

# Military Sexual Trauma Related to PTSD

By Robert Weiss LCSW, CSAT-S

Many military veterans suffer from PTSD related to experiences of sexual trauma. An even greater concern is the alarming amount of stigma surrounding the discussion and treatment of PTSD and addiction within the military community.[1]

In recent decades, these addictions and coping mechanisms have become more sexualized, manifesting in many cases as porn addiction. By addressing this dynamic, we can help veterans who are dealing with addiction by demystifying the stigma surrounding their methods of coping, i.e. addiction.



While it has been reported that a number of men and women have sued the Department of Defense for “allowing a military culture that fails to prevent rape,”[2] a Pentagon spokesman said that Secretary of Defense Robert Gates was working to ensure that the military was “doing all it can to prevent and respond to it,” reported *The New York Times*. [3] But the problems persist and more and more vets and their loved ones are seeking solutions.

It is important to note that trauma and addiction affect men and women; and it is equally difficult for both to speak out against it. One female vet recounted this story: “You fear for life a lot of times. I constantly reevaluated everything as to whether I should suck it up or take the risk of saying something. I sucked it up for a while; I just thought, ‘I’ll do whatever it takes.’”[4] The result of bottling up trauma leads many to deal with their psychological pain with addictive behaviors.

## More Clinical Help Is Needed

Vets that speak out about the widespread issue have remarked that “more clinical help is needed,” especially for female vets whose “programs [too often] attempt to mirror men’s programs” that are typically “geared toward drug and alcohol abuse and addiction.”[5]

The statistics on military sexual trauma (MST) among women are staggering, with 42% reportedly experiencing it. Additionally, studies have found that MST was more likely to lead to PTSD than other military or civilian traumatic events, which would include witnessing engagement related deaths.

## Porn Addiction in Veterans

Given the proactive nature of military life, some veterans have started blogs sharing stories about their struggles with porn addiction, shedding light on the broader military addiction epidemic. Sites like Feed The Right Wolf have seen upwards of 200,000 visitors. Feed’s

owner contended while he's "not an expert...it is important to share the message about the dangers of porn addiction," mainly because "there aren't many other sites talking about [it]."

Experts have also weighed in on the gravity of this problem. In the article, *Addicted to Online Porn: X-rated Internet Explosion Wreaks Havoc with Troops' Careers & Lives*, author Jon R. Anderson stated that "the seamy side of Porn 2.0 is picking off military marriages and killing promising careers like a shadow army of well-placed snipers."

Reflecting on these issues, Capt. Diana Colon, a therapist who heads an Army mental health clinic in Schweinfurt, Germany, said recent engagements like Afghanistan and Iraq "have created a new generation of dysfunctional pornography abusers." The tragic reality of porn abuse has been that many retired veterans and their spouses divorce as a result of the addiction. According to a 2002 survey of 1,600 top divorce lawyers, more than half of all divorces involved a spouse hooked on porn sites.

### **Treating Military Addiction and Trauma**

Many military personnel fall into addiction to cope with their trauma and stress. By addressing the addictions they are facing, we can also make strides towards ending the sexual trauma. There is hope for those who seek treatment. For more information, please visit SASH and Every Man's Battle, and Elements Recovery Referral Center.

[1] <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/ptsd-in-military-women-can-put-them-at-risk-for-eating-disorders-and-addiction-134668573.html>

[2] <http://www.helpforveterans.blogspot.com/>

[3] [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/16/us/16military.html?\\_r=1&scp=1&sq=pentagon rape&st=cse](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/16/us/16military.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=pentagon%20rape&st=cse)

[4] <http://www.helpforveterans.blogspot.com/>

[5] Ibid.

[6] [http://www.armytimes.com/offduty/health/offduty\\_porn\\_033110/](http://www.armytimes.com/offduty/health/offduty_porn_033110/)

Robert Weiss is Founding Director of The Sexual Recovery Institute and Director of Sexual Disorders Services at The Ranch Treatment Center and Promises Treatment Centers. These centers serve individuals seeking sexual addiction treatment and porn addiction help. Specifically, the Centers for Relationship and Sexual Recovery at The Ranch (CRSR) offer specialized intimacy, sex and relationship addiction treatment for both men and women in gender-specific, gender-separate treatment and living environments.

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