

Faculty Information 11/02/2019

**STUDENTS WHO HAVE POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS (PTS)**

(Previously called Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: PTSD)

**OVERVIEW**

Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS) is a psychological disorder that may occur when an individual is exposed to an extreme traumatic event, including but not limited to military combat, violent personal attacks, sexual assault, natural or man-made disasters, or serious accidents. The trauma may be personally experienced or witnessed and typically involves actual or perceived threat of death or bodily injury. The natural response to such events includes intense fear and/or a feeling of helpless. Chemical and hormonal changes occur in the brain. For some individuals, these symptoms subside within a short period of time. These individuals do not experience PTS. For other individuals, these symptoms persist, although the symptoms may not manifest for several months or even years later. Symptoms may occur when an event or situation reminds the individual of the traumatic event. It may be something as simple as a smell or a sound. The individual who lives with PTS may experience flashbacks, nightmares, insomnia, and anxiety attacks. The diagnosis of PTS depends on the duration and intensity of these symptoms.

Some of the cognitive difficulties associated with PTS may include attention and concentration difficulty; information processing challenges; learning and memory deficits; sluggish abstract reasoning, and/or challenges with Executive Functioning. Additionally, an individual living with PTS may also experience the additional stressors of challenges with personal relationships due to withdrawing from these relationships and isolating himself/herself; explosive temper; sleep disturbances due to nightmares and insomnia; difficulty with time management; and/or panic attacks.

While PTS is not limited to those who experience combat, it is more prevalent in this population and it is the returning veterans who are living with PTS that has caused attention to focus on this debilitating disorder. In addition, veterans are less likely than the general population to seek the services of the Student Disability Resources and Services or community resources due to military culture, where they do not want to disclose any perceived “weakness” and do not want to burden others with their personal challenges.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR FACULTY**

* Include a statement in your syllabus inviting students with disabilities and veterans who may have special needs to meet with you privately so that you may confidentially discuss the student‘s needs and reasonable accommodations. Also, at the beginning of each semester, verbally invite students with disabilities and veterans with special needs to meet with you privately to discuss their individual and unique needs. Talk about the requirements of the class, the needs of each student (on a case-by-case basis, as each student’s needs are unique), and strategize as to how to implement the reasonable accommodations defined by the Student Disability Resources and Services. If the student has not yet met with the Student Disability Resources and Services, encourage him/her to do so. You can contact the Director of SDRS to schedule a time to meet privately with you and the student to further encourage the individual to make the connection with the SDRS. If you and the student note any needs that are not met by existing accommodations, contact SDRS and refer the student to schedule an appointment with SDRS so that the needs can be identified and appropriate reasonable accommodations can be noted.
* Never make an assumption about a student or that individual’s abilities. Each student is unique, and his/her disability impacts him/her in varying ways. If the student is a veteran, always be respectful of each veteran, regardless of your personal political views, and ensure that the class is respectful also by establishing an environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. If you have concerns, contact the Director of the Student Disability Resources and Services (SDRS) at SDRS@TAMUC.edu or 903-886-5150.
* Some students may require preferential seating as a reasonable accommodation. Discuss the accommodation with the student and together determine the best seat for that individual. Typically, veterans with PTS prefer to sit away from windows and near the door, facing the door.
* Many students with PTS will require the use of note taking technology or a note taker as a reasonable accommodation. If the student requires a note taker, please assist in obtaining a note taker by either announcing to the class that SDRS is hiring note takers, or by singling out good students and asking if they would be interested in the job. Never disclose who the notes are for in order to preserve the confidentiality of the veteran. SDRS will provide NCR paper to the note taker who is hired and establish how the notes are to be delivered to the student.
* Face the class when speaking so that all students may use facial expressions to help understand what is being said.
* Use multiple modalities of instruction when possible to promote attentiveness and comprehension of the subject matter. This benefits ALL students in your class.
* Allow students with PTS to take a short break, if necessary, as sometimes this is necessary when a panic attack is starting. The short break enables the individual to compose himself/herself and rejoin the class.
* Be aware that veterans who receive medical care from the Veterans’ Administration may have to miss class occasionally due to medical appointments. The VA is not flexible with appointments and a veteran may have to wait months before getting an appointment. Allow the veteran to make up work when appropriate.
* Give a brief overview of what will be taught at the beginning of each class, followed by a brief review of what was taught at the end of each class. This promotes retention of the course material.
* For exams, it is helpful to provide, in advance, a study guide that reviews the content to be covered in the exam, as well as illustrating the format of the exam. This helps prepare the students for the exam and reduces anxiety.
* It is common for individuals with PTS to also have a service animal. A service animal is restricted to being either a dog or a miniature horse. It may or may not have a harness or a service animal vest. The two questions that may be asked are “Is this a service animal trained to perform services for an individual with a disability? What services does the animal provide?” Students who have a service animal have responsibilities for ensuring that the animal is under control, not disruptive or aggressive, to keep the animal clean, to personally clean up after the animal. If you have a student in class with an animal that is creating concerns, please contact SDRS at SDRS@TAMUC.edu or call 903-886-5150.
* If you are using videos or films with graphic content or if your lecture is going to include topics that might directly impact the student with PTS, warn him/her in advance of the content to ensure that it does not trigger a flashback. In some cases, it is appropriate to offer the student an equal alternative assignment.
* Many students with PTS will require extended time for exams, quizzes, in-class writing assignments.

Additionally, many students with PTS also struggle with issues of anxiety disorders and/or attention disorders and may need to take exams in a distraction-reduced environment. Consult SDRS if you have questions at SDRS@TAMUC.edu or call 903-886-5150. If the student is struggling with issues, you can also refer the student to the TAMUC Counseling Center. When referring a student to the Counseling Center or SDRS, it is often helpful to offer to walk the student to the location and assist in scheduling an appointment. If the student is in distress, provided that the student is willing, walk the student to the Counseling Center and let the receptionist know that the student requires immediate assistance. If the student reports intent to harm self or others, immediately contact Dr. Nick Patreas in the Counseling Center for support.

* Be sure that, at all times, you maintain the privacy and confidentiality of the student. If you need to discuss issues or testing arrangements with the student, do so privately. When working with veterans remember that veterans bring maturity and leadership skills to the class and can be a great asset in your class.

**Texas A&M University Commerce Student Disability Resources and Services**

Gee Library, Suite 162

903-886-5150

E-mail: StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

**Texas A&M University-Commerce at Frisco – 9700 Wade Blvd, University Hall 105, Frisco TX**

Frisco@tamuc.edu

(972) 377-1665

**Universities Center at Dallas – 801 Main Street, Suite C340, Dallas TX**

Dallas@tamuc.edu

(214) 954-3600

**Collin Higher Education Center – 3452 Spur 399, Mckinney, TX 75069**

CHEC@tamuc.edu

972-599-3122

**Mesquite Metroplex Center – 2600 Motley Drive, Suite 100, Mesquite, TX 75150**

Russell.blanchett@tamuc.edu

972-882-7520

**Navarro Partnership – 3200W 7th Avenue, Corsicana, TX 75110**

Virginia.monk@tamuc.edu

903-875-7619

***REMEMBER****:*

***ALL*** *students must meet the same academic standards for credit in your class. Standards should NOT be lowered. Students with disabilities may use reasonable accommodations, but they are held to the same academic and Code of Conduct standards as any other student.*