

PTSD after serving a Mormon mission?

Posted by: **gemini** ()

Date: February 06, 2016 06:20PM

I am really worried for my grandchildren who are now entering mission age and serving or preparing to go on missions.

From the blogs that are reposted here and the weekly one we get from our own family, something just feels off...like repression of the disappointments and rejection that these young people get constantly.

Any RM's who can chime in on whether this resulted in any type of PTSD symptoms after coming home? This just seems like such an unhealthy activity!

Re: PTSD after serving a mission?

Posted by: **elderolddog** ()

Date: February 06, 2016 06:23PM

... if only they were representing a church that was worth joining...

Re: PTSD after serving a mission?

Posted by: **PTSD - RM DOC** ()

Date: December 13, 2016 02:15PM

Trauma is different for different people. I seen people die right in front of me, broken many bones and have gotten into car accidents.

There was nothing more traumatic for me than the guilt I felt on my mission. I realize most people react to this in a more healthy way but I honestly think I would do better seeing people die around me everyday than preach something that was destroying me.

That defined my position to all my friends and family and everyone in my life.

Re: PTSD after serving a mission?

Posted by: **Elder Berry** ()

Date: February 06, 2016 06:33PM

I think I had more PTSD after my "live" endowment than anything on my mission and crazy stuff happened to me out there.

Re: PTSD after serving a mission?

Posted by: **Brother Of Jerry** ()

Date: February 06, 2016 06:48PM

Just nightmares of being called on a mission again and having to go back. :-/

Re: PTSD after serving a mission?

Posted by: **lapsed** ()

Date: February 06, 2016 07:00PM

I'm 60 and still have dreams of being back on a mission and can't leave...about once a week.

I wouldn't say that it is in anyway comparable to the PTSD veterans face, but after all these years the mission still haunts me. I'd rather have this (whatever it is) to reliving being in a war. Can't imagine how horrible that would be.

PTSD is an authentic condition, but like many psychological diagnoses...

Posted by: **caffiend** ()

Date: February 06, 2016 06:50PM

...it is turning out to be vague and sometimes very elastic. Unfortunately, it has become an effective catch-all to explain away and excuse many problems that, years, decades, and generations ago were personal issues that people simply had to deal with.

Many men came back from hell-holes like Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima, and the beaches of Normandie, having suffered greatly. Most of them got on with their lives.

Please don't jump to the conclusion that I'm some simplistic, hard-hearted jerk. I've been in my share of critical incidents. But two years away from the family? PTSD?

Some kids will have very difficult times, definitely, and will need help to adjust (I avoid the word "recover") afterwards. Many others will have an interesting time, learn to deal with new situations, unfamiliar and sometimes difficult people, get the door closed on their noses, problem authorities, and come out more mature and socially competent. A year ago the Wall Street Journal ran an op-ed about how many of these kids were better equipped for college and the business world.

Religiously, some will come back more enmeshed in the cult (boo!) and for others, it will be the beginning of their exits (Yea!). But PTSD? Maybe a few, here and there. Expecting to see it leads to a self-fulfilling diagnosis.

Re: PTSD is an authentic condition, but like many psychological diagnoses...

Posted by: **angela** ()
Date: February 06, 2016 08:05PM

^^^^^This.

PTSD is serious condition due to severe trauma. I have a family member who suffers from it, so much so that they have been in a psychiatric hospital for care and is still undergoing long term out patient therapy.

Re: PTSD is an authentic condition, but like many psychological diagnoses...

Posted by: **axeldc** ()
Date: February 08, 2016 01:06PM

I have known some RMs who come back seriously abused by their missions. They have parasites that plague their bowels. They were mugged, stabbed or assaulted. They witnessed horrendous poverty they never thought imaginable.

I agree that most RMs don't get PTSD, but don't dismiss someone's experiences without hearing them out. Some people do suffer real trauma and should seek help.

Please re-read my post, above.

Posted by: **caffiend** ()
Date: February 09, 2016 12:06AM

I am not dismissing PTSD as illusory or anything. But I stand by my opinion that it is quite elastic, and if you check off enough sentences on a list, you get the diagnosis.

The good news is that this is something that was unknown or scoffed at for decades. The downside is that it's an umbrella diagnosis, and lots of people take refuge in it, and unnecessarily perpetuate their sense of "victimhood."

