



## Early Warning Signs of PTS/TBI

- ❑ **Turns up TV sound very loud**
  - It's turned up so that the veteran can focus on what is being said, and it helps to drown out other noises in their area
  - Experiences ringing in the ears
  - Headphones turned up loud
- ❑ **Plays very loud, aggressive-sounding music**
- ❑ **Desires the adrenaline rush created by certain activities**
  - Aggressively drives vehicles
  - Receives speeding tickets, involved in traffic collisions with and without injuries involved
  - Offers statements similar to, "The only time I feel alive is when I am going 160 MPH (on my motorcycle)"
  - Obsessively plays violent video games
  - Excessive attention is given to online gaming and virtual world "friends"
  - Buys a fast car, motorcycle, and/or weapons
- ❑ **Experiences recurring nightmares**
  - May be unaware they have acted out an event
- ❑ **There are communication changes**
  - Less talkative than before
  - Long periods with no communication whatsoever with family
  - Conversations turn to arguments
- ❑ **Self-medicates with drugs and/or alcohol**
  - Statements similar to, "You don't understand", or "You can't help."
  - Hangs out only with select, military peers
- ❑ **Children begin to exhibit behavior and/or appearance changes at school**
  - "I haven't taken a bath because Daddy locked us out of our apartment."

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**Has difficulty with relationships**

- Breaks up with girlfriend/boyfriend, husband/wife
- No longer hugs close family members
- Domestic violence
- Win-at-all-costs attitude—hurtful in relationships—even the most trivial arguments will be fought as if they are death matches
- No compromises
- Isolates him/herself from his/her children

Children are expressing statements like, “I don’t think my Dad loves me.”

**Experiences crying bouts**

- Talking about their low-points during the war/deployments

**Was an extravert prior to service; now very introverted**

**Sounds of fireworks may cause this reaction**

- Wanting to and/or leaving the area

Those anxious sensations lead the veteran to quieter areas and away from the crowd

**Certain aromas or odors may trigger a response**

**Unable to sleep**

**Cannot hold a job**

**Shows signs of isolation**

- Agoraphobic-like in avoiding places, travel, people
- May state things like, “I don’t want to be around crowds, right now, Dad”

But will interact with Battle Buddies and online

- Shuts him/herself in his/her room with video games

**Begins to drink alcohol excessively**

**Abuses prescription drugs**

**Designs his/her sleeping area to be a more secure environment**

- Reinforces doors, windows
- Positions sleeping area to see who is approaching

**Shuts out family and friends**

**May refuse telephone calls from family, spouse, and friends**

**Unknown triggers are causing panic attacks**

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- ❑ **There is more intense introversion or overreaction when they are nearing redeployment**
  - May avoid others all together during this time period
- ❑ **Distances themselves from faith**
- ❑ **No longer has the ability to empathize**
- ❑ **Has a short fuse for small events or problems**
  - Overreaction replaces good decision-making
- ❑ **Self-describes his/her behavior as being an a\*\*hole**
  - No filter on his mouth—poor choices of words
  - Excessive profanity
- ❑ **Has lack of ability to perform previously-mastered skills**
- ❑ **May isolate themselves, but may have the ability to perform well under stress**
  - While home on leave, witnesses a major traffic accident. Immediately helps the victims
  - Some veterans seem to thrive on the adrenaline of the moment
- ❑ **Is using steroids**
- ❑ **Drinking Red Bull by the six-pack**
  - Combat vets may have been supplied Red Bull to stay alert
- ❑ **Multiple divorces**
- ❑ **Moves out of bedroom he shares with significant other fearing he may harm him/her during nightmares**
- ❑ **Survivor's guilt may be present**
  - May express guilt that he/she survived
- ❑ **Experiences headaches lasting multiple days**
- ❑ **Has short- or long-term memory problems**
  - Loses things: keys to house, car, mailbox
  - Cannot recall simple details
  - Cannot recall childhood memories
  - Leaves refrigerator door, front door, and/or car door open
  - Forgets to eat prepared food
  - Drives until he/she runs out of gas

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- ❑ **There are vehicle operation issues**
  - Alights from vehicles he is riding in before it comes to a stop
  - May not drive some places or avoids driving altogether
  - May avoid driving where there are many overpasses present
- ❑ **Races down steep hills on his/her bicycle at break-neck speeds**
- ❑ **Talks very loudly (due to weapons-related hearing loss)**
  - Veterans sometimes become frustrated when their civilian family/friends point out their louder voice
    - “Civilians are just too sensitive”
- ❑ **Speaks or writes differently than before**
  - Once was eloquent, now is markedly less proficient
- ❑ **Was an avid baseball player and wanted to coach high school**
  - Now not interested in baseball
- ❑ **Uses Breathalyzer to see how high they can get it to go**
- ❑ **Expresses a desire to go back to his lifestyle before military service—a time when things were simpler**
- ❑ **Seeks employment in adrenaline-charged atmospheres**
  - Emergency Room member
  - Department of Corrections
  - Emergency Medical Technician
  - Fire Fighter
  - Police Officer
- ❑ **States that he/she feels betrayed by the Marine Corps, Navy, Army, Air Force, Coast Guard**
  - Will not use VA services, instead seeks civilian counselors/medical care
- ❑ **Makes statements similar to, “They (Marine Corps) will pay for what they did to me**

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