

Who's most susceptible to PTSD?

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Franklin D. Roosevelt, the president who led the United States into the depths of total war and back out again, has a little-visited memorial on the far side of the Tidal Basin in Washington, D.C. It's private and reflective, like the man himself, and chiseled into the rough stone are these words, from a Chautauqua speech made three years before the German invasion of Poland: "I have seen war. I have seen war on land and sea. I have seen blood running from the wounded... I have seen the dead in the mud. I have seen cities destroyed... I have seen children starving. I have seen the agony of mothers and wives. I hate war."

The awful cost and calculus of war never changes, of course, but in the 60 years between Operation Overlord and Operation Iraqi Freedom, our understanding of the human brain, on and off the battlefield, has marched far ahead. Post-traumatic stress disorder—what Roosevelt would have known as "shell shock"—is now both a clinical term and a household one. A traumatic brain injury is understood to be as dangerous a wound as the kind that bleeds. Psychologists like Brett Litz of Boston University even speak of "moral injury"—an act of transgression that violates a soldier's ethical or religious code, and leaves its scar chiefly on the soul, rather than the body or the brain.

Read the whole story: [*Pacific Standard*](#)