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What's New & Notable?

afterdeployment published a full-page advertisement in the USO's magazine, On Patrol (page 13 of their Fall 2009 publication). This ad is one of several steps we've taken to let the military community know about afterdeployment.

Dr. Jennifer Alford, afterdeployment's Functional Director, will present at the DCoE's Second Annual Warrior Resilience Conference in Norfolk, VA on 3, 4 November. Dr. Alford will focus on afterdeployment's range of resilience-based materials.

Welcome to afterdeployment.org's Fall Newsletter!

Since our last newsletter, we've continued to develop and enhance afterdeployment.org. In late July, we renovated our homepage to highlight direct links to the DCoE* Outreach Center, the National Suicide Hotline, and the Real Warriors Campaign. We also introduced extensive materials on understanding and recovering from Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). For more on afterdeployment's TBI materials, read our feature article entitled "RECOVER from mTBI" (page 2). To find out more about the July refresh, check out page 3.

In recent months the project team has focused on afterdeployment's next user interface, set to 'go live' in early 2010. The new interface is more than just a new 'look and feel.' Users will find an improved navigation scheme, an advanced provider-locator function, ready access to real stories from realwarriors.net, new features (polls, health tips, and 'mind-flex' exercises), video-based guides that explain complex psychological materials, and community forums and blogs.

Speaking of community and social networking, afterdeployment is now on Facebook and Twitter. Be sure to check out our recent marketing activities (page 3).

On behalf of the afterdeployment project team, I want to thank our leadership at DCoE. We appreciate the great feedback and direction from DCoE's director, Brigadier General Loree Sutton, and from Dr. Gregory Gahm, T2** director.

As always, the project team welcomes your feedback at afterdeployment@universal-inc.net.

Sincerely,

Robert Ciulla, Ph.D.
afterdeployment.org Program Manager

* Defense Centers of Excellence (DCoE) for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury
** National Center for Telehealth and Technology

Spotlight on Partnerships

afterdeployment.org partnered with a research initiative led by the Telemedicine and Advanced Technology Research Center (TATRC). Known as mCare (mobile care), brief health tips derived from afterdeployment content are delivered via cell phones to military personnel with TBI in community-based warrior transition units (CBWTUs).

mCare allows the care coordination team to readily reach out to service members through a now-ubiquitous technology: personal cell phones. Currently, mCare messages include announcements, appointment reminders, and health and wellness tips.

The health tips span several content areas: health and wellness, substance abuse, depression, life stress, re-connecting with family and friends, physical injuries, anger, spiritual guidance, sleep hygiene, and work success.

Here's an example of how a health tip appears on a cell phone:



Upcoming Events

Warrior Resilience Conference II
November 3-4 2009,
Norfolk, VA

International Society for
Traumatic Stress Studies
November 5-7 2009,
Atlanta, GA

American Medical Informatics
Association Annual Symposium
November 14-18 2009,
San Francisco, CA

Telehealth Resources

Telemedicine and e-Health

Telemedicine Law and Practice

Journal of Telemedicine and
Telecare

Contact Us!

Send feedback or questions to:
afterdeployment@universal-inc.net.

RECOVER From a Mild Traumatic Brain Injury (mTBI)

Written by:
*Julia Hoffman, Psy.D., afterdeployment.org
National Center for PTSD, Palo Alto*

Traumatic Brain Injuries, or TBIs, affect a person’s consciousness. Service members can suffer TBIs from penetrating trauma (like a gunshot or stab wound) or blunt force (such as a blast or vehicle crash). Symptoms of a TBI include loss of consciousness, post-traumatic amnesia, irritability, lack of emotional control, and physical signs (like skull fractures). TBI injuries range from mild to severe, depending on the type, level, and length of impairment immediately after the event.

About 300,000—or 20%—of service members deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom have suffered a TBI. Most are classified as mild TBI (mTBI).ⁱⁱ mTBIs are often hard to diagnose and treat for a number of reasons. Many people with mTBI show no visible signs of injury. Some may have limited or no access of medical diagnostic equipment. And still others with mTBI present a wide range of recurring symptoms, including other psychological and physical problems.

Most people with mTBI fully recover within months of the injury. A few experience ongoing symptoms, like memory loss, irritability, headaches, fatigue, and dizziness.ⁱⁱⁱ These injuries can cause serious side effects, such as relationship problems, substance abuse, job and school stress, and increased risk of homelessness and suicide.

Current Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs Clinical Practice Guidelines for mTBI management suggest early education in treating this injury^{iv}. mTBI sufferers need information to address common issues, side effects, and strategies to manage injury-related problems. Other things, like maintaining positive expectations, are also essential to recovery.

