Early Warning Signs of PTS/TBI

Personality Changes
☐ 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

☐ There are communication changes
  ▶ Less talkative than before
  ▶ Long periods with no communication whatsoever with family
  ▶ Conversations turn to arguments

☐ Shuts out family and friends

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

☐ Unknown triggers are causing panic attacks

☐ 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

☐ 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

☐ 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

Disclaimer: The focus of the information contained in the pamphlet is educational and not a treatment plan and, there are no guarantees that the information contained in this document or our online videos (www.communityvetsproject.org) will be effective. Every person with PTS/TBI may have unique challenges that are outside the realm of this effort. Please seek prompt, professional help as necessary.

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Leaves refrigerator door, front door, and/or car door open
- Forgets to eat prepared food
- Drives until he/she runs out of gas

☐ 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.

**BEHAVIORAL CHANGES**

☐ 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

☐ 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.”

☐ 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

☐ 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

☐ 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

☐ 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”

☐ 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