Once a veteran gets his PTSD rating, he keeps it (and the monetary compensation) until he dies. Nobody ever seeks, or gets, a "cure" from it.

There IS help for recurrent PTSD nightmares.

Posted by: **Anon for this one** ()
Date: February 09, 2016 02:36AM

I was diagnosed with it a number of years ago. One of the nastiest symptoms was night after night of hideously frightening nightmares. I would wake up crying, shaking, and with a heartbeat well above 100 beats per minute.

I did some research and found an article on a VA website about a drug called Prazosin, which was originally developed for high blood pressure. However, the VA found that when this medicine was given to patients who had PTSD in addition to HBP, their nightmares decreased markedly. So at first, it was just an unexpected side-effect.

Since I have high blood pressure and have to take medicine for it, I asked my doctor about Prazosin. I showed him a printout of the article.

He gave me a prescription for it and my PTSD nightmares dropped to almost zero immediately. I still get mildly unpleasant dreams now and again (like being lost somewhere, which is scary for me) but absolutely NOTHING like the horrors that used to stage carnivals in my head every night.

It's worth looking into. I take the med before going to bed at night, and I'm usually fine. If I happen to take an afternoon nap, I may slip back into a nightmare. Good reason to avoid naps.

That IS a good report, Anon.

Posted by: **caffiend** ()

Date: February 09, 2016 12:05PM

I want to emphasize that I am not dismissive of PTSD. My gripe is just that it is over-diagnosed, and very often the basis for a victim mentality. I wish there were more cases like yours, where it was an authentic condition, and treated appropriately and effectively.

And, a cautionary but possibly unnecessary word: Be alert to the variations of your condition and the fluctuations of your medications, as these things usually need reassessment and drug adjustments. (I trust you know that.)

Re: PTSD is an authentic condition, but like many psychological diagnoses...

Posted by: **safi** ()

Date: May 18, 2018 11:05PM

I was in the army and was deployed to Iraq. Afterwards I was diagnosed with PTSD, but it wasn't because of war. It was because of being raised in a toxic environment. Church probably played a role. The stress level of soaking at church or missionary work was much higher than getting shot at, mortared, and having missiles fired on me while in a helicopter. Those events weren't even stressful to me.

Re: PTSD after serving a mission?

Posted by: **donbagley** ()

Date: February 06, 2016 07:13PM

I got some from a single weekend spent with the mishies when I was twelve. I can't imagine how much you'd get from a two year mission.

Edited 1 time(s). Last edit at 02/06/2016 07:13PM by donbagley.

Re: PTSD after serving a mission?

Posted by: **the1v** ()

Date: February 06, 2016 08:16PM

PTSD doesn't have to be war and it doesn't happen to everyone. Some people can go through terrible conditions and readily adapt. Others suffer psychological effects the rest of their lives. Two people can experience the same thing and have totally different reactions to it.

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/index.shtml>

Something that is interesting in the resilience category is the social support structure. Mormon missionaries can experience terrible things and there is no structure of support. Perhaps it is better now days but when I went you didn't talk about anything negative.

Re: PTSD after serving a mission?

Posted by: **Inverso** ()

Date: February 08, 2016 08:42AM

I wasn't diagnosed with PTSD when I returned from Mexico in 1985 but it had only recently been recognized and wasn't something people checked for. I'm fairly certain that I had it. My first full-time assignment was in the neighborhood where the Sinaloa cartel was born and we were treated to random blasts of machine gun fire on

a regular basis, then my companion and I were held up twice just two weeks apart-- first with knives and later at gunpoint. When you combine that with the brutal hazing, the constant haranguing over stats, primitive living conditions (no indoor toilet, etc) and lack of a support network... I had mission nightmares, anxiety, and suffered from an uncontrollable hypervigilance/fear when forced to go out at night for many, many years.

Edited 1 time(s). Last edit at 02/08/2016 08:42AM by Inverso.

Well, there is such a thing as post mission trauma.

Posted by: **Bamboozled** ()
Date: February 08, 2016 09:23AM

Whether it should be lumped in with PTSD seems to be debatable here. Perhaps there should be a new designation for the LDS experience. Maybe we at RfM should coin a new phrase, like Post Mission Traumatic Syndrome (PMTS) where we can affirm that such a thing does exist for many returned missionaries and yet not dilute the PTSD that those with much more violent experiences experience.

