

# DCoE in *Action*

Vol. 3/No. 8 | August 2010



*DCoE is working to encourage help-seeking behavior among service members with invisible wounds such as post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury with our Real Warriors Campaign. Reaching out is a sign of strength.*

## Maj. Ed Pulido Reaches Out for Help, Finds Strength to Carry On

This month, DCoE's [Real Warriors Campaign](#) launched a new profile featuring Maj. Ed Pulido, an Army veteran who experienced psychological health concerns following the amputation of one of his legs after a 2004 improvised explosive device (IED) explosion in Iraq. In his video profile, Pulido discusses the importance of reaching out for help for both the visible and invisible wounds of war. While

seeking care for his leg, Pulido underwent 17 surgeries, and eventually the decision was made to amputate.

Pulido slowly recovered physically after the amputation, but began experiencing depression and suicidal ideation.

"There were times when I was in that hospital where I thought to myself, 'Man, I don't know if I can go on like this,'"

said Pulido. "I felt like I wasn't the same person anymore, and I wondered, 'How will I be able to support my family?'"

"I actually thought about taking my life because I just felt like I was not strong enough and I was not a real warrior," added Pulido.

However, with the support of his family, his chaplain and fellow service members, Pulido was able to find the strength to reach out for the care he needed for his invisible wounds. He began talking about what he was experiencing.

"After reaching out for care, I began to change the way I approached my life physically and psychologically," said

*Continued on top of page 3*



Real Warriors Campaign volunteer Maj. Ed Pulido with his wife, Karen and daughters, Kaitlin (9) and Kinsley (4)  
Photo courtesy of Real Warriors Campaign



**DEFENSE CENTERS  
OF EXCELLENCE**

For Psychological Health  
& Traumatic Brain Injury

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## Welcome Message from COA Deputy Director



Dr. Lolita T. O'Donnell, deputy director, Clearinghouse, Outreach and Advocacy Directorate

I am honored to discuss the [DCoE Outreach Center](#), a resource that is available for service members, veterans and their families. As the deputy director of DCoE's Clearinghouse, Outreach and Advocacy Directorate, which oversees the 24/7 outreach center—Greetings!

Invisible wounds of war have unquestionably made the Department of Defense (DoD) increase its efforts to provide service members, veterans and

families with programs, resources and tools that support their needs. In this environment, it is critical to ensure confidential and easily-accessible support services and resources.

The DCoE Outreach Center provides comprehensive information, resources and tools for all psychological health and traumatic brain injury (TBI) concerns to anyone interested, particularly to those who need it most—warriors, veterans, families and health professionals. The center supports DCoE's efforts to advance quality care for service members and veterans experiencing invisible wounds, such as post-traumatic stress disorder.

The center is staffed by trained health resource consultants who understand the common stress reactions affecting today's warriors and military families. They are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to connect military personnel and family members to the appropriate resources.

As the only DoD call center dedicated to psychological health and TBI, the center also supports DCoE's [Real Warriors Campaign](#). Visitors to the campaign's website can access the DCoE Outreach Center's [live chat](#) feature that

immediately connects them with health consultants. The campaign encourages service members to seek care for psychological health and TBI by sharing stories of service members who have sought treatment and have continued to maintain successful military and civilian careers. In this edition, you will read about the latest campaign profile of Maj. Ed Pulido. I encourage you to visit the campaign's website at [www.realwarriors.net](http://www.realwarriors.net) to view additional profiles of our warriors and their families sharing success stories.

Early intervention is key in the recovery process, and the DCoE Outreach Center is a valuable tool to use.

Have a question? Contact the center toll-free by phone at 866-966-1020, e-mail [resources@dcoeoutreach.org](mailto:resources@dcoeoutreach.org) or use the [live chat](#) feature, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

I am proud to have the opportunity to serve those who courageously serve us. I encourage you to [share](#) your thoughts with DCoE about how to help our service members and their families.

