

Surviving The Horrible Memories Of War

What difference does it make to the dead, the orphans, and the homeless, whether the mad destruction is wrought under the name of totalitarianism or the holy name of liberty and democracy? Gandhi could have not been more right when he said his piece about the futility of a war that brings bloodshed and chaos. Nobody really wins but everyone is a losing victim of man's atrocities and evil doings against each other. Sometimes, it would have been better to be dead than to survive and face the almost life-long trauma one has to deal with after going through the harrowing experience of war. War is a complex web of violence, loss, and human tragedy. Aside from the destruction of lives and properties that is inherent in any armed conflict, violations of human rights is also prevalent. Torture, oppression, sexual abuse of women, abductions, and massacres also occur during times of armed conflict. Surviving the horrible memories of war is a victory in itself yet the survivors often still need to deal with stress and anxiety long after the fighting has ceased. For many war survivors, the shooting may have stopped but the battle against psycho-emotional distress and serious medical conditions are still on-going struggles. Everyday, military personnel and civilian survivors relive the catastrophes of war. Men and women, young and old alike, still cannot remove the images and sounds of battle from their minds. For a long time, they will vainly try to deafen the sounds of gunfire and bomb explosions ricocheting in their heads day in and day out. They find it extremely difficult to erase the painful memories of witnessing their beloved families, relatives, and friends being gunned down to death or dismembered. Scenes of burying their own dead in open trenches continue to flash back in their minds. Soldiers are haunted by episodes of being forced to shoot innocent civilians, including women and children ---- all in the name of duty. Most war survivors suffer from emotional and psychological disorder such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Though PTSD was first brought to public attention in relation to war veterans or survivors, it can also result from a variety of traumatic incidents, such as rape, torture, being kidnapped or held hostage, child abuse, vehicular accidents, plane crashes, even natural disasters such as floods or earthquakes. It is considered to be one of the most severe forms of emotional disorder. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) occurs when a terrifying ordeal involving physical harm or the threat of physical harm happens to a person. The person may have been the one who was harmed or the harm may have happened to a loved one, or the person may have witnessed a traumatic event that happened to loved ones or strangers. Most war veterans or survivors get easily startled and can become emotionally numb especially in relation to people with whom they used to be close. Like other people who are suffering from PTSD, they tend to lose interest in the things they used to value and enjoy. They have a hard time showing affections, can be easily irritated and may become more aggressive to the point of being violent. It is possible that a traumatized person may not develop a full-blown PTSD. For a case to be considered PTSD, symptoms should last more than a month. Usually, these symptoms appear within the first three months after the traumatic incident, or it could manifest several years later. Recovery from the condition may vary as some individuals may need at least six months to deal with PTSD, while others may need more time before they fully recover. War veterans and survivors with PTSD experience severe headaches and anxiety attacks. Aside from having crying spells, they also tend to sweat heavily, get easily depressed, experience sustained bodily pains. They develop phobias or irrational fears that may or may not be related to the actual traumatic event. PTSD patients are often afraid of being alone in the dark or have trouble sleeping at night due to recurring nightmares about war. Some war veterans even develop a fear of heights due to terrible memories of parachute jumps. These painful memories are called flashbacks and may consist of images, sounds, smells, or feelings, which are often triggered by ordinary occurrences. The popping of firecrackers, the startling sound of a slammed door, a car tire explosion, and other sudden, loud noises can trigger flashbacks resulting to panic attacks. A person having a flashback may lose touch with reality and believe that the traumatic incident is happening all over again. Treatment of PTSD involves regular therapy and the use of medications. Health care professionals may prescribe antidepressant drugs to help PTSD patients to relax and find relief from the aching physical and emotional wounds of war. These medications may also help induce sleep in those who are suffering from insomnia, aside from making it easier to deal with daily stress and anxiety. Various psychotherapy programs are being studied and developed not just to bring modest relief from stress and anxiety but to effect noticeable changes in the lives of these emotionally battered and perhaps physically disabled survivors of war. While there is yet no cure or formula to totally stop wars, there is available assistance and medication for those who inevitably become traumatized by armed conflict. As long as there are bitter, armed struggles in the world, these medications and therapy sessions will be in high demand.

About the Author

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