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## 6.3 Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Effect on Families

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## Effects of PTSD: How It Can Impact Veterans and their Families

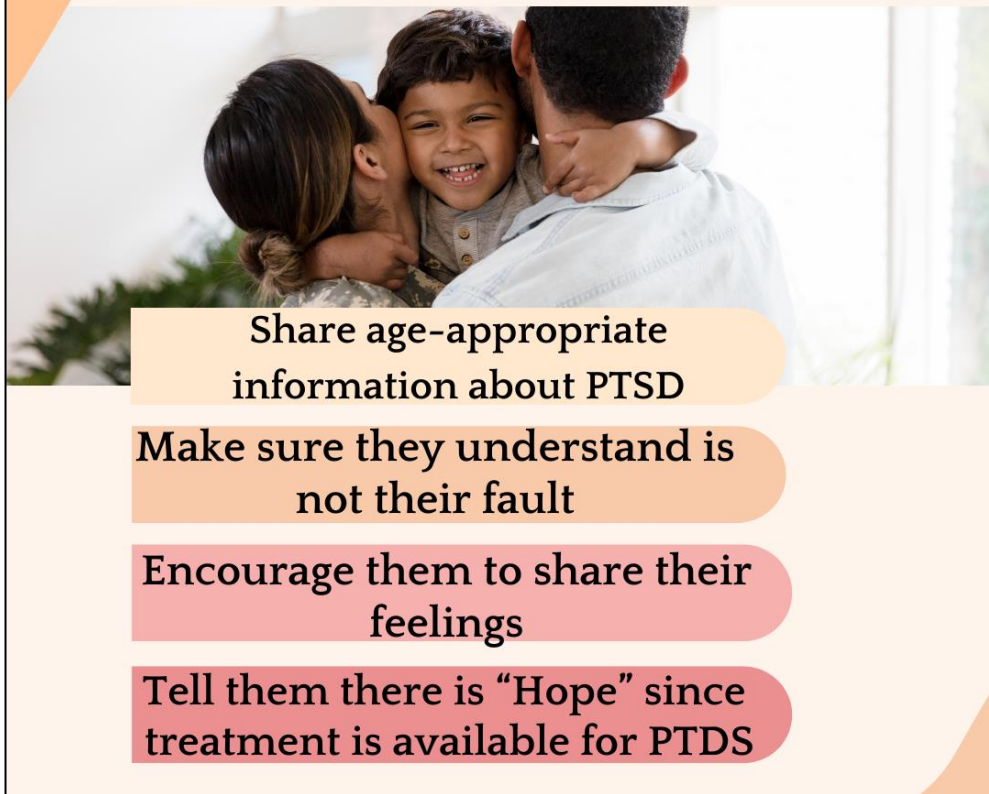
There are many effects of PTSD on those with the disorder. It is common for Veterans and other people with PTSD to have problems such as keeping a steady job. They may have increased irritability and have trouble connecting with their co-workers, families, and friends and showing their emotions. They may also avoid group activities and social interactions. Additionally, they may have other mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and alcohol or drug abuse. Sometimes, these problems happen because of PTSD symptoms one is experiencing. For example, people may use alcohol or drugs to help them deal with anger, sadness, or guilt, which are symptoms of PTSD (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2023e).

When someone has PTSD, symptoms may affect not only the Veteran but also their family and friends. PTSD makes it hard to do everyday things, and this may lead to unmet family needs. Living with someone who is afraid all the time, has nightmares, and avoids social situations can hurt the most caring families.

According to research, Veterans with PTSD can develop problems with their marriage because they share less of their thoughts and feelings with their partners. Intimacy problems also tend to be higher in combat Veterans with PTSD. Lower sexual interest may lead to lower satisfaction within the relationship. Veterans with PTSD may feel numb or void of emotions, and this can create an emotional disconnection (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2023b).

The partners of Veterans with PTSD may feel overstressed or burnout, in particular if they are in a caregiver role. PTSD can also directly affect the mental health of partners. Family members of Veterans with PTSD can experience depression, anger, worsening physical and mental health problems, and guilt. Talking to children about PTSD is an essential part of coping with PTSD as a family (Figure 6.3a).

# Talking to Kids About PTSD



**Figure 6.3a**

*The Importance of Talking to Kids About PTSD*

**Source**

*U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, May 2023*

Even young children can benefit from being explained what their mom or dad are going through, as long as it is understandable at their age. Talking about PTSD helps children see that it's not their fault, that it's okay to talk about your feelings and challenges, and that asking for help is *not* something to feel ashamed of.

Partners, spouses, and family members should seek counseling for themselves or engage with sources of social support if these symptoms occur (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2023b).

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