

# PTSD TREATMENT IN THE SYRACUSE VA

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# COMBAT RELATED PTSD

## Transitioning From the War Zone

- Increased avoidance and hypervigilance symptoms – even in Veterans without PTSD
- Significant anger problems
- Perfectionism
- Guilt and Shame – applying civilian standards to behavior in the war zone
- Nightmares and intrusive memories
- Belief that only other Veterans can understand

# COMPLEX PTSD

- Pre-military exposure to abuse, neglect, parental substance abuse etc.
- Multiple traumatic experiences during deployment
- TBI
- Substance abuse/dependence
- Perpetrator experiences

# EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICE

- Cognitive Processing Therapy
- Prolonged Exposure Therapy
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Depression
- ACT for Depression
- Social Skills Training for Veterans with serious mental illness
- Behavioral Family Therapy

“To stimulate efforts to make evidence-based psychotherapies (EBPs) widely available throughout VHA, the Office of Mental Health Services (OMHS) in VA Central Office has developed national initiatives to train VA mental health staff in the delivery of EBPs. The training model for each of these initiatives involves two key components designed to promote skill mastery, local implementation, and sustainability: (1) attendance at an in-person, experientially-based workshop, followed by (2) weekly expert consultation on actual therapy cases for six months.”

[http://vaww.mentalhealth.va.gov/ebp/programs\\_protocols.asp](http://vaww.mentalhealth.va.gov/ebp/programs_protocols.asp)

# Prolonged Exposure Therapy

- Avoidance is the primary focus
- Triggers, potentially unsafe situations, memories and thoughts of the trauma, closeness with others all avoided
- Breathing retraining
- Education
- In Vivo Exposure
- Imaginal Exposure

# Cognitive Processing Therapy

- Focus on cognitions
- ABC and Challenging Questions worksheets
- Done with or without exposure
- Helping the client evaluate their interpretations of why the event happened and what it means will allow them to shift their thinking and reduce symptoms

# SYRACUSE VA PTSD CLINIC

- Trauma must have occurred during military service
- Combat trauma; Military sexual trauma; Training accident;
- Meets criteria for PTSD or Adjustment Disorder
- Motivated to engage in treatment

# SYRACUSE VA PTSD CLINIC

- Implements a 3 phase approach with emphasis on containment and preparation, exposure, and reconnection/engaging in life
- DBT, CPT, Psychoeducation and Skills focused groups
- Individual psychotherapy – PE, CPT, Cognitive Behavioral or Psychodynamic

# SYRACUSE VA PTSD CLINIC

- Initial 1-3 session intake evaluation
- Client staffed in weekly meeting
- Treatment modality is decided based on complexity, capacity to engage, emotion regulation skills, substance use etc.
- Individualized for each client
- Typical course for complex PTSD is 6 months to a year of individual psychotherapy and DBT and transition to Exposure Therapy when ready
- Simple PTSD may include a skills group and PE or CPT