

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS SYNDROME

Battle fatigue and shell shock are terms that have been used in the past to describe a condition many soldiers suffered after returning home from war. It was thought to have been caused by witnessing the death and destruction of the battlefield. Depression, anxiety, nightmares, flashbacks and hypersensitivity to loud, sudden noises were some of the symptoms. During the 1970's due to more in-depth treatment of Vietnam War Veterans, professionals came to regard the condition as a mental health disorder and it got a new name, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD. It was discovered that many non-military people also suffer from PTSD. In addition to war, other traumatic life events such as natural disasters, serious accidents, brain injuries, physical and sexual abuse and rape can cause PTSD.

During the last decade there have been extraordinary scientific and medical advancements concerning the issue of PTSD. It is now called PTSS or Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome because a syndrome means the individual experiences multiple symptoms. And it is no longer considered a mental health disorder. PTSS is a type of brain injury. One can google, (brain scans of childhood trauma) and the damage can clearly be seen. Many people suffer PTSS due to a traumatic event in their adult life. But numerous others suffer PTSS because they experienced traumatic childhood events. ACE is a test counselors now use as a guide in therapy. It stands for Adverse Childhood Experiences. The list they use of ten adverse experiences includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

We humans are naturally equipped to cope with danger. Our bodies release a hormone called cortisol when we become afraid. It rushes up to a little area of the brain, which in turn, stimulates three other areas. These areas control perception, emotions and fear. When working correctly this hormonal process helps us escape or end danger. It is called the "flight or fight" response and is now studied extensively. Normally, when humans become aware of danger, the process starts and we instantaneously decide whether to run away or to stand and fight. Once the danger has passed our bodies hormonally stop the process so we can go back into a relaxed state.

Science has proven that this process becomes a problem for people who are perpetually in danger for long periods of time, like soldiers in battle. Cortisol constantly being released damages those four areas of the brain causing malfunctions and confusion. A child living in a "constant state of vigilant stress," due to sexual attacks is like a soldier on a battlefield. And when they grow up they are the same as the shell-shocked soldier. This is why many survivors refer to the childhood sexual abuse they endured as a life sentence because even after they grew up and the abuse ended they are unable to shut down the "flight or fight" process and relax.

Although it's amazing that scientists have discovered this process, they haven't figured out how to fix the damage and cure PTSS. So let us enter into prayer with The Great Physician for the healing of child sex abuse repercussions and for the protection and rescue of the approximately 223 million children on the battlefield right now.

"You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance." (Psalm 32:7)

A link to an instrumental rendition of **How Can I Fear** is provided to enhance your meditations.

<https://youtu.be/bYJ6U5rTux4?si=pfM2FTs6I7Zy2Dor>