As for me, I've been home 30 years and continue to have dreams where I have to go back on my mission. For many of those years they were unpleasant nightmarish dreams that seemed to dredge up the unpleasant times of my mission.

Though maybe not truly PTSD the mindfu*k that is an LDS mission and the scramble it can do to ones mind and spirit should still not be discounted.

Re: Well, there is such a thing as post mission trauma.

Posted by: **getoutnow1830** ()
Date: May 17, 2018 08:13PM

Yes there is such thing as post mission trauma. I feel the negative effects of serving a mission for that fucking cult every single day of my life. The feelings of guilt, shame, anger, frustration, etc. tortures my mind every second of the day. I in no way compare this to what our soldiers and veterans face but do agree that there is some sort of PTSD and/or trauma felt and experienced. I feel guilt for wasting two years of my life especially in the good years. I feel guilt for not being there for my friends and family. I feel ashamed to have been a missionary for a fairy tale and

preaching bullshit down peoples throats! I feel anger towards the companions that were some of the worst human beings to ever been bred. I feel anger towards a mission president who sought to make my life a living hell all because I didn't live up to the status quo.

Re: PTSD after serving a mission?

Posted by: **blueorchid** ()

Date: February 08, 2016 10:28AM

Most missions would be considered boring, a waste of time, frustrating, competitive, draining, or for some, yea, even purposeful. Very few mission experiences would include the words traumatic or debilitating stress.

A mission is on the same level of doing many things that are just a difficult part of life--things we all do sometimes. Often the mission is accompanied by a lack of support by the leaders as well as a push to make you feel inadequate. This is something most of will go through in our careers or jobs in life. It is just part of the game and toughens most of us.

I, with some of the others here, agree that the PTSD thing gets tossed around a little too lightly and does a disservice to those who have actually suffered severe trauma and extreme stress.

I have had the "back on the mission" dreams and the devil nightmares most of my life. I really don't enjoy them, but they are not ruining my life.

A lot depends on the MP

Posted by: **Bamboozled** ()

Date: February 08, 2016 11:22AM

Missions are such a subjective experience. Some MP are Christ-like and others are downright psychologically abusive.

Any time you are fed the line that if you fail on your mission you will fail in life its going to fu*k up some minds.

Re: A lot depends on the MP

Posted by: **blueorchid** ()

Date: February 08, 2016 01:30PM

I forgot that line--if you fail at a mission you will fail in life. That is sick.

Re: PTSD after serving a mission?

Posted by: **the1v** ()

Date: February 08, 2016 10:50AM

Well after reading more about the subject my mission did reach the PTSD threshold of stress. Now that I think back on it took me 4-5 years to recover after I got back. Went through numerous jobs and had a bad episode about three years after.

Do most missions cause PTSD? Of course not. However taking young men and women, separating them from their support system, place them into hazardous conditions where they are rejected and revoked daily, creates the environment conducive toward developing symptoms. Toss them into a violent area with a high violent crime rate and there will be a few that have issues.

Re: PTSD after serving a mission?

Posted by: **blueorchid** ()

Date: February 08, 2016 11:02AM

I know of two cases of mission experiences that did reach PTSD levels and were pretty horrific and cause long term damage. Hope you are doing well now. Those two I think were exacerbated by no support what soever from the MP and his wife, and actually quite the opposite, doing their best to make the missionaries in questions feel like unworthy failures for something out of their control. It didn't need to be that bad.

MP's are just more "untrained clergy" that the Mormon church likes to brag about.

Re: PTSD after serving a mission?

Posted by: **the1v** ()

Date: February 08, 2016 11:55AM

PTSD can be lifelong or heal up after six months or so. My brother-in-law had a rough six months after his second tour with the marines in Iraq. A few of his buddies were injured with a roadside bomb. The Marines where very good at getting him help as he was still active. He's worked for years as a paramedic dealing with trauma constantly.

Recurring dream

Posted by: **axeldc** ()

Date: February 08, 2016 01:03PM

I think most RMS have had the recurring dream of being back on the mish. Most of us are very unhappy with it, thinking we should be home, not serving out this sentence. I remember trying to make the dream more pleasant by ignoring mission

rules and treating it like a long vacation.

The dreams stopped happening once I quit the church. I think they show guilt about not doing enough on the mission, which is how LDS, Inc. motivates missionaries. Once you leave the church, it should wear off.

