

Post-traumatic stress is not a military condition - it's a human condition

By Carol Kerr

Bob Delaney's story: Post-traumatic stress is not a military condition – it's a human condition



Bob Delaney speaks to The War College student body in the first of multiple activities

scheduled in September for the Army War College community to raise awareness about suicide prevention.

to view the presentation go here (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRpjvvExxIs&feature=share&list=UUODMO7nucY2A8-pfU8QeerA>)

Bob Delaney was excited to be an undercover cop. He was successful. He put mobsters behind bars and testified at a Congressional hearing about it. But when it was over, it wasn't over. Disappointment in the eyes of the criminal whose friendship and trust he'd betrayed, and a wiretap of mobsters talking about 'whacking' him triggered an emotional coaster ride.

Delaney, a former New Jersey state trooper, now speaks to military

audiences about the human response to trauma, basing his comments on his own post- trauma stress symptoms and how he learned to cope and continue through a NBA referee career.

“Everybody in 1978 wanted me to be the Robert Delaney they knew in 1975. They didn’t see me for three years while undercover. They didn’t see that I was a different Bobby Delaney,” he said.

His story is full of details that help those with post-traumatic stress recognize parallels with their own responses to their experiences. Watch the video of Delaney’s story, when he spoke to Army War College students here Aug. 29.

“You’re in the business of trauma,” he said to the military audience. “You see the rest of the world as others do not.”

Post traumatic stress is not what’s wrong with you – it’s about the wrong you experienced, he said, noting that the most common source of PTS is an automobile accident.

“If you’ve served, there’s a level of trauma and stress that came into your life,” he said, noting that law enforcement and military personnel are in high risk for experiencing trauma. “And, you need the tools to deal with the stress that will come.”

“While the Soldier is going through post-traumatic stress, the family is going through active traumatic stress,” he noted.

It’s the new normal: a normal reaction to abnormal circumstances, he said.

“If I think that I’m the only one going through it, by talking with someone else, I learn that I am not alone,” said Delaney, drawing from his experience. “It’s not the big bad thing under the bed.

He described it as letting the air out of the balloon, and relieving the pressure by taking the simple step of talking about experiences.

“The first one to talk to is yourself. Say it aloud to the mirror,” he recommended. “It can be done with painting or with song. It doesn’t require a clinical setting to help release and be more comfortable in Main Street USA than Main Street Kabul.

Delaney’s talk with The War College students and an evening presentation with families were the first elements of a month-long campaign to reset understanding throughout the military community of PTS and links to suicide, and the professional resources and personal interactions that can save a life.

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