Dr. Lolita T. O'Donnell, deputy director Clearinghouse, Outreach and Advocacy Directorate

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## Maj. Ed Pulido Reaches Out for Help, Finds Strength to Carry On

(continued from page 1)



Gen. David H. Petraeus presents Maj. Ed Pulido with the Purple Heart. | Photo courtesy of Real Warriors Campaign



Maj. Ed Pulido with Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric K. Shinseki at the 2010 DoD/VA Suicide Prevention Conference | Photo courtesy of Real Warriors Campaign

“After reaching out for care, I began to change the way I approached my life physically and psychologically.”

Pulido. “I began to see that my life wasn’t done, and that I could conquer my challenges.”

“As we shift to a culture focused on building resilience and improving the well-being of the force, we need to educate our service members, veterans and families on the available resources to achieve and sustain a healthy lifestyle,” said Col. Robert Saum, DCoE director. “By sharing his story, Maj. Pulido is providing the proof our warriors need to know that reaching out is a sign of strength and that resources work.”

Pulido encourages all service members and veterans to take advantage of

personal support systems and available resources.

“Not only can you use your support system through your church, but also through your family, through the Vet Centers, or just individuals who are your comrades that you served with,” he said. “It’s truly important that you have a support system.”


Pulido also continues to serve the military community as a veteran. Pulido is the vice president of Programs and Military Affairs for the [Folds of Honor Foundation](#), which provides post-secondary educational scholarships for children and spouses of military service men and women killed or disabled while serving.

“The Real Warriors Campaign website, [www.realwarriors.net](#), includes valuable tools and resources for service members, veterans and military families experiencing any stress as a result of deployment,” said Saum. “This includes a live chat feature that connects visitors

with health resource consultants specializing in psychological health and traumatic brain injury at the [DCoE Outreach Center](#) 24 hours a day, seven days a week.”

“I encourage all first line leaders and commanders to use the resources on [www.realwarriors.net](#) to inform service men and women, and military families that help is available, and that reaching out makes a difference,” said Pulido. “To achieve peak performance on the battlefield, our warriors must be physically, psychologically and spiritually fit.”

“By raising awareness through the Real Warriors Campaign, we are working to ensure that we leave no military service member and their family behind on the field of battle,” said Pulido.

To view Maj. Pulido’s full video profile and to access resources for service members, veterans and families, visit [www.realwarriors.net/multimedia](#). 

## Accessing Benefits for PTSD Easier than Ever

Reaching out for help is a sign of strength, and now easier than ever. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently announced it intends to provide faster processing for disability compensation for veterans who have experienced post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

"This nation has a solemn obligation to the men and women who have honorably served this country and suffer from the often-devastating emotional wounds of war," said VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki.

Requests for disability compensation, the tax-free benefit paid to veterans' with service-connected disabilities, will process faster for those who are coping with PTSD.

### How Does the New Rule Work?

Specifically, VA published a regulation which reduces the evidence needed for getting disability compensation if the trauma claimed by a veteran is related to "fear of hostile military or terrorist activity" and is consistent with the circumstances of the veteran's service.

Before this new rule, VA officials had to confirm the "stressor event" that a veteran reported experiencing, unless the veteran received certain military awards or served in certain occupations. This process often was time-consuming, delaying care for those in need of support.

The new rule no longer requires VA officials to confirm a stressor tied to fear of hostile activity, if a VA psychiatrist or psychologist can confirm that the experience

