

METHODS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ADAPTATION FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS

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Abstract: This article is dedicated to the problems of psychological adaptation for military personnel who have experienced post-traumatic stress. The symptoms of post-traumatic stress are presented in a scientific manner, along with recommendations and practical methods for rehabilitating these conditions.

Key words: post-traumatic stress, dynamics, psyche, aggression, guilt, depression, symptoms, emotions, explosive reactions, prevention.

The changes that have occurred in recent decades regarding the health status of military personnel require a theoretical understanding of the principles of maintaining psychological health, professional performance, and longevity of military specialists. This includes the basis for adequate methods of correction and rehabilitation in cases of functional disturbances in their bodies.

The study of the characteristics of military personnel's activities indicates that modern conditions impose high demands on the psychophysiological mechanisms of human life. Military service today is characterized by increased informational loads, high psycho-emotional tension, and greater expenditures of functional reserves for social adaptation.

This necessitates the improvement of medical monitoring measures concerning the health status and professional performance of military personnel. The development of methods for psychological correction and rehabilitation is crucial to prevent the emergence of neuro-psychic disorders and psychosomatic diseases.

In this context, measures for psychophysiological support of military personnel's activities acquire significant importance. They include psychophysiological expertise, psychophysiological correction, and rehabilitation of military personnel.

One of the complex psychological consequences of combat actions in our time is post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD). The term "post-traumatic stress syndrome" or "post-traumatic stress disorder" became common among American psychologists and psychiatrists after the Vietnam War. Veterans exhibited a mental disorder that had not been previously described in specialized literature.

The dynamics of experiencing PTSD involves four stages:

In the first stage, which occurs immediately after the traumatic event, a person's psyche refuses to accept what has happened. This phase is called the "denial" or shock phase. The person tries to escape from experiences that are too painful for them. They are aware of what has happened but cannot accept it on an emotional level. Experiences at this stage can be compared to the medical concept of pain shock, where immediately after an injury, a person does not feel pain—otherwise, the body would not withstand the overload. Typically, the first stage of PTSD is relatively short-lived.

The second stage is known as the "phase of aggression and guilt." Gradually beginning to process what has happened, a person blames those who were directly or indirectly involved in the traumatic event. Often, after this, the person turns their aggression against themselves and experiences intense feelings of guilt ("if I had acted differently, this wouldn't have happened"). Such experiences are

explained by the attempt to find justice in an "unjust world." "I don't want it to be this way"—these words can express a protest against cruel reality.

The third stage is the depression phase. After realizing that circumstances are stronger than themselves, depression sets in. It is accompanied by feelings of helplessness, abandonment, loneliness, and uselessness. The person sees no way out of the situation and feels that the pain will intensify day by day. At this phase, a sense of purpose is lost, and life becomes meaningless: "no matter what I do, nothing will change."

The Fourth Stage of PTSD Experience - Healing Phase

At this stage, there is a complete conscious and emotional acceptance of one's past and the acquisition of a new meaning in life. A person realizes, "What happened really happened; I cannot change it; I can change myself and continue to live despite the trauma." It is important that at this stage, a person is able to extract useful life experience from what has occurred.

When a person does not have the opportunity to release internal tension, their body and psyche find ways to adapt to this state. The mechanism of post-traumatic stress is that its symptoms, which appear as a mental disorder, are actually deeply rooted behaviors associated with extreme events in the past.

Clinical Symptoms of PTSD:

1. Unmotivated Vigilance. A person is constantly alert and watches the surrounding environment as if they are in danger.
2. "Explosive Reaction." Sudden movements in response to perceived threats.
3. Emotional Numbness. Difficulties in establishing close and friendly relationships, unavailability of joy and spontaneity.
4. Aggressiveness. A tendency to solve problems through brute force, including psychological and verbal aggression.
5. Memory and Attention Disruptions. Difficulties concentrating, especially in stressful situations.
6. Depression. Nervous exhaustion, apathy, and a negative attitude towards life.
7. General Anxiety. Manifesting at both physiological and emotional levels.
8. Outbursts of Rage.
9. Hallucinatory Experiences.
10. Insomnia. Difficulty falling asleep and interrupted sleep caused by high levels of anxiety.
11. Suicidal Thoughts. Thoughts of death may seem more appealing than living with constant pain.

