



HOW TRAUMA CHANGES THE BRAIN

We know that military service can be filled with traumatic events and frequent exposure. We don't know what kinds of experiences individuals have dealt with in the past, so we need to approach everyone in a universally sensitive manner.

**Trauma CAN and DOES change the brain.
It's why we believe in a trauma-informed approach.**

WHAT IS TRAUMA?

Trauma is a "neuro-developmental insult" that impacts the development of the brain as well as psychological processes.

Examples of military-related trauma include:

- Military sexual trauma
- Exposure to death and dying
- Witnessing suicide
- Making decisions that impact the survival of others
- Exposure to blasts
- Mass casualties and wounding
- And more

Everyone's experience with trauma is unique. Its effects can still be understood regardless of the event.

HOW TRAUMA AFFECTS US

Traumatic exposure disrupts the development of self-regulatory processes.

Trauma exposure can lead to:

- Chronic dysregulation
- Destructive behavior towards self and others
- Learning disabilities
- Dissociative problems
- Somatization
- Distortions in concepts of self
- Physiological Changes, such as trouble sleeping, gut issues

Simply put, it alters the way one thinks and acts.

SOMEONE STRUGGLING MIGHT EXPERIENCE

Poor impulse control

Using good judgement

Regulating Emotions

Lack of self-awareness

Understanding cause and effect

Memorizing and retrieving information from memory

Understanding consequences

Struggling to communicate details in an organized, sequential manner

Initiating activities or tasks

Retaining information while doing something with it



HOW TRAUMA CHANGES THE BRAIN

YOU CAN HELP SOMEONE STRUGGLING WITH TRAUMA

Not everyone who has experienced trauma will struggle with suicidal ideation or behaviors.

- Learn their triggers
- Provide reassurance of safety if someone shares their experience
- Acknowledge they may be feeling powerless
- Focus on their strengths
- Offer space for them to share their feelings
- Above all, if someone needs help recovering, know resources like ours exist



If you or your loved one experience consistent symptoms from past trauma that leads to thoughts of self-harm, stay hopeful and connect to a proven resource.



Military service members or veterans may call Stop Soldier Suicide 24/7 at 844-503-0553.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is 988.