

## Guidance for researchers interviewing those potentially suffering with PTSD

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## **Guidance for researchers interviewing those potentially suffering with PTSD**

Dr Katherine Albertson, Sheffield Hallam University June 2015

These recommendations are based on the clinical and research experience of a leading Clinical Psychology lecturer who has worked at the King's Centre for Military Health Research and the guidance from Combat stress when conducting research with this client group:

1. Be clear the focus of the interview is not to discuss the past / difficult memories- but capture basic information for base line data collection regarding interaction with the Right Turn project and the extent to which this has been beneficial.
2. Do not ask directly about difficult memories / trauma experiences.
3. If participants do begin to talk about trauma memories, move on to another topic with the rationale that it may not be helpful to talk about the past and recommend respondents speak to their project leader regarding accessing available counselling services (signposted in the de-brief sheet).
4. Indications of un-diagnosed PTSD may include: reporting very poor sleep; high levels of near constant anxiety/anger; and being pre-occupied with memories from the past, but also trying to block these out.
5. For respondents that become distressed during interviews, use simple emotional regulation strategies:

These may include using grounding objects. Patients with PTSD often experience intrusive memories of trauma memories that can make them feel they are re-experience memories as if they are happening again. Grounding objects are things that can be used to trigger sensory information to bring patients back to the present. For example, essential oils or strong tasting things (extra-strong mints work well- you will find a tube in your research pack) and stress balls. Other emotional regulation strategies may include controlled breathing (breathing out for longer than we breathe in. So getting a respondent to breathe out for 3 seconds and in for 2 seconds to allow this to disperse CO<sub>2</sub> and take in oxygen).

6. Ensure you go through the de-brief sheet at the end of the interview- highlighting the additional sources of support available post interview. Also ensure they are made aware that you will be expressing your concerns to the project site lead- gently reminding they agreed - via the consent form they signed.

7. Speak to both the site project lead and Research Lead about your concerns post interview- this will ensure respondents are signposted to the support they require.