These symptoms help a person identify their mental state and strive for the restoration of life balance, even after many years of turmoil. This is confirmed by the examples of many people who have experienced trauma and suffered from post-traumatic disorders.

Understanding that painful phenomena are a natural result of severe events in the past leads to internal acceptance of what has happened as well as reconciliation with oneself. Healing consists of reconciling with oneself, seeing oneself as one truly is, and acting in accordance with one's individuality.

The first step toward healing begins with the sincere question: "Where can I find meaning in everything that has happened in my life?" It is impossible to change the past, but our feelings and perceptions of our past and ourselves can change, opening the way to recovery and new opportunities.

Switching from Stressful Experiences and Anxiety to a Sense of Inner Balance – The Second Stage of Responding to Stress Factors

Since human activity involves thoughts, emotions, and the physical body, balance can be lost in any of these areas: physical, cognitive, or emotional. When you fall to the ground, it undoubtedly affects both

your thought processes and emotional state. If you become angry, it again changes the direction of your thoughts and somehow affects the state of your physical body. Thus, if you lose balance in any area of life, it will affect your overall relationships with the surrounding world.

Restoring lost balance is our natural ability; we utilize it daily, often without even realizing it. Developing this natural quality is particularly necessary for those who suffer from excessive emotional excitability, obsessive thoughts, and other phenomena of inner disharmony. Balance is the ability to function within a certain range that is most favorable. The energy expenditure is then neither too great nor too small.

Balance does not consist of tensing up or relaxing as much as possible but implies the ability to maintain a state that is necessary for a given activity, whatever it may be. In simpler terms, finding inner balance means taking a position that makes it difficult to be "knocked off your feet," despite all of life's difficulties. For example, suppose you experience headaches caused by overexertion. Initially, one thing is clear: your head hurts, and your only desire is to get rid of the pain. However, by practically mastering some aspects of balance, you will realize that pain arises only when stress tension accumulates. This means that under stress, you are actively tensing certain muscles, which in turn impairs blood circulation and leads to headaches. If you understand what happens in your body before you feel pain, then you will see your task not as quickly dulling the pain sensation but rather as managing the stress that is causing your headache. In some cases, transitioning from a stressed state to inner balance can only be achieved by learning to relax specific muscle groups.

The same strategy applies to your thoughts. If you are prone to "obsessive ideas" driven by unfounded fear, they make you tense just as much as if something were genuinely threatening you. Cultivating balance involves fostering a mindset that is free from obsessive, unfounded fear. Learning balance is one way to open "release valves" within yourself and reduce excessive tension. To open these valves and approach balance, self-work is necessary. Self-work involves performing several exercises; the first part consists of a series of actions called progressive muscle relaxation. It focuses on tensing and relaxing specific muscle groups. The second part relates to breathing, where you need to master the art of abdominal breathing, which will increase the oxygen flow to your body. In conclusion, elements of mental training such as visualization will help develop your imagination through which you can fully relax internal tension and achieve balance and peace of mind. If you practice this relaxation cycle three times a day—upon waking, in the middle of the day, and before sleep—within just a few days, a person will begin to realize how muscle tension accumulates within them. The ability to relax will be most beneficial during those moments in your life marked by the greatest stress tension. The described exercise, similar to Eastern martial arts and meditative practices, helps a person develop a sense of balance through special concentration of attention.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the mental health of military personnel is directly related to their professional activities and psychological resilience under extreme conditions. In this regard, military psychologists face the necessity to enhance their knowledge in the fields of military psychiatry, psychology, and psychophysiology in order to timely recognize mental disorders and organize effective prevention of mental disorders and the consequences of PTSD.

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