



# **Sex after Service: A Guide for Military Service Members, Veterans, and the People Who Love Them**

*Drew A. Helmer*

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Military service members and veterans are perhaps particularly vulnerable to sexual dysfunction given some common experiences in the military and during combat deployments. Deployment to a combat theater is an inherently stressful experience, made worse with actual combat exposure and other physical and psychological hardships and trauma. This in turn contributes to higher rates of physical damage (including traumatic brain injury and amputations), post-traumatic stress disorder, and unhealthy coping mechanisms (alcohol and substance abuse). Medications commonly prescribed to treat or manage these conditions can also contribute to sexual dysfunction. Perhaps worst of all, the most intense period of experiencing these complications is likely to occur in the service member's or veteran's 20s and early 30s, the life stage at which most Americans are dating, selecting a partner, and creating a family. Sexual dysfunction can have significant impacts on all of those important activities.

This book serves as an authoritative resource for military service members, veterans, and those who love them, on all manner of sexual health issues. Starting with an introduction to the basic concepts of sexual health, Helmer then goes on to discuss the effects of combat on overall health, sexual health and function, and differences in those effects on men and women. Including Veterans' stories throughout, the book illustrates some of the challenges and complex situations empathically and in nonjudgmental terms. While many service members join and experience combat before the age of 30, the author also considers the effects of aging and life stage on sexual health and function in military personnel. Finally, Helmer clearly articulates a process for determining if there is a sexual health issue that rises to the level of a problem and what can be done about it. This is handled with a positive, hopeful tone and general, yet effective, suggestions on where and how to seek assistance.

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