

Health & Wellness Department, NMCSD, 34800 Bob Wilson Drive, San Diego, CA 92134

UNDERSTANDING AND WORKING WITH PEOPLE
WHO HAVE POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER:
GETTING MY HAPPY BACK

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Presented by:

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Goals of This Session



- ❑ Understand the Recreation Therapy Process at Military Hospital (NMCSD)
- ❑ Increase knowledge of PTSD populations
- ❑ Educate community partners i.e. non profits, municipalities, adapted sports agencies and military personnel as to how best to work with PTSD population.
- ❑ Educate audience about the do's and don'ts of working with this population
- ❑ For audience members to take information learned at this session for implementation purposes.

Goals of This Session



- ❑ To bridge communication gap between various military commands and community partners
- ❑ For military commands and COC to understand importance of recreation therapy intervention for ill, injured and wounded troops.
- ❑ To increase number of military commands who offer recreation therapy as a therapeutic intervention to ill, injured and wounded troops
- ❑ To increase numbers of ill, injured and wounded troops involved in community based rehabilitative recreation activities

Things to Consider When Working With Military Population

- Active duty vs veterans
- Know your service branches
- Registration form ~does it apply to military population?
- Patients (medical and ethics clearances)
- Work with hospital or facility staff
- What problems is the individual having?
- What are their rehab or individual goals?
- You are a part of the rehabilitation
- Not everyone is injured in combat (OEF/OIF)
- Military is an entirely different animal

What is Recreation Therapy?



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- ❑ Specialized application of recreation for the specific purpose of intervening in and changing some physical, emotional, or social behavior.
- ❑ Promotes the growth and development of the individual.
- ❑ Therapeutic recreation may be viewed as a process of systematic use of recreation activities and experiences to achieve specific objectives.

What is Recreation Therapy?



- Uses treatment, education and recreation services to help people with illnesses, disabilities and other conditions to develop and use their leisure in ways that enhance their health, functional abilities, independence and overall quality of life
- Tx in which 1-on-1 intervention or group activities are used as a means of modifying maladaptive behavior, awakening social interests, or improving the ability to interact and function in socially acceptable ways

Understanding the Therapeutic Recreation Process

- ❑ Bachelor of Science Degree
- ❑ Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (national certification)
- ❑ Part of rehabilitation team~ Not just fun and games
- ❑ Consult from PCM, Psychologist, Psychiatrist, etc
- ❑ Walk-in appts requests
- ❑ Appointment is made for initial assessment
- ❑ Assessment completed (Average # per week)

Understanding the Therapeutic Recreation Process



- Deficits, barriers to participation
- Goals & objectives are established
- Medical clearance is required by providers
- TR intervention prescribed/ scanned into chart
- Treatment appointments
- Charting on pts progress after each 1-on-1 session



What is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder?

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- PTSD is a psychiatric disorder that can occur following the experience or witnessing of life-threatening events such as military combat, natural disasters, terrorist incidents, serious accidents, or violent personal assaults like rape.

What is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder?

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- ❑ Effects of PTSD ripple across the lifetime or generations
- ❑ Effects patient, their family and loved ones
- ❑ Invisibly Wounded
- ❑ Can be a dual diagnoses with TBI, ortho impairment or amputation, etc.

Behaviors and Feelings That Create Barriers to Participation May Include



- ❑ Inability to function in social or family life, employment
- ❑ Disengaged, decreased feelings of attachment
- ❑ Isolation & depression
- ❑ Often relive their experiences through nightmares and flashbacks
- ❑ Feelings of worthlessness
- ❑ Feelings of de-masculinization
- ❑ Loss of camaraderie, brotherhood and belonging to something
- ❑ Hyper-vigilance, evaluation of the threats, and determining evacuation plan.

Behaviors and Feelings That Create Barriers to Participation May Include

- ❑ Impatience
- ❑ Anxiety/Fight or Flight
- ❑ Aggression/Anger/Outbursts
- ❑ Emotional Detachment
- ❑ “Thousand yard stare” or failure to look you in the eyes
- ❑ Nervous and fidgety, knee bouncing, poor body language
- ❑ Teary
- ❑ Lack of Trust

Behaviors and Feelings That Create Barriers to Participation May Include

- ❑ Fear of Crowded Areas
- ❑ Reaction to Loud Noises/Startle Reflex
- ❑ Flashbacks/Night Terrors/Night Sweats
- ❑ Poor Sleeping Patterns
- ❑ Feelings of Guilt/Survivor Guilt
- ❑ Alcohol & Substance Abuse
- ❑ Addictive Behaviors
- ❑ Inability to enjoy activities they once enjoyed
- ❑ Failure to show up for activities

Recreation Therapy Goals for Patients with PTSD



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- ❑ Increase socialization opportunities/build relationships, especially other combat injured peers
- ❑ Community reintegration
- ❑ Increase comfort level in crowds and community setting
- ❑ Increase comfort level in working with civilians
- ❑ Learn new recreation, sports, leisure or fitness activities
- ❑ Relearn/reconnect old skills/previous activities

Recreation Therapy Goals for Patients with PTSD



- Provide individual with new community resources
- Increase endurance, strength and overall fitness
- Find meaning and quality in life
- Decrease stress and anxiety
- Diminish isolation, depression, thoughts of suicide, worthlessness, run a way from life, etc.

