

The Impact of Trauma on Normal Suicidal Behavior in Military Veterans

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DESCRIPTION

Military veterans are often lauded for their courage and dedication, but many carry the psychological scars of their service long after returning to civilian life. One of the most devastating consequences of military service is the increased risk of suicidal behavior, a phenomenon that is frequently linked to the trauma experienced during deployment. Understanding the intersection of trauma and suicidal behavior in veterans is important for developing effective prevention strategies and providing timely intervention for those in need.

This study examines the relationship between trauma and suicidal behavior in military veterans, examining the different types of trauma they may experience, the psychological impact and the ways in which trauma influences suicidal thoughts and actions. Additionally, it outlines potential interventions to mitigate this risk and improve the overall mental health of veterans.

Suicidal behavior in military veterans

Suicidal behavior refers to a range of actions, including suicidal thoughts (ideation), plans, gestures, attempts and completions. Military veterans are at a higher risk of suicide compared to the general population, with studies consistently showing that veterans have a significantly higher suicide rate. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), veterans are more than 1.5 times more likely to die by suicide than civilians. In recent years, the U.S. military has seen alarming suicide rates, with some estimates suggesting that as many as 20 veterans die by suicide every day.

While not all veterans experience suicidal thoughts or behavior, trauma, particularly combat-related trauma, plays a pivotal role in increasing the risk. Trauma can trigger a range of psychological disorders, including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety and substance abuse, all of which are strongly linked to suicidal ideation and attempts.

Psychological impact of trauma on veterans

The psychological effects of trauma can be extreme and long-lasting, particularly when left untreated. For many veterans, the mental and emotional burden of trauma may begin to manifest soon after they return home, but in some cases, it may take years for the full impact of their experiences to surface.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): PTSD is one of the most common and debilitating psychological consequences of trauma. Veterans who have experienced combat, MST, or other forms of trauma are at an increased risk of developing PTSD. Symptoms of PTSD, including intrusive memories, emotional numbing and hyperarousal, can make it difficult for veterans to function in daily life. The constant anxiety and emotional distress can lead to feelings of hopelessness and despair, which in turn can increase the risk of suicidal thoughts and behavior.

Depression and anxiety: Depression and anxiety are also common mental health disorders among veterans who have experienced trauma. Trauma-related depression often stems from feelings of worthlessness, guilt and the inability to process painful memories. Anxiety, often in the form of panic attacks or generalized anxiety disorder, can lead to a sense of impending doom and further exacerbate suicidal ideation. These mental health conditions frequently co-occur with PTSD, compounding the risk of suicide.

Substance abuse: Substance abuse is another risk factor for suicide among veterans. Many veterans turn to alcohol or drugs as a way of coping with the intense psychological pain caused by trauma. However, substance abuse can have a toxic effect on mental health, worsening symptoms of depression and anxiety and increasing the likelihood of impulsive behavior, including suicidal actions.

CONCLUSION

The impact of trauma on suicidal behavior in military veterans is extreme and complex. Veterans who have experienced combat, MST, or other forms of trauma are at heightened risk for suicide due to the psychological consequences of that trauma, including

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PTSD, depression and substance abuse. However, with appropriate support, therapy and trauma-informed care, many veterans can find healing and recovery. It is essential that

professionals, military organizations and communities continue to work together to provide the resources and care necessary to prevent suicide and support veterans in their journey toward mental health.