A Strengths Approach to Developing Coping Mechanisms for Veterans Living with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Alex Jankowski

Overview

• Many veterans are experiencing negative long-term psychological effects caused by combat exposure and exhibiting symptoms of PTSD such as negative emotions, poor sleep, avoidance of activities, functional impairment, and a decrease in QOL.
• RT can help veterans living with PTSD by developing coping mechanisms to alleviate their symptoms.

The Leisure and Well-Being Model

• Focuses on a person’s strengths to inspire ongoing personal growth and development.
• The end goal is to achieve well-being, i.e., achieving overall life satisfaction and realizing full potential.

Linking Model to PTSD

• Developing posttraumatic growth: This self-regulatory mechanism is the protecting agent against negative and harmful health effects of combat exposure.
• There are two ways of helping achieve posttraumatic growth: development of individual strengths and cultivation of internal and external resources by enhancing leisure experiences.

IMPLICATIONS

• Enhanced leisure experiences may shift attention from negative thoughts and help them transcend into more positive experiences.
• When engaged in activities, have them reflect on positive experiences and savor the enjoyment they are receiving from participation.
• Amount of social support received and integration back into the community is important for coping with the symptoms of PTSD.
• Providing veterans an active role in a community can help them feel virtuous, or a part of something larger than themselves.

Posttraumatic growth can aid veterans in the development of coping mechanisms to decrease the severity of their PTSD symptoms and increase life satisfaction.

References


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Components of The Leisure and Well-Being Model for RT Service Delivery

Enhancing Leisure Experience

• Savoring leisure
• Authentic leisure
• Leisure gratifications
• Mindful leisure
• Virtuous leisure

Developing Resources

• Psychological
• Social
• Cognitive
• Physical
• Environmental
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Abstract:
The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have been the longest combat operations for the U.S. since the Vietnam War and have seen over 2.6 million soldiers deployed. Many service members and veterans are experiencing the negative long-term psychological health effects caused by combat exposure like posttraumatic stress disorder. An estimated 12%-20% of service members involved have reported symptoms of PTSD, such as negative emotions, poor sleep, avoidance of activities, functional impairment, and a decrease in overall quality of life. Recreational therapy, when implemented according to the Leisure and Well-Being Model, can help veterans living with PTSD to develop coping mechanisms to alleviate their symptoms. Following the guidelines of the model will help the CTRS to focus on the development of a person’s strengths and capabilities to inspire ongoing personal growth. Use a strengths-based approach to cope with stressors can help to increase overall life satisfaction and quality of life in individuals suffering from PTSD.

References:


