

Helping our friends suffering from PTSD

By Andrew Tutty

Halton Hills Accessibility Advisory Committee



Andrew Tutty

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is not a new phenomenon. It has a long pedigree. The effects of battle are cited in Deuteronomy in The Bible, the legend of Gilgamesh, the ancient Greek battle of Marathon, The Icelandic Sagas, and have been included in Shakespearean plays.

Recent conflicts include The U.S. Civil War, The Franco-Prussian War, The Russo-Japanese War, World War I and II, The Vietnam War and our own experiences in Afghanistan.

PTSD is the current name but has been cited variously as Soldier Heart or Nostalgia, Railway Spine, Shell Shock, and Battle Exhaustion. The understanding of its causes and effects has gone through many different perceptions within the Psychological profession and in society at large.

Perceptions have ranged from a physical rationale as Neurasthenia, to our current understanding of Neuropsychology and the effects of continual stress and the brain's ability to cope. The symptoms range in severity from sleeplessness, anxiety, claustrophobia, self-isolation and severe mood swings.

The effects are ravaging on the person displaying symptoms and for those around them. Family members and relationships suffer, work

and professional circumstances are adversely affected and self harm can be its final solution for many without adequate treatment.

The unforgettable images soldiers have had to endure have left many thousands debilitated. This affliction has reached into civil society with high stressed professions such as first responders, health providers, police investigating crime and, more recently, jurors who are exposed to those crimes in court.

Treatment has been just as varied. Rest, a combatant's removal to institutions designed to address the impact of war; therapeutic soft colour interiors, arts and crafts and gardening have been utilized. Medicines and group or one on one therapy are current remedies.

For help and more information visit The Canadian Addiction and Mental Health Centre at: www.camh.ca/en/hospital/health_information/a_z_mental_health_and_addiction_information/Post-traumatic/Pages/pstd.aspx

Andrew Tutty is a member of the Town's Accessibility Advisory Committee and writes about issues that affect people of all abilities.

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