#### **PTSD**

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and How it Affects the Physical Body

Prepared for FPPTA
Sherril Cheevers
Saxena White P.A.

Health and Wellness Coordinator Certified Holistic Cancer Coach

Stay Healthy and Enjoy Your Pension!

### What is PTSD?

- **Post-traumatic stress disorder** (PTSD) is a disorder that develops in some people who have experienced a shocking, scary, or dangerous event.
- First responders often witness, or are exposed to: death, grief, pain, loss, injury, threats to personal safety, long days of work, poor sleep, physical hardships, and other negative experiences. First responders have a difficult job in that they are constantly exposed to disasters and traumatic events.

## Physical Impacts of PTSD on the Body can Accumulate and Impact Overall Health

- Increased heart rate and blood pressure
- Muscle tension and pain
- Digestive issues
- Weakened immune system
- Sleep disturbances



## Neurological Impact can Contribute to Physical Symptoms and Affect Overall Well-Being

- Hyperactivity of the amygdala (emotional center)
- Impaired functioning of the pre-frontal cortex (decision making and emotional regulation
- Altered neurotransmitter balance (serotonin and dopamine)

## Two Main Modes of Nervous System Operation

#### Sympathetic-Fight or Flight



- Resting heart rate increases
- Heart Rate variability decreases
- Respiration speeds up
- Blood flow increases to muscles and lungs
- Blood flow decreases to deprioritized areas
- Stress hormone levels rise

#### Parasympathetic- Rest and Digest



- Resting Heart Rate decreases
- Heart rate variability increases
- Respiration slows
- Blood Flow increases to reprioritized digestive system
- Organs resume their day to day functions
- Stress Hormone levels fall

### During Fight or Flight

- During the fight-or-flight response, your body is trying to prioritize, so anything it doesn't need for immediate survival is placed on the back burner. This means that digestion, reproductive and growth hormone production, and tissue repair are all temporarily halted.
- Traumatic events push the nervous system outside its ability to regulate itself. For some, the system gets stuck in the "on" position, and the person is overstimulated and unable to calm. Anxiety, anger, restlessness, panic, and hyperactivity can all result when you stay in this ready-to-react mode.



## Stress is Sickening

Death of a spouse	100	Marriage	50
Divorce	73	Marital Reconciliation	45
Marital Separation	65	Pregnancy	40
Jail term	63	<b>Outstanding Achievement</b>	28
Death of family member	63	Finishing School	26
Injury/illness	53	Vacation	13
Loss of job	47	Christmas	12
Retirement	45		
Death of close friend	37	Your body doesn't know the diffe	rence
Mortgage foreclosure	30	between good and bad stress!	
Child leaving home	29		

# Chance of Getting Sick

Add your numbers together from previous chart:

>300 80%

150-299 50%

<150 30%

Now add onto this the stress experienced as a first responder.

### How to Rest and Digest

Developing a healthy support system

Engaging in relaxation exercises

Getting regular physical excercise

Making sleep a priority

Practice deep breathing exercises

#### Resources

**Healthy Support System-** Friends, co workers, support groups, EAP, online therapy. Check your insurance for what is offered Relaxation Exercise- yoga, meditation, stretching (raja yoga) Peleton app, ifit, headspace Physical Exercise- strength training, pilates, walking, jogging Peleton app, ifit, **Sleep-** healthy sleep habits. 10-3-2-1-0 method 0 the number of times you 10 hrs before bed no more 3 hrs before bed no more 2 hrs before bed no more 1 hour before bed no more will need to hit snooze in caffeine food or alcohol work screen time the am **Deep Breathing-** 4-7-8 breathing" is a similar technique. Inhale for a count of four, hold your breath for a count of seven, and exhale for a count of eight. The pause in between your

breaths allows you to slow things down and relax.

### Look for GLIMMERS

Have you heard about Glimmers? They are the opposite of Triggers. A glimmer is a tiny micro moment of happiness; a sign of hope. Once you begin to look for the them, they will start to appear everywhere.

Thank you for your time and please reach out to me if you would like more information.

Sherril Cheevers 561-542-2230

