

# Alberta Municipal Supervisor Association

November 17, 2015

# Jeffrey Yetman

- Born 1973 in St. John's, Newfoundland
- Joined the army at the age of 16
- Deployed to Croatia in 1993 at the age of 18
- Deployed to Bosnia in 1998
- Served in the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery and in the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
- Diagnosed with PTSD in 2002
- Deployed twice to Afghanistan in 2008 and 2011

# Topics That I Will Cover Are:

- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
  - Definition
  - Signs and symptoms
- Service Dogs

22

# Traumatic Events

- War
- Natural Disasters
- Vehicle Crashes
- **Terrorist Attacks**
- Sudden Death of a loved one
- ... the list goes on
- Any event that traumatizes any particular person

(There's no hard fast rule as to what constitutes a traumatic event)

# Definition

- A mental health condition triggered by a terrifying event either through experience or witnessing.
- **A normal reaction to an abnormal situation.**

# Signs and Symptoms

- Re-experiencing Traumatic Events
  - Upsetting memories of a past event
  - Nightmares
  - Intense physical reactions (pounding heart, vomiting, sweating)
- Avoidance
  - Avoiding activities, places, and thoughts that remind you of the trauma
  - Loss of memory in regard to the trauma
  - Loss of interest in life itself
  - Detachment
  - Limited future (Can not see yourself living beyond a predetermined amount of time)
- Increased Anxiety
  - Difficulties sleeping
  - Irritability and anger
  - Concentration issue
  - Hyper-vigilance (always on high alert)

# Signs and Symptoms (cont.)

- Other common symptoms
  - Guilt and shame
  - Substance abuse
  - Depression
  - Suicidal thoughts

As supervisors, you must endeavor to know the people that work for you. This will aid you greatly in noticing these symptoms in those people.

In my experience, PTSD usually manifests itself in the three highlighted symptoms.



# Mental First Aid

- This will allow you, as supervisors, to:
  - Recognize the signs and symptoms of PTSD
  - Provide initial help
  - Guide a person to appropriate professional help
- MFA aims are:
  - Preserve life when a person may be in danger to himself or others
  - Prevention
  - Promotion of recovery
  - Provide comfort

**The best way to provide this is to observe and be prepared to talk to the individual and most importantly, listen.**

**A lot of times, it will be another coworker that notices these symptoms and brings it to your attention. Tact is critical at this point, as you don't want to seem judgmental or threatening to the person suffering.**

- **IF YOU CAN'T FIND A GOOD  
PERSON.....BE ONE**

# Service Dogs

- Meet Diego, he is my service dog.



# Service Dogs (cont.)

- Service dogs are dogs individually trained to work and perform tasks for a person. They include:
  - Visual impairment
  - Hearing impairment
  - **Mental health disorders**

Most people immediately equate service dogs to being blind. This is not the case. Mental health service dogs provide the needed companionship and stability to a person whom may not have those things in his/her daily life.

# Identification of Service Dogs

- Service dogs are generally identified by a vest or harness worn on the animal.
  - This vest is merely to show other people that the animal is a trained and certified service animal.
  - On these vests you will generally see patches indicating not to touch, talk to, or disturb the animal in any other way.
  - The service dog handler will generally have his or her own guidelines regarding petting or touching the animal.
  - Disregarding these patches or the handlers wishes may result in the animal being unduly distracted and therefore not as effective for the handler.

# Access for Service Dogs

- At this time, there is no national policy regarding service dogs.
- Every province has their own provincial service dog act <http://humanservices.alberta.ca/disability-services/service-dogs.html>
- Currently, a national service dog strategy is being developed through the federal government. The government is engaging experienced service dog handlers and trainers in order to provide and facilitate a national service dog act that works for everybody.

<http://www.woundedwarriorsweekend.org/>





# MENTAL HEALTH CONTACTS

- Mental Health Helpline
- Offers help for mental health concerns for Albertans.
- 1-877-303-2642 24 Hours
- [http://calgary.cmha.ca/mental\\_health/crisis-services/](http://calgary.cmha.ca/mental_health/crisis-services/)
- 403-266-HELP (4357).



# Conclusion

- In closing, 22 suicides by veterans and first responders are 22 too many.
- By staying engaged with those around us, we are best suited and able to recognize when someone around us is struggling with mental health.
- **Buddy checks**
  - These can be done just by talking to your friends and coworkers.
  - The benefits to this are great.
  - It allows both the person inquiring and the person struggling to talk/text/phone to ensure that nobody suffers in silence.

# Conclusion (cont.)

- I would like to thank you all for inviting Diego and myself here today to talk to you guys on what I believe is one of the most pressing issues in today's society. Together we have the power to change that 22 to 0. It will not happen overnight, but through education and compassion we will get there. Thank you.