

It might be helpful for advisers and instructors to be aware of common diagnoses for veterans, as well as the symptoms, medications, and possible side effects.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

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<http://www.mayoclinic.org/>

Definition: anxiety disorder associated with a traumatic event typically where one's physical health is endangered, longer lasting when stressor is an intentional human action

Signs and Symptoms: flashbacks triggered by daily events, diagnosed if symptoms last longer than 1 month, might lose touch with reality during the flashback, associated with depression and drug and alcohol abuse

Clinical Manifestations:

- Persistent frightening thoughts, memories
- Emotional numbing
- Sleep disorders
- Hypervigilance, exaggerated startle response
- Trouble with affection
- Irritability, aggressiveness, violence
- Avoidance of trauma-related situations
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Depression
- Suicidal thoughts or violence

Medications and Side Effects:

- **Antidepressants.** These medications can help symptoms of depression and anxiety. They also can help improve sleep problems and concentration. The selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI) and medications sertraline (Zoloft) and paroxetine (Paxil) are approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for PTSD treatment.

- Anti-anxiety medications.** These drugs also can improve feelings of anxiety and stress for a short time to relieve severe anxiety and related problems. Because these medications have the potential for abuse, they are not usually taken long term.
- Prazosin.** If symptoms include insomnia or recurrent nightmares, a drug called prazosin (Minipress) may help. Although not specifically FDA-approved for PTSD treatment, Prazosin may reduce or suppress nightmares in many people with PTSD.

Coping and Support:

- Follow treatment plan.
- Avoid drugs and alcohol.
- Take a break when feeling anxious.
- Consider joining a support group.
- Talk to others.

Traumatic Brain Injury

<http://www.traumaticbraininjury.com/>

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/>

Definition: complex injury with unique and broad variety of symptoms and disabilities, might be caused by violent blow or jolt to the head or body

Mild TBI – loss of consciousness and/or confusion and disorientation less than 30 minutes

Severe TBI – loss of consciousness for more than 30 minutes and memory loss after the injury or penetrating skull injury longer than 24 hours

Signs and Symptoms: Common injury that might be missed initially while medical team works to save the individual's life

Clinical Manifestations:

- Headaches
- Difficulty thinking
- Memory problems
- Attention deficits
- Mood swings
- Frustration
- Impairment of higher-level cognitive functions
- Comatose states
- Limited function of arms or legs

- Abnormal speech or language
- Emotional problems

Medications and Side Effects:

- Attention and concentration - amantadine and methylphenidate, bromocriptine and antidepressants
- Aggressive behavior - carbamazepine and amitriptyline

Coping and Support:

- Join a support group
- Write things down
- Follow a routine
- Take breaks
- Avoid distractions
- Stay focused on one task at a time
- Appropriate changes at school might include having instructions read out loud, allowing more time to complete tasks, or breaking down tasks into smaller steps

Physical Disabilities (such as amputations)

Programs available as assistance: Dragon speech to text software

<http://www.nuance.com/dragon/index.htm>