Things to consider when working with persons with PTSD...the Dos

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- ❑ Have adequate trained staff/volunteers who know how to work with this population
- ❑ Do involve family member(s) and/or friends when appropriate
- ❑ Build rapport and trust with your client/patient
- ❑ Consider offering activity for OEF/OIF combat injured only to promote brotherhood shared experiences
- ❑ Listen & observe

Things to consider when working with persons with PTSD...the Dos

- ❑ Intervene if someone (participant, volunteer, etc.) is having a problem
- ❑ Advocate on behalf of the individual or the grp
- ❑ Anticipate reactions and environment changes before they happen
- ❑ Give them space, time out when needed (smoke, etc)
- ❑ Tweak program to meet the goals of the participants, not what's best for the agency
- ❑ What are their other issues, diagnoses, etc.

Things to consider when working with persons with PTSD...the Dos

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- ❑ Include pts/participants in your program planning
- ❑ Be honest with them
- ❑ While at activity, periodically ask them how they are doing
- ❑ Work with their therapist to align goals
- ❑ Let them know that at any time they feel uncomfortable that they can take a break, leave, etc.

Things to consider when working with persons with PTSD...the Dos

- Encourage them to contact you via phone call, email, or text when they cannot make it
- Let them know they are welcome to come back at any time
- Make your activity challenging and fun
- Do a small group feedback following each training session
- Do anticipate a roller coaster ride

Things to consider when working with persons with PTSD...the Don'ts

- ❑ Over instruct activity~ Just enjoy or connect to the activity so they want to return
- ❑ Ask them questions about their combat experience or their injuries, especially invisible injuries, they are there for the activity not to answer questions.
- ❑ Say the wrong things or inappropriate statements i.e. talk about the war, your personal opinions, politics, religion, etc.
- ❑ Don't expect quid pro quo

Things to consider when working with persons with PTSD...the Don'ts

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- ❑ Take their behavior personally
- ❑ Walk up behind them or grab them
- ❑ Put them in situations or environments that could trigger negative behavior
- ❑ Over encourage them to try the activity when they don't feel comfortable. Encourage them to observe an activity if they don't want to participate. Sometimes it is best to observe.
- ❑ Don't think they are "healed" just because they are getting treatment.

Things to consider when working with persons with PTSD...the Don'ts

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- ❑ Stay away from ranks at activities. First names are good.
- ❑ Think you know what is best for them
- ❑ Push them into activity i.e. make it mandatory
- ❑ Push them when they feel uncomfortable
- ❑ Say “ I know how you feel”
- ❑ Don't tell them to “suck it up”
- ❑ Treat them all the same. Each person is unique.
- ❑ Give them a sales pitch, false promise, etc.

Activities to Consider for PTSD Population



- **Activities that promote socialization**
 - Board games, team sports, dancing, etc.
- **Activities that promote reintegration**
 - Group outings, volunteerism, movies, restaurant, etc.
- **Activities that promote self expression**
 - writing, music, acting, painting, poetry

Activities to Consider for PTSD Population



- ❑ **Goal setting:** running, cycling, hiking, etc.
- ❑ **Outdoor Activities:**
 - ❑ skiing, snow boarding, fishing, surfing, hunting, biking, kayaking, canoeing, paddle boarding, etc.
- ❑ **Activities that promote thrill, challenge, etc.**
 - ❑ skydiving, white water rafting, mountain biking, etc.
- ❑ **Activities that promote relaxation :**
 - ❑ yoga, tai chi, mediation, etc.

Challenges to Overcome



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- ❑ Understanding from Chain Of Command
- ❑ Accusations of malingering
- ❑ Battle continues everyday
- ❑ TR sessions are taken away as form of punishment
- ❑ Your disabled ? The invisibly wounded
- ❑ Difficult to break into group and build trust
- ❑ Lack of family education and support
- ❑ Lack of community programs

Challenges to Overcome



- ❑ Community partners not listening or willing to change program to align with individual needs or rehabilitation goals
- ❑ “Some days are better than others”
- ❑ Don’t assume all combat injured share the same experiences
- ❑ Eliminate the horse and pony show
- ❑ The diagnoses is for a lifetime. No quick fix