



Wounded Island soldier struggles with post-traumatic stress

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The wounds Cpl. Tyler Coady suffered in Afghanistan are healing, but now he is fighting the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder.

In June, Coady, 22, a reservist from Charlottetown, was driving a light armoured vehicle in Kandahar province when it struck a pair of roadside bombs.

No one was killed, but Coady suffered serious injuries to his neck and hearing loss. His PTSD was diagnosed last month.

PTSD is an anxiety disorder that gives sufferers intense, prolonged feelings of fright and distress for no clear reason. It is caused by a traumatic event involving threatened death or serious injury to the sufferer. Seeing someone else threatened with death or serious injury, or killed, can also cause it.

Symptoms such as flashbacks usually begin three to six months after the event.

For Coady, PTSD has made a once-outgoing guy isolate himself from the world.

"For some people, it can be totally different, but any kind of social situation can be really difficult for you. It can be at your workplace, out with friends. It's so hard to relate to someone else it can cause a lot of problems socially and with family and stuff like that," he said.

The Christmas season has been especially difficult, he said.

"We lost a lot of people over there and it's tough not thinking about them," he said.

Family members also suffer

Family members also feel the stress and anxiety, said Charlene McGinnis with P.E.I. Military Families Resource Centre in Charlottetown.

"Having their loved ones back after such an ordeal that they've had to endure over the last year, the family themselves have a sense of it's over but it's not over. What are we going to do?" said McGinnis.

So far this winter, the centre has received twice the number of calls it did last year.

Margaret Tesselar has been one of those callers. Her son Rob returned home from Afghanistan in the fall, but Tesselar said she feels an emptiness and sadness she can't explain.

"I've run on adrenalin and I don't know if it's post-deployment stress and now everybody's back so it's like poof! So I'm wondering now am I going into a slump or is it a natural reaction," she said.

The Military Families Resource Centre will help Tesselar find a counsellor on the Island.

No help on the Island for Coady

But Coady will have to leave the province to get the help he needs.

"In P.E.I. we don't have a lot of the same things that Gagetown and other places have. They're regular force and we're reserve. And some of the resources they have aren't readily available to us because we're at a distance," he said

Coady would like those services to be available on the Island.

He also wants people to know the impact of war doesn't always end when a soldier comes home.

"Some of the things you do, you'll just have outbursts of anger and people don't understand why and you don't understand why. It's just good for people to know symptoms and what they might be going through and just be patient with them," he said.

In the past five years the number of veterans dealing with PTSD has jumped by 400 per cent. That coincides with Canada's involvement in Afghanistan.

Veterans Affairs says there are currently more than 6,500 veterans receiving disability benefits for PTSD.

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