

POST DEPLOYMENT SEMINAR

Dates: March 2-4, 2012

Goal: turning vulnerability into strength through learning and utilizing peer support.

This is an experiential workshop for soldiers who have "been over there". Despite the best support immediately following deployment, there can be long lasting effects. Going to War is like crossing a fence, with no opportunity to jump back. Incidents which happen during wartime and the reactions experienced upon returning can rupture an individual's basic worldview. One may feel vulnerable and may have to emotionally come to grips with a reality that someone who has never been there cannot understand. The civilian job, the neighborhood and one's relationships may now be perceived differently. The PDS will provide education on trauma, patterns of resolution, and field-tested coping strategies to promote recovery and resilience. Because peer support is an important element of the PDS, peers will lead discussion groups relating to deployment and post-deployment issues. This method helps promote normalization and recovery. The PDS format has been in use by the FBI for over 25 years.

What Type of Post Deployment Issues Will We Discuss? The PDS will cover incidents and events that occurred in the war zone as well as events on the home front. We will talk about events that sometimes result in an overwhelming sense of vulnerability and/or loss of control. These may include:

- * Separation from family
- * Going outside the wire
- * Convoy duty
- * Fire-fights
- * IED's
- * Getting shot or seriously hurt in the war zone
- * Observing personnel getting wounded or killed
- * Jumpiness
- * Sleeplessness
- * Difficulty Concentrating
- * Replaying Events/Nightmares
- * Shutting off emotions
- * Shutting out the world
- * Relationship Issues

Soldiers who have been through the PDS report that it has helped them to talk about relationships, sense of guilt, having a short fuse, easily getting angry, and for some, the strong desire to go back.

What will the officer get out of this? (1) An opportunity to share one's experience with one's peers as well as give and receive support (2) Teachings by military/ mental health professionals on proven trauma recovery methods, and (3) Learning coping strategies that can enable recovery from deployment and post-deployment reactions. Soldiers report that the PDS has strengthened their ability to deal with work, relationships and life in the future.

Few organizations around the country offer PDS-type programs for their own agency and to the best of our knowledge there is no such program which is regional in scope. While we may not be able to include everyone who wishes to participate in the program, we are planning a Post-Deployment Seminar consisting of 35 participants and 15 facilitators. As the course fills up a waiting list will be started. The facilitators will be peer support soldiers who have been deployed themselves, mental health professionals as well as military chaplains. This program is open to any guard or reserve soldier in South Carolina. Those who have recently retired or separated from the guard or reserve will be offered the opportunity to attend if additional slots are available.

Location: South Carolina (specific location TBA)

For more information call J. Eric Skidmore: 803-252-2664 or cell 803-206-8961. Sponsor: The SC Army National Guard/SCLEAP (Spouses/Significant Others Welcome). Rate for non-SCARNG Personnel: Food Per Diem Rate: \$25.00 per person per day Housing: \$85.00 per person per night (excluding taxes)