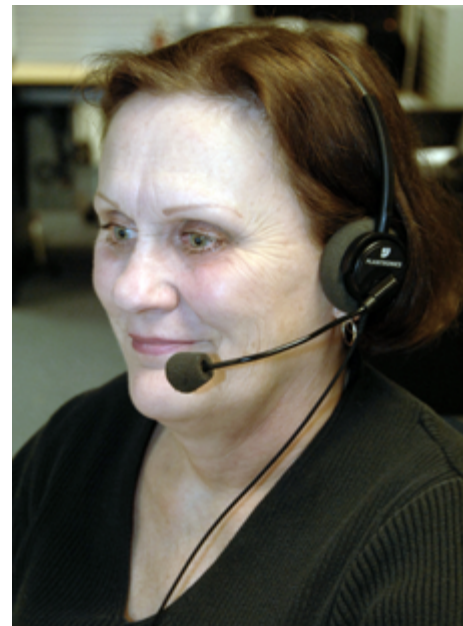


U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Lynette R. Hoke

recalled by a veteran supports a PTSD diagnosis, and the veteran's symptoms are related to the stressor. Additionally, the regulation eliminates the need to verify military records and will result in veteran's receiving care for PTSD in a timelier manner.

The new rule is particularly beneficial for:

- Veterans whose military records have been damaged or destroyed
- Veterans whose records don't specify deployment
- Veterans whose combat experience was long ago and who do not have the ability to recall the date. (Previously, knowing the approximate date was necessary for records search.)




U.S. Air Force photo by Nan Wylie

### Access Treatment Today

If you or someone you know is experiencing PTSD symptoms, help is available. PTSD is a common reaction to uncommon circumstances and can be treated.

There are three ways to reach a trained professional regarding PTSD:

1. Call or visit a local [VA Medical Center](#)
2. Call the VA's benefits information hotline at 800-827-1000
3. Contact a health resource consultant at the DCoE [Outreach Center](#) at 866-966-1020

Find additional information on VA PTSD care, benefits or claims [here](#). 

**The U.S. Senate recently passed a resolution designating June 27 as National Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Day. Read more [here](#).**

## Real Warriors Campaign Promotes Tools to Reinforce Psychological Strength

It is common for service members and military families to experience some psychological stress as a result of a deployment or other stressful event. Just as physical skills are a mandatory part of a warrior's training, learning skills that develop and improve one's psychological resilience is extremely important too. DCoE helps service members, veterans and their families build resilience so they can successfully adapt to overwhelming stress and extreme adversity.

Resilience is the ability to maintain mission readiness before, during and after stressful situations. Resilience improves a warrior's ability to "bounce back" from traumatic situations and also reduces initial impact and negative effects that stress can have on mind, body and spirit.

For service members and loved ones, resilience helps overcome the challenges that are often a part of military life. Those challenges range from dealing with deployments, repeated separations and a permanent change of station. Developing resilience allows warriors and family members to face situations with psychological strength

and is essential to sustain the demands of military life.

DCoE's [Real Warriors Campaign](#) provides five ways that service members, veterans and families can connect to resources that help to reinforce and improve an individual's psychological strength. See the campaign's helpful guide, *Five Tools that Reinforce Psychological Strength* below:

### 1) Call the DCoE Outreach Center

Reaching out for help is a sign of strength. If you or someone you know have questions or would like more information, don't hesitate to call one of the trained health resource consultants at the [DCoE Outreach Center](#). They are trained to understand the common stress reactions resulting from service and are always ready to talk, listen and provide confidential guidance. Call 866-966-1020 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

### 2) Log on to Real Warriors Live Chat

Wherever you are in the world, you can connect instantly with the DCoE Outreach Center by logging on to [www.realwarriors.net/livechat](http://www.realwarriors.net/livechat). Trained

health resource consultants are available around the clock to provide free, confidential guidance about recovery resources for you, a friend or a loved one. You can also contact the DCoE Outreach Center via e-mail at [resources@dcoeoutreach.org](mailto:resources@dcoeoutreach.org).

### 3) Watch Warriors Share Their Stories

Watch empowering videos of service members who had the courage to seek care for traumatic brain injury (TBI) or psychological concerns and are maintaining military and civilian careers. Remember to check [www.realwarriors.net/multimedia](http://www.realwarriors.net/multimedia) frequently for new videos profiling warriors who have returned to peak performance.


