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**PTSD and Combat Stress  
Prevention and Treatment in  
Naval Special Warfare**

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# Why PTSD?

- According to the CDC on average 22 veterans or active duty personnel commit suicide
  - A majority of these suicides can be attributed to Post Traumatic Stress
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# Why Naval Special Warfare?

- Lowest recorded Post Traumatic Stress related suicide rate
  - More advanced treatment methods than the rest of the Department of Defense
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# What is PTSD and Combat Stress?

PTSD (posttraumatic stress disorder) is a mental health problem that some people develop after experiencing or witnessing a life-threatening event, like combat, a natural disaster, a car accident, or sexual assault

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# Prior Studies in Special Operations

- 2014 United States Air Force study
    - Air Force personnel at SERE school
    - Cognitive changes due to extreme stress
  - 2007 Naval Health Research Center study
    - Cortisol levels in personnel during NSW SERE school
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# Research Question

What is Naval Special Warfare doing different than the rest of the Department of Defense in terms of Post Traumatic Stress prevention and treatment?

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# Methods

- Interviews with active and prior Naval Special Warfare personnel
    - All served during the Global War On Terror (9/11/2001-Present)
  - Small survey pool
    - Four Question Survey
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# Results

1) In your opinion has Naval Special Warfare properly prepared you for Combat Stress and the prevention of Post Traumatic Stress?

- Yes (84.6%)
  - No (15.4%)
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# Results

2) In your opinion is enough done to prepare Naval Special Warfare members for Combat Stress and prevention of Post Traumatic Stress?

- Yes (61.5%)
  - No (38.5%)
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# Results

3) Do Naval Special Warfare members have easy access to treatment for Combat Stress and Post Traumatic Stress?

- Yes (84.6%)
  - No (15.4%)
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# Results

4) In your opinion is the required treatment for Combat Stress and Post Traumatic Stress effective?

- Yes (23%)
  - No (77%)
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# What is done to prevent it?

- Training
    - BUD/S
    - SWCC A&S
    - Navy EOD School
  - Mandatory post deployment treatment
  - Navy run Decompression camps
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# Training

- BUD/S- Considered hardest training in the United States military
    - 5 ½ day “Hell Week”
    - Combined less than 6 hours of sleep
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# Mandatory Post Deployment Psych Evaluation

- Hour long meeting with a Psychologist

Complete overview of deployment combat action

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# Navy Run Decompression Camps

- At Least one on each coast

Allows families to reunite in a controlled environment free of work stressors

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# Is the Treatment Effective?

- Yes
  - Allows for proper post deployment reintegration
- No
  - Many Operators believe post deployment Psychiatric treatment is ineffective

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# What Allows for Less PTSD

- Compartmentalization
  - After Action Reports (AAR)
  - Planned action
  - Justification
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# Compartmentalization

- Operators can separate their work life and their home life
  - Allows for a more efficient transition back to the home front

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# After Action Reports (AAR)

- Allows for operators to face traumatic experiences
  - Proven to be an effective treatment for Post Traumatic Stress

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# Planned Action

- Majority of operations are planned heavily
    - Allows for operators to have a sense of control during the operation
    - Allows operators to calm down and clear their head before contact with the enemy
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# Justification

- Members of Naval Special Warfare are often able to Justify actions
    - Read in on the whole Operation Plan
    - Understand why they did what they did
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# Problems

- Often not willing to report symptoms of PTSD
    - Fear loss of security clearance
    - Fear loss of deployment status
    - Fear it ending their career in the military
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# Conclusion

- Naval Special Warfare has PTSD prevention and treatment that is so advanced because of its members
  - Their methods would not be able to be applied to the rest of the Department of Defense
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