If it's more than that, then maybe you should get counseling. I've known some people who were truly abused on their missions in various ways, and not just the standard manipulation.

Re: Recurring dream

Posted by: **Demon of Kolob** ()

Date: February 08, 2016 04:32PM

I also had the nightmare dreams of being on a mission again these also stopped as soon as I formally left the cult.

Re: PTSD after serving a mission?

Posted by: **Exmoron** ()

Date: February 08, 2016 01:29PM

I don't think the Mormon missionary experience would rise to level of a life threatening stressor in the strict sense of the diagnosis of *PTSD. Certainly though Mormon missionaries are placed in situations that are risky and dangerous. Many experience anxiety years afterward. I have dreams of being in the mission field now 30 years post mission. Missions suck no doubt about it.

*PTSD, or Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, is a psychiatric disorder that can occur following the experience or witnessing of a life-threatening events such as military combat, natural disasters, terrorist incidents, serious accidents, or physical or sexual assault in adult or childhood.

Re: PTSD after serving a mission?

Posted by: **Inverso** ()

Date: February 08, 2016 02:53PM

Think what you'd like but I returned home physically and psychologically broken and I know I'm not the only one. Lucky you if your experience was different.

I've been back for 30 years too and although I no longer have panic attacks when

someone approaches me on a dark sidewalk, the effects were debilitating for over a decade and it's only in the last couple of years that I've been able to process some of this stuff with my therapist.

Re: PTSD after serving a mission?

Posted by: **Exmoron** ()

Date: February 08, 2016 05:49PM

I was thinking as a general rule, but maybe your experience is much more wide spread. Come to think of it, I was roughed up by a drunk guy one time on the streets of London and chased off by a mob in a neighborhood (good thing we had our bikes as rocks were whizzing past our heads).

Re: PTSD after serving a mission?

Posted by: **the1v** ()

Date: February 08, 2016 03:21PM

My mission:

Terrorist incident... Check (IRA bombings)

Physical Assault... Check (multiple times)

Serious Accidents... Check (ended up in the E.R., permanent nerve damage to my left hand and forearm.)

Re: PTSD after serving a mission?

Posted by: **Off the fence** ()

Date: February 08, 2016 05:11PM

Story time?

I had PTSD after being mugged

Posted by: **axeldc** ()

Date: February 08, 2016 05:49PM

I'm still only 99% recovered 10 years later. Having a gun pointed at you while a guy screams for your wallet makes you lose your sense of security.

Not really severe PTSD but something similar

Posted by: **Hedning** ()

Date: February 08, 2016 05:18PM

I had a lot of really bad experiences on my mission but I don't think anything like soldiers experience in combat. My father survived a bombing of his airbase where many of his friends very close by were killed. He lost about 1/4 of his fighter pilot

friends in his unit. My uncle landed ahead of the main invasion forces on several pacific islands, his job was to stay alive and keep radio transmissions going until the main landing force was on the beach. I have experienced nothing like that and I don't think we should call our discomfort anything like what people who have gone through war, mass destruction etc. have experienced.

That being said a lot of crap happens. My cousin was shot while serving in a US city. I was punched, threatened with knives, beatings, and had bottles thrown at me. But the part that did the psychological damage was the sadistic treatment by my mission president. Not only constant degrading nonsense about obedience, and self worth, but I also became very sick on my mission and was locked in the mission home for quite some time -until I finally got in contact with my family and doctor, who got me sent home. I was told by my mission president and stake president that I would always be a loser and failure because I did not have enough faith. I too used to have the dream where you were called back ... I found a cure though last year I went back overseas and visited my mission, and some of the crummy places I lived. It was very cathartic and I made some new friends there who are exmos. No more scary mormon mission hell dreams.

Re: Not really severe PTSD but something similar

Posted by: **flash** ()

Date: February 08, 2016 06:38PM

I hear you Hending about the nightmares of being sent back on a mission.

When I went back to an area in Virginia where I was a missionary in the late 1970's, I felt a strange feeling to be in that area again, because, for a brief moment, I felt the familiar missionary depression and hopelessness start to well up inside me of having to go tracting all day. It surprised me that those feelings could still rise up after 20+ years.