At *afterdeployment.org*, we have created RECOVER, a 7-step tool to help service members remember the issues related to mTBI. RECOVER stands for: *Resolve to get better, Educate yourself and your family, Cope with symptoms, Observe healthy habits, Value your safety, Engage your support system, Reach out for help for yourself and your family.*

Resolve to get better challenges service members to set realistic recovery goals. This critical step reminds them that impairment does not equal disability. Instead, the step optimizes recovery by creating positive expectations and setting achievable goals.

Educate yourself and your family encourages service members and families get information from health providers and others about TBI-related issues. *afterdeployment.org’s* 38-page e-library has a wealth of helpful information vetted by members of the *afterdeployment* team and Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center.

Cope with symptoms recommends the use of self-management strategies for troubling TBI and non-TBI symptoms. Users can download these *Quick Tips* recommendations at *afterdeployment.org*.

Observe healthy habits reminds mTBI patients to pursue lifestyle choices that maintain their body and mind. Exercising (if allowed), sleeping, practicing good hygiene, following prescribed treatments, avoiding alcohol and drugs, and enjoying pleasant life activities can all lead to optimal recovery.

Value your safety warns service members to use protective equipment and avoid high-risk activities. This step underscores the danger of future head injuries and the impact of multiple concussions.

(continued on page 3)

R	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resolve to get better Make peace with your recovery, be realistic, and set recovery goals to optimize the recovery process
E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate yourself and your family Knowledge is power: find out what to expect from health care providers and other sources
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cope with Symptoms Prioritize problems and learn skills to manage them one at a time
O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observe Healthy Habits Exercise, sleep, eat, have some fun, avoid alcohol and drugs, etc.
V	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Value your safety Avoid a second head injury or other problems caused by new limitations
E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage your support system Figure out who your supports are and make sure to stay in touch and learn to ask for help as necessary
R	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reach out for help for yourself and your family Get medical attention and professional support as early and often as necessary



What People are Saying

“afterdeployment.org is saving my marriage” – *Military Spouse* (posted on Facebook)

“There is a lot to visit on this site, with many resources offered. I would sit down with my family to go through this site; even if we were in separate places I'd feel that we could go through this one together.” – *Service Member*

“I like this one because it seems to relate more to me, my family and our experience as a military family.” – *Family Member*

“Well Done! Comprehensive.” – *Spouse of a Veteran and parent of an Active Duty Service Member* – Navy

“I believe a lot of the topics are going to help many soldiers when they come back from deployment.” – *Provider*

“I like hearing what people who have actually experienced a homecoming have gone through and how they have handled their homecoming.” – *Family Member*

“Good Job! Keep it up! Hoorah!” – *Active Duty, Army*

“It was professional, informative, interactive and engaging.” – *Family member*

RECOVER From a Mild Traumatic Brain Injury (mTBI) (continued)

Engage your support system emphasizes the importance of connecting with family and friends in the recovery process.

Reach out for help for yourself and your family strongly recommends that service members seek medical attention and, if needed, behavioral health services as soon as possible in their recovery process. Family members also serve a vital role in finding high quality care.

You can access more information about the [RECOVER model](#) on [afterdeployment.org](#) ♦

F i Tanielian, T. Jaycox, L.H., Editors. Invisible wounds of war: Psychological and cognitive injuries, their consequences, and services to assist recovery. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2008. Available at: <http://rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG720/ii> Warden, D. Military TBI during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. *J Head Trauma Rehab* 2006; 21 (5): 398-402iii Gordon, W.A., Zafonte, R., Cicerone, K., Cantor, J. Brown, M., Lombard, L. et al. Traumatic brain injury rehabilitation: state of the science. *Am J Phys Med Rehab/ Association of Academic Physiatrists*, 2006; 85(4): 343-382.iv Management of Concussion/mTBI Working Group. VA/DoD clinical practice guideline for management of concussion/mild traumatic brain injury. Washington DC: Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense, 2009.

Website Development



On 31 July we added “New and Featured,” to the homepage to alert users about new features, content, and *afterdeployment* initiatives.

This addition introduced a full set of new materials on Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), including text from experts, fact sheets, and new annotated references.

We raised the visibility of DCoE’s Outreach Center and the National Suicide Hotline, giving users ready access to support. The Real Warriors Campaign is also featured prominently on the home page. The Real Warriors Campaign, a DCoE initiative, promotes resilience, recovery, and reintegration of returning service members, veterans, and military families.



In addition, We also moved our “Give Us Feedback” survey link to an easily accessed location on the home page.

