

Why Do I Have PTSD?

“Stand up, Hook up, Shuffle to the Door, Jump right Out and Count.....Oh shit! My chute’s not opening!” is how I felt for years. If your parachute isn’t packed properly, and all the little cords get twisted up, and the canopy doesn’t open, then you have what used to be called a “Cigarette Roll”. That means your ass is headin’ for mother earth for the “big kiss,” and real quick like.

In this situation, you’ve got two choices. You can release the main chute while praying that your reserve chute wasn’t packed by the same dip-shit, or you can ride it out and do an exceptional “parachute landing fall”: that’s a five point landing that’s suppose to take up the shock of impact. Unfortunately, I saw this happen while I was in jump school at Fort Benning, Georgia. Never heard what happened to that trooper, but he decided to ride it out, all the way to the ground.

So then, over the course of about 8 years, while seeing my ass streaking toward the entrance to the “Happy Hunting Grounds”, I needed to find out some of the answers to some of the big questions. And with the point of impact getting closer all the time, I thought I’d give organized religion a shot.

Marines don’t half step on anything, and I advanced under fire with a 100% effort to find out what all this book learnin’ had to offer. I read everything I could find: the Koran, the Bible (didn’t know there were so many different ones), all the Eastern stuff, and anything I could lay my calloused hands on.

Then one day, I read about this warrior type guy named Siddhartha Gautama. Most people know him as The Buddha. And he made a lot of sense. Well actually, he was sorta’ like Jesus, in that he never wrote down anything. They had their fire-teams (privates, lance corporals), writing down all the stories of where they went and what they did. By the way, Jesus and Mohammad weren’t timid souls either, and sure weren’t afraid of goin’ on patrols into enemy territory.

All the books seemed to say about the same thing: Know Yourself. Well no shit, I thought, that’s what I’d been tryin’ to do. They also said that God is always watchin’ your 6:00 O’clock. That worked for me, too (learned that in the foxhole). But hell, watchin’ Crocodile Dundee when he said something like “Me and God, we be mates” made about as much sense as most of the stuff I read. And through most of it, nobody talked about “dealing” with the shit you’ve already been through, except Mr. Siddhartha.

The ass-trologers said it was your destiny, and the planets and stars caused all this to happen. Some people talked about Karma and how all that made things happen. But the Buddha reminded me of Old Sarge. He said, “Look you dumb shits, if there’s an arrow stickin’ in your ass, don’t worry about the texture of the wood, or the bright-littlewinged-lizard feathers at the end of it. The damn thing is stuck in you, so Deal With It!”

And once again, that small green light glimmered in my cluttered brain. I realized that I sure as hell had a PTSD arrow stuck in me, and I’d better pull out the shaft and deal with healing up as best I could. The point of all this is simple. If you’ve got a PTSD arrow stuck in your ass, you’d better learn to deal with it. You may always have a scar, you may always limp a little, or feel the wound on a cold day, but it’s “not” gonna ruin your life unless you let it.

So here we go! “Why do I have a Post Traumatic Stress Disorder?” you ask. Well maybe it was the planets, fate, karma, Murphy, or any other excuse you’d care to make, but the fact is, You’ve Got it. And it’s gonna stick with you like a tick on a dog. Like it or not, you are damn well gonna have to deal with it now, or deal with it later. I recommend now.

Alright then, my fine Youngins, let’s look at what may have caused a round to jam in your chamber. As you go through the list, see if any of these hit the “bull’s eye,” and you don’t have to say a word to anyone (unless you need to read out loud like Marines). This will be your own little secret for now; you can say “Holy shit!” in silence.

Do any of the following fit you?

1. You have been through a traumatic, “life and death” experience, maybe a lot of them.
2. You may be feeling “No one understands me.” That may be true unless you talk to the right people.
3. You are in “pain,” mentally, physically, or both, and you don’t know why.
4. You are suffering with the emotional waves of “Loss.”
5. You are feeling “helpless” in getting a grip on the waves of emotions flooding your thoughts.
6. You may be feeling “survivor guilt,” because you are still alive, and your friends are not.
7. You may be feeling “guilt” over the things you’ve done and don’t know who or what to blame.
8. Nothing “seems the same” to you anymore. Everything that was once familiar, comfortable and normal is now different and uncomfortable.
9. Nothing feels important, not family, friends, work, nor your life.
10. You are not sleeping much, and having nightmares when you do.
11. You are having “flashbacks” from your traumatic experiences.
12. You want to return to the war, to your unit and friends and don’t really know why.
13. You now have a violent temper. You get pissed off over every little thing, and want to lash out at everyone all the time.
14. You may want to kill everyone who pisses you off. Everyone is an asshole.
15. Your guard is always up, and you can’t trust anyone anymore.
16. You can’t seem to find any real friends to “trust.”
17. You can’t relax around people, and can’t stand crowds.
18. You can’t go into public places and not be on full alert, checking for the enemy.
19. You’ve turned to drugs and or alcohol to kill the pain in your head and body.
20. You’ve lost what self-esteem you once had, and don’t think you’re worth squat shit.
21. You can’t make plans for tomorrow because the present is so miserable.
22. No one wants to be around you anymore, not family or friends. You’ve become angry, hateful, critical, and negative about everyone and everything.
23. You may be thinking of suicide as a way to escape, and have become reckless with your life and the lives of others.
24. You feel like no one gives a shit about you anymore, and don’t have a clue why.
25. You find it more comfortable on base than around civilians, or you just want to be alone all the time. The 1000 yard stare has become your pastime activity.
26. And generally, you’re up to your neck in shit, and nobody’s throwing you a line.

Well, my fine troubled friends, no matter how many of these nasty little items have struck a chord in your brainhousing-group, it's not hopeless, and "I AM" throwin' you a rescue line. So rest assured. And you may still smell like shit for awhile after you get pulled out, but don't sweat it, you'll meet others that smell the same way. Once you shower up, you can rub a little deodorant on your ass, and no one will know the difference.

This is just an Old Marine's way of saying You Are Not Alone. There are ways to get through all this, and YOU WILL improvise, overcome and adapt! The choice is yours. And after a good bit of work, you'll be able to plan your custom-tailored life, and enjoy the hell out of it.

So then, just "Why" you have a post traumatic stress disorder doesn't really matter. That you "do" have it does.

Deal with it in a constructive way. Allow others to help you, and there are a lot who will, and not just the \$200.00 an hour club.

Pick your counselors and friends carefully, remembering that "like experience" counts a bunch. And just in case you're wondering, I didn't "make up" that list you just read while I was mining for nose gold. I lived and felt every single one of them. And like I keep repeating for the sake of my Marine Pups, "If I could do it, so can YOU!"

Life can be anything you desire, and what you desire can make your life worth living.....
Semper Fi!

From: *"The Warriors Guide to Insanity"* By Sgt. PTSD Brandi, U.S.M.C. Never Retired?
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