events)*

*Hyperstartle/Hypervigilance (extreme "jumpiness")*

*Decreased concentration*

*Increase in use of alcohol or other drugs*

*Mixing alcohol with prescription pain or mood altering medications*