### 4) Share your Story on our Message Boards

Experiencing conditions related to stress or TBI is common in today's military. Interacting with others who have shared similar experiences can be a helpful part of returning to peak performance. Visit [www.realwarriors.net/forum](http://www.realwarriors.net/forum) to share your story and exchange tips with others.

### 5) Educate Yourself

If you or someone you know is preparing for, experiencing or returning from a deployment, the informative articles on the Real Warriors Campaign website will provide concrete tactics and tools for facing those challenges. There are articles highlighting those serving on active duty, members of the National Guard and Reserve, veterans, families and health professionals. Read the latest articles at: [www.realwarriors.net/featuredarticles](http://www.realwarriors.net/featuredarticles).

To obtain the brochure version of *Five Tools that Reinforce Psychological Strength*, click [here](#).

To order copies of the brochure, or to inquire about other Real Warriors Campaign materials, e-mail [dcoe.realwarriors@tma.osd.mil](mailto:dcoe.realwarriors@tma.osd.mil). 



U.S. Army photo

## DoD and DCoE Address Service-Related Stress

Dr. Jeff Cook, a *DCoE* psychologist, recently had the opportunity on the *Military Health System Blog* to discuss Department of Defense (DoD) and DCoE specific programs and resources addressing service-related stress. Below Dr. Cook explains ...

With the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, our nation's service members are often repeatedly called to duty in dangerous places and exposure to combat or stressful situations is a common reality. The DoD's scientific understanding of combat stress reactions has rapidly advanced to meet these new demands.

These advances have allowed the department to enhance and refine its efforts to minimize the adverse effects of combat exposure and provide cutting-edge assessment and treatment when service members develop reactions. DoD programs address stress-related conditions at all levels, including prevention, training, treatment and continued research.

In an effort to prevent the development of combat stress conditions, including

post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), select programs are aimed at building resilience against the potentially damaging effects of combat exposure. These programs seek to provide personnel with resources and tools to prevent the development of combat stress reactions and PTSD. Examples of Service-specific resilience efforts include:

- Marine Corps [Combat Operational Stress Control \(COSC\)](#) program
- Army [Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program](#), a resilience training program formerly known as Battlemind

Additional emphasis has been placed on education and training for providers who identify and treat stress reactions and PTSD. Several DCoE [component centers](#) are working directly to address this need, including:

- [Center for Deployment Psychology](#) provides training to military and government-employed psychological health providers in evidence-based interventions for PTSD.
- [Deployment Health Clinical Center](#) created a treatment model which enhances provider recognition and effective management of PTSD in primary care settings, called [RESPECT-Mil](#). Additionally, DHCC provides an intensive, three-week, evidence-based intervention program for providers that focuses on deployment-related stress conditions that includes multidisciplinary evaluation and treatment.

*Continued on top of page 7*

## Know the Symptoms Related to Combat Stress

### Cognitive

Concentration problems  
 Difficulty with memory  
 Re-experiencing events or flashbacks  
 Loss of trust

### Emotional

Unusual or excessive anxiety, fear or nervousness  
 Feeling overwhelmed  
 Feelings of isolation  
 Loss of interest or motivation  
 Depression, despair or unexplained sadness  
 Agitation and intense anger or irritability

### Physical

Problems sleeping  
 Fatigue  
 Numbness, tingling or loss of function in limbs or other body parts  
 Headaches  
 Changes in vision

Symptoms may develop immediately following a traumatic event or take several days or months. For symptoms that continue for weeks, months or become increasingly worse over time, contact the trained health resource consultants at the [DCoE Outreach Center](#) to get connected to helpful resources immediately.

Outreach Center

24/7



call  
866-966-1020

email  
[resources@dcoeoutreach.org](mailto:resources@dcoeoutreach.org)

chat  
[www.dcoe.health.mil/24-7help.aspx](http://www.dcoe.health.mil/24-7help.aspx)

## DoD and DCoE Address Service-Related Stress


(continued from page 6)

A major barrier to eliminating combat stress-related conditions is the reluctance to seek treatment for psychological health conditions. DCoE launched the [Real Warriors Campaign](#) in an effort to reduce the negative connotations of psychological health evaluation and treatment. The campaign encourages service members and veterans to get help early. By doing so, they can greatly reduce the

impact of combat stress on their careers, family and psychological health.