Over the past months, the project office and its experts have conducted two surveys on user feedback for site development projections and planning. To participate in our user testing, check [afterdeployment’s survey page](#) for new surveys. ♦

afterdeployment.org Marketing



Our project office is rolling out several marketing strategies under DCoE’s Strategic Communications and T2 Marketing. We adopted a new *afterdeployment.org* logo. You can see the new logo on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). The logo will soon be tied in to the website and other marketing materials. You can become a “fan” of *afterdeployment.org* on [Facebook](#) to receive updates about *afterdeployment.org*. And you can follow *afterdeployment.org* on [Twitter](#) for helpful health tips and other information.

We’ve also launched a Public Service Announcement (PSA) campaign, including a full-page ad in the fall 2009 edition of the USO magazine, “On*Patrol.” And we launched a six-month PSA with the Armed Forces Network (AFN), a worldwide radio and television broadcast network airing in 177 countries.

Stay tuned for more exciting updates on *afterdeployment* (blogs, forums, text messaging and more)! ♦

Publications & Presentations of Interest

Lee M. Ritterband, PhD; Frances P. Thorndike, PhD; Linda A. Gonder-Frederick, PhD; Joshua C. Magee, MA; Elaine T. Bailey, PhD; Drew K. Saylor, BA; Charles M. Morin, PhD. 2009. Efficacy of an Internet-Based Behavioral Intervention for Adults With Insomnia. *Arch Gen Psychiatry*. 66(7):692-698.

Helen Christensen, Ph.D., Kathleen M Griffiths, Ph.D., Louise Farrer, BA. 2009. Adherence in Internet Interventions for Anxiety and Depression: Systematic Review. *J Med Internet Res* (Apr 24); 11(2):e13

Reger, M. A., Etherage, J. E., Reger, G. M., & Gahm, G. A. (2008). Civilian psychologists in an Army culture: The ethical challenge of cultural competence. *Military Psychology*, 20, 21-35.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Department of Defense (DoD) or the Defense Centers of Excellence (DCoE). The appearance of external hyperlinks does not constitute endorsement of the linked websites by DoD, DCoE or afterdeployment.org

Outreach to National Chaplain Center, Department of Veteran Affairs

Spirituality is part of many resilience training programs, including the Army's new resilience initiative, [Comprehensive Soldier Fitness \(CSF\)](#).

In January 2009, *afterdeployment* launched a full Spirituality Program called "Seeking Spiritual Fitness". The program includes expert advice from a military chaplain, a full e-library, fact sheets, personal stories, a spirituality assessment, and several interactive workshops.



In an ongoing effort to improve and enhance *afterdeployment's* materials, the project office consults with subject matter experts on an ongoing basis. Recently Chaplains Jeni Cook and Will Kinnaird of the National Chaplain Center (Department of Veteran Affairs) provided information on standardized spirituality assessments measuring individual

interest in spirituality, spiritual wellbeing and spiritual injury. The project office is considering these suggestions for future incorporation into the Spirituality program.

In addition, Chaplain Kinnaird was kind enough to forward *afterdeployment's* newsletter and marketing materials to Chaplains in the US Department of Veterans Affairs. As a result, we now have a number of Chaplain subscribers to our newsletter! ♦

Sesame Street Workshop: Talk, Listen, Connect

In the next iteration of the afterdeployment.org website we will be linking to various partners and other resources. One example of these resources is the [Sesame Street Workshop's Talk, Listen, Connect \(TLC\)](#) program. This program is aimed at assisting parents and children, ages two to five years old, with the challenges associated with deployment and homecoming and the changes that occur as a result of both. The program is a bilingual (English & Spanish), multimedia rich presentation of difficulties families often face around single or multiple deployments of caregivers.



TLC contains helpful tip sheets for parents, downloadable activities, a facilitator's manual and engaging videos for both caregiver/parent and child to watch with their favorite Sesame Street characters and celebrities. Materials are focused around discussing challenges from deployment and homecoming and with coping with change due to a parent's "invisible" (psychological or Traumatic Brain Injury) and/or "visible" (physical) injuries. The video content incorporates real stories and experiences of military families and normalizes experiences and emotions associated with deployment. The Sesame Street characters provide the experiential learning opportunity by working through situations and experiences that the child may have or is currently having.

In addition, Sesame Street Workshop recently launched (September 2009) the *Family Connections* program in which military families can connect and share experiences in a kid-friendly, Sesame Street themed, social networking site (similar to *Facebook*). Here, families can share pictures, videos, letters, and artwork with their friends and family. ♦

Websites linking to afterdeployment.org

The following is a sample of websites that reference afterdeployment.org.

- Military OneSource
- National Institutes of Health
- MarineWives.com
- RealWarriors.net
- Mentalhealth.gov
- LIFElines.navy.mil
- DCoE Outreach Center
- Army Toolbag.org
- ArmyFRG.org