However, those feelings were quickly crushed and swept away when reality came rushing back and I knew that I did not have to go and start knocking on the doors of the surrounding houses. I could leave at any time. I could eat at any time. I was not confined to a certain area. I had no weekly reports to fill out. I did not need the permission of some pinhead Zone Leader or MP to leave. I had my own car to drive away, I had money, and I was free from the toxic religion of Mormonism.

It was a very satisfying feeling being in that place as an exmo because I never felt more free of the Mormon Church than being in a place where it had chained me so tightly. Since then, the nightmare dreams never have come back.

Post Father Contacting Stress Syndrome

Posted by: **Hedning** ()

Date: February 09, 2016 12:25AM

One thing I hated on my mission was street contacting. This summer my wife was with me and we were looking for a restaurant, she said why don't you just ask somebody on the street just for an instant I was back in time and had this gnawing inside, not wanting to bother people with bullshit, afraid they would not understand me in the language etc etc, unhappy with the rude send off I was about to get..

Anyway I did ask, and the people were wonderful to me anytime I asked for directions ... they were so amazed that an American spoke their language and they were so friendly and helpful ... so much different than the reaction I got as Mormon Missionary scum.

Re: PTSD after serving a mission?

Posted by: **runrunrun** ()

Date: February 08, 2016 05:46PM

PTCS - Post Traumatic Church Syndrome.....

Re: PTSD after serving a mission?

Posted by: **scoates** ()

Date: May 18, 2018 06:31AM

Definitely got PTSD. Absolutely horrific. Messed me up for good.

I lost a son, since, and that trauma doesn't hold a candle to being trapped in a foreign country having every minute controlled for a month.

Re: PTSD after serving a mission?

Posted by: **logan** ()

Date: May 18, 2018 09:19AM

Sorry but if you are worried about your young adult grandchildren getting PTSD from being rejected you need to talk to their parents and see what went wrong when raising them.

Edited 1 time(s). Last edit at 05/18/2018 09:20AM by logan.

Re: PTSD after serving a mission?

Posted by: **beardedatBYU** ()

Date: May 18, 2018 09:25AM

I have mixed feelings about my mission experience during and since. After 24 years I still catch myself thinking of some experiences and occasionally have dreams where I have to go back, and those are terrifying.

Re: PTSD after serving a mission?

Posted by: **messygoop** ()

Date: May 18, 2018 01:14PM

After having a slew of terrible leaders in the church, bad mission experiences were par for the course of the Mormon experience. I was already used to being blamed for anything and everything that went wrong or could go wrong. By my third zone conference, I learned that it was "normal" to have your mission president berating missionaries for everything that they had little or no control over (but we were told that it was our unrighteousness that was impeding us from achieving greatness).

I don't think that I suffer from PTSD, but I have regular anxiety issues when dealing with people of authority.

Re: PTSD after serving a mission?

Posted by: **snowball** ()

Date: May 18, 2018 04:30PM

I had some residual feelings of guilt about not having done certain things as well as I might have. Of course, now I only wish I had been more disobedient and traveled to Munich just for kicks. One of my companions would have definitely been up for it.

Like others here, I've had a dream...er...nightmare about having to go on another mission despite the fact I no longer believed in Mormonism. But, I kind of thought it was funny afterward.

No PTSD, but other people have worse experiences. I just had a bunch of Germans telling me they didn't need what were selling.

Re: PTSD after serving a mission?

Posted by: **Aquarius123** ()

I don't suffer from PTSD, but did go through the usual mission crap like a couple of bike accidents, an amoeba (yeah that was fun), a mild earthquake, a monsoon, chased with brooms (ok that was funny because they missed! Lol) poophead mission presidents and poophead dl' s, etc. I still have nightmares of being on another mission and or being stuck in Asia with no way to get home.

Date: May 18, 2018 05:51PM

Re: PTSD after serving a mission?

Posted by: **smirkorama** ()

missions are fun !!!!

Date: May 18, 2018 06:10PM

Just ask Gordon BS HinckLIEy !!!!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vFSoyFUq2w0>

Re: PTSD after serving a mission?

Posted by: **Badassadam1** ()

I have PTSD of breaking under all the pressure and not serving a mission. To this day i wonder how my life would have went had i have gone.

Date: May 18, 2018 07:54PM

Re: PTSD after serving a mission?

Posted by: **Fng sparky** ()

Probably not any better, some MP Psycho, or partner
But at least out of Idaho and your Mormon family antagonists

Date: May 19, 2018 01:34AM