**Improve the Veteran-Family Relationship By Not...**

- Giving up on them
- Expecting them to attend functions, no matter how special you feel it is
  - Respect the fact that they most often want to avoid these:
    - Crowds
    - Questions about their service
    - The added attention focused towards them
    - They do not feel secure in those places.
  - Statements like the following are important to recognize: “I have to keep my head on a swivel. I'm looking everywhere for a threat. My wife knows when we are at a restaurant I must sit with my back to the wall and my face towards the door.”
  - Veterans may not be interested in your social or support groups
    - “Mom, your support groups are not the types of meetings returning vets would appreciate. They were talking about things I did not care about.”
    - Veterans may not like:
      - Firework exhibitions
      - Where balloons are popped, air horns used, or large parties
- Letting the veteran draw you into a confrontation or argument with them
  - They sometimes want a confrontation and family members are convenient targets for their frustration
  - The argument makes them feel better due to the adrenaline charge it brings them
  - Unless it is a safety issue, avoid getting sucked into an argument. Smile and let it pass
- Expecting your veteran’s personality to be the same as it was before s/he entered service
  - Continuing to be a close, touchy-feeling son/daughter may be an unrealistic expectation on your part
  - The spouse may have changed as well.
- Sharing your online research of news articles that your veteran's unit fought in
  - Avoid bringing your veteran into these conversations
  - They become anxious thinking they will be judged or need to re-live the events – they feel that these unsolicited questions are an intrusion into their personal space
  - Usually results in driving you and your veteran farther apart
  - Wait to be invited into such a conversation by your vet
- Providing unsolicited advice, such as:
  - You ought to quit drinking
  - You should stop smoking pot
  - You should take better care of yourself
  - You should …
- Letting the veteran's PTS/TBI define your life too
  - PTS/TBI veterans may have trouble showing empathy, sympathy, and other emotions
  - This is not personal to you, although it may feel like it

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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