

June is PTSD Awareness Month

1 message

Til Valhalla Project <support@tilvalhallaproject.com>
To: Frank Rotella <frankrotella54@gmail.com>

Sat, Jun 1, 2024 at 11:31 AM



Mens

Womens

Elites



Dear Frank,

Too many of us are dealing not only with PTSD but also with the stigma surrounding it. The start of PTSD Awareness Month is a good time to remember that misconceptions about PTSD can be nearly as harmful as the invisible wounds themselves.

The best way to break the stigma is to show that it's okay to be open about our struggles and that even those of us experiencing our darkest moments have brighter days ahead of us. I want to lead by example and share a bit of my journey in the hopes that others feel empowered to do the same.

Let me start with this: PTSD is not a flaw or a weakness. It's a natural response to traumatic experiences. Unfortunately, many of us are judged and treated unfairly because of that response.

PTSD has been part of my life since returning from Afghanistan. On many days, especially right after my deployment, it felt like the battlefield had followed me home.

I was haunted by visions of mortally wounded men that were so real I swore I could reach out and touch them. Every sound convinced me there were enemy forces coming down the hallway to get me. I couldn't drive, because I thought trash piles were covering IEDs and every motorcycle had an IED hidden inside it.

These were not irrational fears. They were deeply ingrained responses from my time overseas. Honestly, it would be more troubling if I DIDN'T come home with some kind of issue after the stress and unpredictability of deployment.

These didn't feel like deeply ingrained responses, though. It felt like I was broken and worthless. Being taught that "you don't tell war stories" and to repress my emotions made me feel like opening up about my struggle just wasn't an option.

It could have ended badly. I was caught in the darkness and thought about ending things multiple times. Thankfully, through the unwavering support of my wife and dad, and the courage to seek professional help, I began to reclaim my life.

Even though I've been fortunate to find ways to deal with PTSD, I still feel the effects daily, and I feel the stigma around PTSD almost as often.

Recently, despite being a high-functioning member of society, I was declined medical clearance when trying to get a pilot's license because of my PTSD. I think "blanket" reactions like that to a PTSD diagnosis do more harm than good, since no two people and experiences are the same, and it can encourage someone battling to hide their struggle and try to fly under the radar instead of seeking help and potentially finding some level of inner peace.


I remember hearing my dad's labored breathing right before he lost his battle with cancer, lying in a hospital bed and hooked up to tubes. To this day, when I hear something that sounds like breathing, I am instantly back in that moment, and it causes stress and negative emotions to wash over me. Sometimes I have nightmares about it and wake up in a terrible mood.

Is that PTSD? By definition, yes. Is it a normal reaction to such a traumatic event? Also yes. Does it mean I should miss out on certain aspects of life? I don't think so.

PTSD takes lives and destroys lives every day, and so does the stigma surrounding it. I hope one day we can realize that we need to treat and elevate rather than repress and shun.

To everyone living with PTSD, know that your experiences are valid and your strength is immense. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness but a testament to your bravery. If you ever feel like there's nowhere else to turn, PLEASE reach out to someone you trust or call one of the numbers below.

Keep moving forward,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Corey Shaffer', with a stylized, cursive script.

Corey Shaffer
Founder, Til Valhalla Project
Proud U.S.M.C. Veteran

IT'S OKAY TO NOT BE OKAY!

IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS STRUGGLING
DON'T BE AFRAID TO REACH OUT FOR HELP! YOU ARE NOT ALONE!



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TEXT: 838255



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WWW.STOPSOLDIERSUICIDE.ORG
844-317-1136



VETERAN'S CRISIS HOTLINE:
1-800-273-8255 AND PRESS 1
TEXT: 838255

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WWW.CRISISTEXTLINE.ORG
TEXT: TALK TO 741741



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855-777-2278



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