

Effects of Military Sexual Trauma

An Emotional and Psychological Account

What is happening to me? Why am I Feeling Like This?

First off, this is in no way telling anyone how they should or shouldn't feel. This should also not be used by loved ones to tell survivors how to feel. Everyone is different and *everyone has the right to handle things the best, least harmful way they can.*

This was written for those who feel lost and want support in understanding themselves and their emotions.

Effects of MST

Anger, sadness and heartbreak and worse are quite common. One cause relatively unaddressed by the military services, the Veterans Administration and mental health professionals is the feeling of *betrayal*. It is one of the biggest differences to civilian sexual assault. This betrayal has similar psychological effects of incest. The betrayal is more severe due to the volunteer status of our military, and more recently those who joined at wartime. All of these are contributing factors to these feelings and will also factor into effective treatment when/if that is ever sought out.

Let's address the mentioning of incest in relation to MST. Those who join the military at any rank, but namely enlisted are broken down and required to trust those with a higher rank without question and are taught, to varying degrees, everything from how to eat and drink, to tying ones own shoes, all the way up to doing the job they signed up for. By doing this commanders have assumed the roles of fathers and mothers respectively. The soldiers with similar, maybe slightly higher ranks are your brothers and sisters and in many ways you trust them more than you do your biological ones, and rightfully so, you had to openly trust them with your life.

There is also the factor that everyone higher than the individual soldier had pull over them. They could deny their food, sleep, professional life and even their post-military lives (a bad conduct discharge, a dishonorable discharge etc. are very hard to reverse and move on from). All of these factors play a part in how a survivor would perceive the attack. Also remember, those who attacked you in many cases, are, know or are friends with the people in charge of any investigation, judicial punishment and/or administrative role in a case. The betrayal issues relate to not only those who did the act(s) but to those who, directly or indirectly, let it happen, enabled it or let that person get away with it (or allowed only the minimal punishment). Again these issues will go as high as the survivor wills it to. It is not uncommon to hate the military, hate veterans and/or to even go so far as to hate the flag and any association with it.

This is written for all to understand and although it is written to explain it to civilians, it is only because they were not there and they don't understand, but they need to as well to help support and assist in making the necessary changes to keep others safe and prevent these from happening in the future.

Symptoms

- Sleep Abnormalities
- Anxiety (general or social)
- Flashbacks
- Blackouts
- Loss of Patience
- Emotional Sensitivity or
- Desire to numb pain, emotions, memories etc. (i.e. with medication, drugs or alcohol)
- Weight Gain or Loss
- Triggers
- Prone to Addictive Behavior
- Depression
- Lash Outs or Anger Fits
- Money Problems (Spending, neglecting responsibility)
- Prolonged Sadness
- Pain (physical)
- Memory Loss
- Insomnia
- Changes in Sex Drive
- Numbness

Those are just some of the symptoms relating to PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) brought on by MST. Many treatments in the civilian world work for Military Sexual Assault but they do not address the betrayal issue much if at all. There are workbooks, low cost psychiatrists and counselors, specialized yoga and breathing classes, anger management assistance and many options, in and outside of the VA or military services. All are required by law to keep complete confidence.

Anyone is more than welcome to contact us for referrals or direct support. We are no pressure and will not steer you in any way that you are not comfortable with. Contact us at: info@BenefitingVeterans.com

Note: The above text is found on the site: www.militarysexualtrauma.org. It is a great resource for information about MST and has links to other sites for information.