In addition to existing DoD programs, the [National Intrepid Center of Excellence \(NICoE\)](#) will provide state-of the art, comprehensive evaluation of service members with complex cases of PTSD, traumatic brain injuries or both. Besides being a center of excellence for holistic

evaluation and treatment planning, NICoE will also serve as a focal point for research and will guide the development of new best-practices for military medicine.

With heightened deployment and combat exposure rates, DoD encourages service members and health professionals to participate in a program to build warrior resilience and readiness. 

## Mindfulness: A New Practice that May Help our Troops

Last month, Dr. Monique Moore, a clinical research psychologist with DCoE, shared with [DoD Live](#) some of the research that the Department of Defense (DoD) and DCoE are pursuing in complementary and alternative medicine, to improve the psychological health of service members. Dr. Moore discusses ...

According to DoD data, psychological health concerns [caused more hospitalizations](#) among U.S. troops in 2009 than any other condition. DCoE is working to help minimize the psychological stress endured by troops to discover the best methods for becoming more resilient. We've recently begun investigating the practice of mindfulness as a technique to help our nation's warriors combat the effects of war.

During fiscal year 2008, DCoE directed \$5 million in funding for research on complementary and alternative medicine, or integrated health practices. This research shows potential value and promise in certain techniques and methods for helping warriors.

[Mindfulness](#), an example of an integrated practice, is a mental state in which one gives full attention to present-moment



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Kasey Zickmund

[Continued on top of page 8](#)

## Mindfulness: A New Practice that May Help our Troops

(continued from page 7)



U.S. Army photo by Master Sgt. Christina Bhatti



DoD photo

experience without judgment, elaboration or attachment. Mindfulness promotes a state of “cool and calm” that can be used to achieve greater situational awareness as well as greater self awareness.

DoD helped fund a recent [mindfulness training study](#) on U.S. Marines prior to their deployment. In the study, the Marines were provided with [Mindfulness-based Mind Fitness Training \(MMFT\)](#). The training integrated mindfulness exercises, at the root of which are attention-control and concentration, into their usual pre-deployment training. MMFT skills are intended to regulate body and mind symptoms following an experience of extreme stress. The findings of the study are in line with


previous research on mindfulness based stress reduction programs.

This study found that the more time Marines spent engaging in daily mindfulness exercises, the better their mood and working memory. Additionally, the study suggested that practicing mindfulness may facilitate optimal functioning in high-stress environments that require enormous amounts of self-awareness, cognitive control, situational awareness and emotional regulation.

Just as being physically fit and flexible helps protect against future physical injuries, so too does being psychologically fit help protect against war’s invisible wounds. Research suggests that one

can change their brain and the way he or she handles stress by doing specific mindfulness repetitive exercises.

DCoE will soon be publishing a “Psychological Fitness” paper in *Military Medicine* that addresses the findings of several mindfulness studies and their implications for helping our troops. Additionally, DCoE is researching a number of other mindfulness and yoga practices for regulating the autonomic nervous system.

Stay posted as we continue to research this area to determine the best treatments and exercises that help our service members. Find more about MMFT [here](#). 



## Communities Supporting Service Members, Veterans, Families



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jon Soucy



U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Donna T. Jeffries



U.S. Army photo by Stephenie Tatum

Recently, [First Lady Michelle Obama](#) and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff [Adm. Mike Mullen](#) have asked the nation to do even more to support the military community.

Each day presents us with an opportunity to reach out to service members, veterans and families. Through professional and social networks we have the ability to do great things not only as individuals but also as part of a greater collaborative effort. Reasons and motivations for providing support are numerous, but the common goal of giving back and making a difference in the lives of others allows us to show our gratitude to service members, veterans and families for their service and sacrifice.

