

The War Within: The Vietnam War and PTSD

The Things They Carried

What is PTSD?

Post-traumatic stress disorder is a trauma stress related disorder that some develop if they are victim to or experience disturbing events like:

- a natural disaster
- violent crime
- sexual abuse
- horrible accident
- military combat

Symptoms of PTSD

Common symptoms include:

- nightmares
- troubles sleeping
- flashbacks to traumatic episodes
- avoidance of situations that remind them of their past distressing moments
- extreme anxiety
- depression that prevents them from leading a normal life

The Stats by War

Records during the Civil War aren't very good when it comes to mental illness, but one historians points out that only 1% of soldiers were able to secure discharge by reasons of insanity.

Source: <http://nyti.ms/2nGZDf7>

Known as “shell shock” during WWI, American soldiers who fought suffered from this PTSD-like condition at a 7-10% rate.

Source: <http://bit.ly/2olbMt6>

During WWII, PTSD was known commonly as “battle fatigue” and estimates suggest veterans of this war suffered at 5% rate.

Source: <http://bit.ly/2nH83TT>

30% of the soldiers who fought in the Korean War are still alive and it seems the majority still suffer from PTSD-like symptoms.

Source: <http://bit.ly/2nH83TT>

The PTSD diagnosis rates for veterans of the following recent wars are:

Persian Gulf War–10%

Afghanistan-11%

Iraq War-20%

Source: <http://bit.ly/2gLL1rK>

PTSD by the Numbers in Vietnam

At least 31% of all male Vietnam veterans and 27% of all female Vietnam veterans suffered from PTSD.

Source: <https://psychcentral.com/lib/facts-about-ptsd/>

More than 50% of all male Vietnam veterans and almost half of all female Vietnam veterans (about 1,700,000 Vietnam veterans in all) have experienced “clinically serious stress reaction symptoms.”

Source: <https://psychcentral.com/lib/facts-about-ptsd/>

15% of all male Vietnam veterans and 8% of all female Vietnam veterans are current cases of PTSD.

Source: <https://psychcentral.com/lib/facts-about-ptsd/>

40% of Vietnam veteran men have been divorced at least once.

Source: <https://psychcentral.com/lib/facts-about-ptsd/>

Almost 50% of male Vietnam vets currently suffering from PTSD had been arrested or in jail at least once.

Source: <https://psychcentral.com/lib/facts-about-ptsd/>

Alcohol abuse or dependence among male Vietnam veterans with PTSD was 40%.

Source: <https://psychcentral.com/lib/facts-about-ptsd/>

Put Yourself in a Vietnam Vet's Shoes

In your group of 2-3, read the six short primary source accounts from soldiers in Vietnam. Discuss the following questions below:

1. What were some of the feelings expressed by American soldiers in these short accounts?
2. Of the problems mentioned, which one do you think was most difficult?
3. Of the killings mentioned (the girlfriend, little boy, the North Vietnamese soldier) which do you think was the most difficult?
4. What effect would these experiences have on your own mental state, in your opinion?

http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/teachers/lesson_plans/pdfs/unit12_6.pdf

Vietnam Vet Copes with PTSD

Think about the following questions as we watch this video clip:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qYtXIVfv4Kc>

1. What events are believed to have caused John Nash's PTSD?
2. How did John's PTSD affect his entire family?
3. Why do you think the writing of this book helped John overcome his troubles with PTSD?

A close-up, slightly blurry photograph of a person's face, likely a woman, looking downwards. The person's hand is visible near their chin. The image is framed by a black border at the top and bottom. In the lower-left corner, there is a red and blue logo for FOX FOX 4 NEWS, with the number 4 in a blue square. Below the logo, the time 9:48 and temperature 42° are displayed in white text.

FOX FOX
4
NEWS
9:48 42°