**Tackett’s Teachings**

**Better Understanding PTSD**

We all probably know someone who has PTSD. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Post-Traumatic Stress can debilitate a person after experiencing or witnessing a terrifying event. This condition can last for months or even years, even after the danger has passed and when PTSD is triggered, it can bring back memories of the trauma accompanied by intense emotional or physical reactions.

Over three (3) million people are diagnosed with PTSD every year. The cause of their PTSD is varied and so is our response to it. Some reactions may include crying for no known reason, shutting down emotionally for hours or even days, even thoughts of suicide or hurting others.

Some of the effects people with PTSD may experience include an inability to develop or maintain positive, healthy relationships, an inability to trust others, feelings of fear, worry and anxiety, low self-esteem, social isolation. Sometimes those with PTSD harm themselves or may have suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

There is no perfect way to treat PTSD. Everyone is different and may react to their care differently. The same goes with those trying to provide care. Care providers are all different with their own experiences and insight, so it is reasonable that an individual’s care plan may vary, respectively. What works for one person may not be the best course of action for someone else. This is why they call it practicing medicine.

A person who suffers from PTSD may never quite get over it. Hopefully, with the proper treatment plan and support from family and friends, the symptoms and reactions can diminish over time. Perhaps even resolve completely. There are no guarantees and we all already know that the world is not fair. But we must continue to live. We must move forward and strive to do better, to be better. We need it, our families need it and our country needs it.

The most common and most sensationalized cause of PTSD is combat experience. Car accidents and sexual abuse or sexual assault may also make up quite a bit of PTSD cases. Physical and Emotional abuse at the hands of someone we put our trust in also make up quite a bit of reported cases. Being assaulted or involved in a terrorist attack or any other dangerous situation, like almost drowning or watching someone (especially a loved one) drown. You can change drowning to burning in a fire or being attacked by an animal. There are many causes which may trigger PTSD.

The Veteran’s Administration reports that military Veterans are 1.5 times more likely to commit suicide than non-veteran adults. We can help those suffering from PTSD by better understanding what they are going through. “Knowledge is power”.-G.I. Joe

Sometimes a sudden, unexpected noise, a certain smell, a dream or nightmare can trigger a PTSD episode. Even watching certain movies can cause a person to relive the traumatic experience. So it is important to keep our lines of communication open with our loved ones and close friends. I find it very helpful to talk about these experiences with anyone who wants to listen and understand more.

For Combat Veterans, the causes are varied and complicated. Many will not discuss their personal feelings or attitudes and therefore may not receive the help they need. They may have Survivor’s Guilt-Feel guilty for surviving a violent event while others they were emotionally connected to, did not survive. Overthinking that they could have done something more or better to help their comrades. They may even feel self-conscious about the scars and wounds they carry.

Many Veterans with PTSD have been in positions of great responsibility: Responsible for the lives of their teammates, accountable for expensive vehicles, equipment and weapons systems. They were a valued and trusted member of a team. They were looked to for answers. They were looked to for help. They were sought out because they would solve the problems at hand. Now, back home in the states, they may feel forgotten about. They may feel underrated or left out of the equation. They expect to be leaders, calling the shots. We expect to be in charge. But we may find ourselves ignored or irrelevant, no longer the center of attention. No longer in charge of our own homes or our own families.

So we deal with these feelings as we know how. We medicate to feel normal again and when that doesn’t work to our satisfaction, we self-medicate. We may drink heavily to forget. We fight and argue without reason to show we are in charge. Sometimes we get so angry we hit our loved ones, we lash out at anyone weaker, our spouses, our children. We isolate ourselves from our friends and family to show we are strong and we don’t need anyone’s help. But inside, we know this is a lie. We know that by isolating ourselves we are crying out on the inside for help. For someone to validate what we are going through. We are embarrassed of the monster we no longer recognize in the mirror. We learn to hate the person we have become.

Back in the real world, the adrenaline rush is gone. The exciting fear no longer challenges us to do our best. We long to be back in the fight where our skills, our training is appreciated by those around us. We look to extreme activities to numb us from the mundane world and give our life purpose. We speed, we mountain climb, we parachute. Sometimes we take unnecessary or unmitigated chances. We strive for that rush which would pit us against death itself, once again. “There is no hunting like the hunting of man, and those who have hunted armed men long enough and liked it, never care for anything else thereafter”. –Ernest Hemingway

This need to feel in charge of our own lives and to be the center of our families will wear our families out and eventually push them away. This includes our civilian employers. Those who suffer with PTSD need to keep evolving into better people, better spouses, better parents, better employees. The same as our families need to continue to evolve and grow with us. We need to evolve and grow with them. We need to keep the bridges to communicate effectively, wide open.

We will survive by putting a name to our problem. “You cannot solve a problem until you can put a name to it. Name it. Describe it. Create an action plan to address it. Only then can you work on solving the issue”. –Robert Tackett. Do not be worried by labels or what others may think of you.

I find that reading helps me relax. Writing helps put my thoughts in some type of ordered chaos. Talking to my family and close friends helps de-escalate my inner turmoil. Many groups and organizations are available to help us with PTSD. The American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association, your local Veteran’s Administration and your church are just a few organizations which can help our Veterans.

My advice to everyone-Life is conflicting and life is not fair at all, so don’t be hurt if things don’t work out your way. Just do the best you can. Stay active. Keep a balanced life style. Work, play, rest. Spend your time wisely with friends, with family and by yourself. Know when to lead, know when to follow. Know when to stand your ground and when to walk away. Always try to do the best you can and never quit. Remember that others care about you, love you and want you to succeed. You are not alone.