



STRENGTH OF A WARRIOR

Ineffective Solutions

When people go through trauma, it's normal to try to cope with things on your own. It's natural to want to avoid painful memories and feelings as well as the situations that evoke them. It is also normal for people to want alone time, to maybe have a drink or two, to not want to talk about the painful memories, or avoid things altogether. And each of those things temporarily and/or maybe used occasionally isn't necessarily bad or wrong. Each person has their own way of dealing with things, right? While it is true everyone has their own way of dealing with things, not all of them are healthy ways and could potentially lead to bigger problems.

Isolation: Rather than spending time around other people, you tend to be alone. Maybe seclude yourself playing video games, drinking, or just sitting in a room by yourself. This tends to bring even more negative thoughts and feelings like sadness and fear. It also may increase the feeling like you're facing life all alone. Having social support is critical to healthy coping.

Drinking and/or Substance Abuse: Sometimes people try and use drugs or alcohol to escape problems, help them sleep, or make their symptoms go away. Drinking and/or drugs may seem to help in the short run, but they make things worse in the long run. They may mask the feelings and/or thoughts and help you feel better, but it is temporary and can lead to other problems. You may find yourself having relationship problems, employment problems, or even legal problems.

Avoiding Others: Many times veterans avoid others because they "don't get it" in reference to what you went through, saw, or had to do during deployments. The others may not understand things and unintentionally say the wrong things. Many veterans have spoken about how "civilians don't know what is really going on" or that "they are more concerned with TV shows or shopping," things that seem insignificant to you now. Others may ask uncomfortable questions or push you to talk about things you are not ready to share.

Avoiding Reminders of Trauma: It's natural to do everything possible to avoid reminders of a past trauma. You may avoid people, places, or events that bring up reminders. You may avoid talking about the trauma. Avoidance can seem like a good strategy for the immediate moment, but it becomes a problem over time. The reason is: trauma controls your life if you run from it. Avoidance actually can cause triggered memories to be more powerful; the more you push the memories away, the more they pop up in your head. If you avoid trauma reminders, you cannot learn that things are different now. Using avoidance as your main way to cope can make it harder to move on with your life.

Dangerous Behavior: Many times when we return from a combat zone many of us engage in what would be considered by most as risky behavior—driving too fast, racing, starting fights, etc. These things may also feed your adrenaline.

Anger: Anger is common with PTSD and anger is an understandable response to trauma. Anger is an emotion that can range from mild annoyance to intense rage. People may become angry when they feel threatened, harmed, or powerless. When faced with extreme threat, people often respond with anger. Anger can help a person survive by shifting his or her focus. The person focuses all of his or her attention, thought, and action toward survival. You may be more likely to react to any stress with "full activation." You may react as if your life or self were threatened even over something very small. However, uncontrolled anger can result in many problems—causing emotional distance between you and your loved ones, leading to violence and reckless behavior, and making it more difficult to recover from a traumatic event. You may not be aware of how your thoughts and beliefs have been affected by trauma. For instance, since the trauma you may feel a greater need to control your surroundings. This may lead you to act inflexibly toward others. Your actions then provoke others into becoming hostile towards you. Their hostile behavior then feeds into and reinforces your beliefs about others. It can be a vicious cycle. Learning how to deal with anger is an important part of PTSD treatment.

Always Staying on Guard: It's only natural to be extra cautious and alert after experiencing a traumatic event. You may be on the lookout for danger at all times. For many of us, our military training kept us alive, so we stick to it in every aspect of life. But being constantly on guard can affect your physical, mental, and emotional health in many ways. Learning to deal with these feelings is an important part of recovery.

Working too much: Working hard can be beneficial—improve confidence, provide interaction with others and financial gain, increase knowledge, etc.—but it can also be a way to avoid dealing with fearful memories or uncomfortable situations.