

Educating Spouses May Be Key to Helping Veterans
Psychology Military Resilience

Digital Poster

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Experimental (Theoretical)

Abstract: Veteran's and family members are facing great difficulties when the veteran returns home to transition to civilian life. While PTSD can and often does cause behavioral and mental changes, not everyone knows that PTSD will affect more than just the person diagnosed. Marriages are struggling, and families are being torn apart when the veteran returns home with PTSD. Although there are many programs that have been created to educate spouses about PTSD, many times translating that knowledge to a perspective on marriage can be difficult. What the books say, and what comes into the homes of veterans and their family members are two totally separate things. The VA is coming up with programs to help couples, and while the research is showing positive results and gaining empirical support especially with Cognitive-Behavioral Conjoint Therapy, there are still many couples left with no idea what to do. In a group already prone to higher rates of divorce, infidelity, and domestic violence, it is important to analyze every plausible explanation and treatment possibility to make sure the best care is being given. This literary review analyzes the empirical literature on PTSD, spouse perceptions, education on PTSD, CBT couple's therapy, and relationship dynamics in relation to the Drama Triangle. This research will evaluate if educating spouses can help not only themselves and the marriage but also their veteran. It will also evaluate the plausibility that it's time for a paradigm shift when treating veterans and their families. The creation of the PTSD Drama Triangle could potentially be a blueprint for therapist to use to help couples understand

the difference between the dysfunctional behaviors of the couple and what healthy behaviors consist of. More than that, the results of this research could pave the way for creating a proactive peer education course for spouses and couples before they leave the military giving them a much better understanding of PTSD, perceptions, and creating a “We” united front in their marriage. This could have a positive impact on the spouse’s mental and emotional health, a positive impact on how they look at their veteran, while improving their marriage by not letting it get to a dysfunctional state.

Christian worldview integration: Being a Christian and what God has instilled in my heart has had a profound effect on my work, my choice to return to school, and research. My desire to work with veterans and their families came from my husband returning from service in 2004. God gave me the strength to keep fighting for my marriage and doing everything I could to make it work. With our marriage coming apart at the seams rapidly, it wasn’t until 2009 that my husband was finally able to be seen at the VA and later diagnosed with PTSD. The more I learned about PTSD, the more I realized that if I would have been educated about PTSD, I could have had a positive effect on our marriage. The majority of our issues was a normal PTSD symptom that I did not understand, and took things very personally and reacted poorly because of that. In 2010, I co-founded the nonprofit Military with PTSD with my husband, and our goal and mission is to help marriages. We believe you can not change what you don’t understand and many spouses like myself react in negative ways because we do not understand what is happening. We help marriages through educating couples about PTSD and sharing our story. God has given me the tools to do his work and the opportunity to return to school to get even

more education so I can continue to his will. Helping military marriages stay together and keeping families together is work I am proud to do.