

DO NOT FORGET THE ARMY'S MISSION

MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA

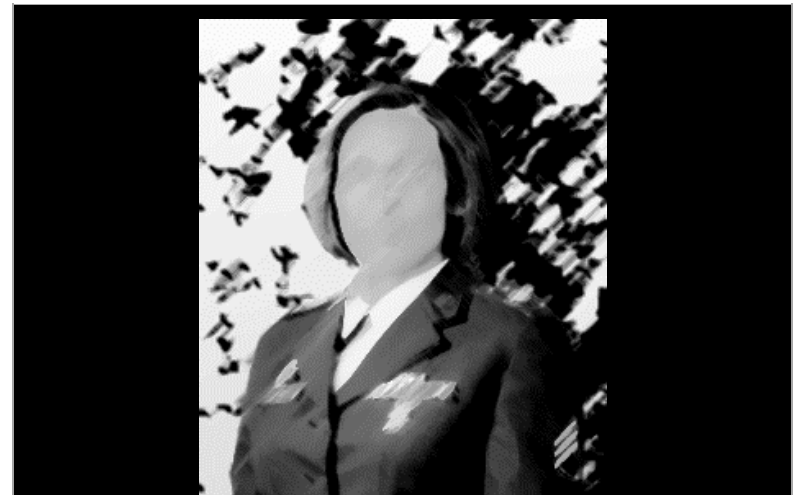
“To deploy, fight and win our nation’s wars by providing ready, prompt and sustained land dominance by Army forces across the full spectrum of conflict as part of the joint force.”



U.S. ARMY

Every Soldier needs to be in the fight. Any Soldier may be a survivor regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, or *rank*. As a leader, you can help them by know the resources available to your Soldiers and using a **humanistic approach** by providing **empathy**, **belief**, and **support** when engaging with these Soldiers will help them process the lasting effects they feel, utilize resources, and heal from their trauma.

An Army Leader's Guide to
Helping Soldiers who have
Survived MST



SHARP Program
Sexual Harassment / Assault Response & Prevention



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STRONG
INTERVIEW • ACT • MOTIVATE



U.S. Army SHARP & DoD Safe Helpline
Confidential. Anonymous. Available Worldwide.
<https://sexualassault.army.mil/>
<https://safehelpline.org/>

MILITARY SEXUAL ASSAULT: An Army Leader's Guide

SEXUAL ASSAULT IN THE ARMY

BY THE NUMBERS

- 23.6%, or almost 1 in 4, women in the military reports that they have been sexually assaulted during their time in service (Wilson, 2018). Military Sexual Trauma (MST) is more highly related to PTSD than combat exposure for women in the military (Lacks & Lamson, 2018; Dutra et al., 2011).
- 4 in 100 men report experiencing some form of MST while serving, 1.9% of men report being sexually assaulted and 8.9% of men report having been sexually harassed during their time in service (Wilson, 2018).
- The number of sexual assaults reported in the U.S. military increased by 9.7% between fiscal years 2016 and 2017 and increased 3% between fiscal years 2018 and 2019 (Department of Defense, 2018 & 2020).

INTERVENE. ACT. MOTIVATE.

"Leaders at all levels... must be visible and adaptable and display a sincere commitment in the fight against sexual harassment and sexual assault."

– U.S. Army Sexual Harassment & Assault Response/Prevention (SHARP)

A HUMANISTIC APPROACH IN TRAUMA RESEARCH

- A humanistic, or person-centered, approach was coined by Carl Rogers and focuses on the whole person while prioritizing the concept of **unconditional positive regard** (Schimmel, 2008)
- Provide opportunities, like support groups, that **normalize** experiences and provide hope for the future (Kress & Hoffman, 2008)
- Even though society is often contradictory by blaming the victim, values of **dignity** and **respect** are humanistic and should be readily given to survivors (Brocato & Wagner, 2003)
- A humanistic approach emphasizes empathetic listening and establishment of rapport which can facilitate natural coping and **processing** of trauma (Seely, 2007)
- Believing that **growth is possible** after a crisis or trauma is a critical element of the humanistic approach (Joseph, 2019)

A HUMANISTIC APPROACH

FOR ARMY LEADERS

If a Soldier confides in you...

- Tell the Soldier, "***I believe you,***" and listen to their story without interrupting.
- Remember, **no one chooses to be sexually assaulted**. Use affirming language, "*your story matters*" and "*your well-being is my priority,*" to prevent victim blaming.
- Listen to and **empathize** with the Soldier. Even if you have not had the same experience, walk with the Soldier in their journey, "*I am here for you, and we are going to figure this out together.*"
- Keep in mind the tenets of a trauma-informed approach: **safety, empowerment, choice, and collaboration**. "*Can we walk to the SARC's office together? I want to be here with you, and they will be able to get us to the right resources to ensure your safety and privacy.*"
- Help the Soldier create a **safety plan** with action steps and contact numbers in case they experience things such as overwhelming anxiety, sleeplessness, or suicidal ideations.
- Know the confidential, anonymous resources for the Soldier in their **search for meaning**.
 - DOD Safe Helpline: 877-955-5247 (available 24/7, call or text)
 - Your unit's Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC)
 - Chaplain's, Behavioral Health, and medical providers