We can work together to build relationships and support outreach efforts by volunteering our time and talents. Think of all the groups you are a part of—work, hobbies, faith-based, education, sports, civic, cultural and more.

Whether taking the time to provide resume and employment advice for transitioning warriors at Walter Reed or welcoming home returning troops at [Yellow Ribbon Program](#) events

throughout the nation, each act of compassion and kindness counts.

Real Warriors Campaign [partners](#) offer a variety of ways for community involvement. Many of the organizations specifically provide assistance to service members who have experienced post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury conditions. These not-for-profit organizations are committed to DCoE's mission and help reach out to service members, families, veterans and health care providers.

Below are a few of these organizations:


- The [Coming Home Project](#) is a non-profit organization devoted to providing compassionate expert care, support, education and stress management tools for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, service members, their families and their service providers through retreats, counseling and community events.
- [The Mission Continues](#) offers veterans and civilians a chance to make their own communities a better place by working together in service. Many of the service projects are done in honor of a fallen warrior.

- [Comfort for America's Uniformed Services \(Cause\)](#) provides recreation and entertainment programs that reach thousands of injured service men and women facing months of medical care and rehabilitation. Cause programs are run by volunteers who range in age from 15 to 70.

- [Soldiers' Angels](#) and their program, "Operation Outreach," allow people to say "thank you" to unsung hometown heroes by providing opportunities for people to volunteer and help support military families coping with a deployment.

Interested in getting involved? Visit [www.realwarriors.net/partner](http://www.realwarriors.net/partner) to learn more about this network of more than 100 partners and affiliates that includes military programs, national nonprofit organizations and local groups.

Perhaps the next time you support a cause or send a care package with words of encouragement, consider sharing information about a [DCoE resource](#) that could be useful during deployment.

Let us all strive to inspire others to support military communities through our efforts and contributions. 

## Tools You Can Use

Additional links are available at [www.dcoe.health.mil](http://www.dcoe.health.mil) under “Resources”

### Resources for Service Members and Families

#### Real Warriors Campaign

[www.realwarriors.net](http://www.realwarriors.net)

DCoE's Real Warriors Campaign combats the self imposed barriers associated with seeking treatment for psychological health and traumatic brain injury conditions through sharing [profiles](#) of real warriors who have sought help and are still maintaining successful military and civilian careers. The website also includes practical articles and resources for those serving on active duty, members of the National Guard and Reserve, veterans, families and health professionals.

#### DCoE Outreach Center

[www.dcoe.health.mil/24-7help.aspx](http://www.dcoe.health.mil/24-7help.aspx)

24/7 Help: 866-966-1020

The center is staffed with health resource consultants who provide comprehensive information, resources and tools about psychological health and traumatic brain injury concerns to military members, veterans, families, health professionals and civilians 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

### Resources for Health Professionals

#### Center for Deployment Psychology

[www.deploymentpsych.org](http://www.deploymentpsych.org)

A DCoE component center, CDP provides training to military and civilian psychological health professionals in evidence-based interventions to help the deployment-related psychological and behavioral health needs of military personnel and their families. Check out upcoming training events [here](#).

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#### Save the Date

##### DCoE's Monthly Webinar

August 26, 2010 / 1300–1430 EST

[Reintegration Programs: Case Studies of Successful State Reintegration Programs](#)

In partnership with: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration ([SAMHSA](#))

To register for this event, e-mail us at: [DCoE.MonthlyWebinar@tma.osd.mil](mailto:DCoE.MonthlyWebinar@tma.osd.mil)

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U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Mark Olsen



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Bennie J. Davis III



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Angela B. Malek

Please email us your comments and story ideas to [dcoemedia@tma.osd.mil](mailto:dcoemedia@tma.osd.mil).

*DCoE In Action* is a publication of the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE). Our mailing address is 2345 Crystal Drive, Crystal Park 4, Suite 120, Arlington, Virginia 22202. Phone: (877) 291-3263.

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