

Military Sexual Trauma

00:12.720 --> 00:14.020

Greetings.

Fearless listeners.

00:14.020 --> 00:16.550

This is Wendy Fahlgren.

The host of She Wears the Boots.

00:16.630 --> 00:21.770

Today's topic is about military sexual trauma
and I'll be speaking with Dr Amy Street and Dr

00:21.770 --> 00:25.440

Jessica Keith. Before we learn more about
military sexual trauma

00:25.450 --> 00:30.065

Let's learn about our guests.

Welcome Dr Amy Street and Dr Jessica Keith.

00:30.075 --> 00:34.265

I'm so excited to be speaking with you today.

Can you please share a little bit about?

00:34.275 --> 00:39.135

Military Sexual Trauma

yourself with our listeners?

And we'll start with Amy ST Hi Wendy and thanks

00:39.135 --> 00:42.845

so much for having us on to talk about this
really important topic.

00:42.965 --> 00:47.485

I'm Dr Amy Street.

Please call me Amy I use she, her pronouns.

00:47.545 --> 00:52.565

I'm a clinical psychologist and I live in
Boston Massachusetts and work for the V.

00:52.565 --> 00:53.775

A.

Medical center here.

00:53.990 --> 00:57.640

I work in the women's Health sciences division
of the National Center for PTSD.

00:57.650 --> 01:02.720

Our division focuses on issues of women trauma

Military Sexual Trauma

and post-traumatic stress disorder.

01:02.730 --> 01:07.080

You'll probably hear me call it PTSD.

It's a common abbreviation.

01:07.090 --> 01:12.030

Our division is particularly interested in issues around the impact of military service on

01:12.030 --> 01:17.140

women and one of my favorite things that I've done is leading the team that developed beyond

01:17.140 --> 01:21.690

MST, which is a self-help mobile app.

It's designed especially for people who have

01:21.690 --> 01:26.535

experienced military sexual trauma and Hi Wendy.

I'm Dr Jessica Keith.

01:26.545 --> 01:33.245

I identify as she please, call me Jessica.

I am also a clinical psychologist and I'm the

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01:33.245 --> 01:39.125

clinical programs and practices lead for VA's national military sexual trauma support team.

01:39.135 --> 01:45.175

We help to promote MST related best practices in the Veterans Health Administration to ensure

01:45.185 --> 01:50.205

all survivors of military sexual trauma can access and receive outstanding care.

01:50.470 --> 01:52.800

In addition to my work with the MST Support team.

01:52.800 --> 01:58.020

I provide therapy directly to veterans who experienced military sexual trauma and my local

01:58.020 --> 02:03.620

VA here in the Tampa Bay area of Florida.

And I'm so pleased to be able to talk with you

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02:03.620 --> 02:06.810

today about this important topic.

Thank you for the opportunity.

02:06.900 --> 02:10.770

Absolutely.

The other question we like to ask is why do you

02:10.770 --> 02:14.440

do what you do and why do you enjoy working
with individuals who have served in the

02:14.440 --> 02:16.900

military?

And this time, let's start with Amy.

02:17.070 --> 02:21.860

I've always been a strong advocate for women
who have experienced interpersonal violence.

02:21.860 --> 02:25.480

I felt that in my personal life and in my
professional life,

02:25.490 --> 02:31.970

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I think it's because violence unfortunately touches so many women's lives and much of my

02:31.970 --> 02:35.780

work is focused on experiences of military sexual trauma in particular.

02:35.790 --> 02:42.280

I think I just feel compelled to support anyone who experienced sexual trauma while in service

02:42.280 --> 02:45.600

to our country.

I think probably because that experience

02:45.600 --> 02:51.030

represents just such an egregious wrong.

It's a thing that absolutely should not happen

02:51.030 --> 02:55.630

in our military and I want to do everything I can to support those who survived military

02:55.630 --> 02:59.170

sexual trauma, help them find their right path

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to recovery.

02:59.180 --> 03:03.030

And how about you, Jessica?

I love that question Wendy.

03:03.040 --> 03:06.120

Um because like many here at VA.

03:06.340 --> 03:10.990

Um I come to this work with a commitment that stems from my own life and experiences.

03:11.000 --> 03:15.210

Um and that includes the close relationship I had with my grandmother.

03:15.220 --> 03:19.640

She served in the Army during World War II as a Morse Code Instructor.

03:19.640 --> 03:22.440

When there were not a lot of women doing that.

03:22.680 --> 03:29.150

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I learned so much from her and always admired her strength to serve even against adversity.

03:29.160 --> 03:34.380

I chose to work with veterans like her and I'm so honored to be able to support women who

03:34.380 --> 03:38.150

experienced military sexual trauma to find healing. Yes.

03:38.150 --> 03:39.420

Thank you for that Jessica.

03:40.280 --> 03:44.490

Okay, so like I said today, we're going to be talking about military sexual trauma.

03:44.500 --> 03:50.850

And I'd like to start off very broadly by talking about what is military sexual

03:50.850 --> 03:55.150

trauma. Sure.

Wendy some military sexual trauma or M.

Military Sexual Trauma

03:55.150 --> 03:59.110

S. T.

As it's also known is the term that via uses to

03:59.110 --> 04:05.030

refer to sexual assault or threatening sexual harassment that occurred during a person's

04:05.030 --> 04:06.190

military service.

04:06.850 --> 04:12.100

So this includes any sexual activity during military service in which a person is involved

04:12.100 --> 04:15.330

against their will or when they're unable to say no.

04:15.370 --> 04:21.140

For example, being physically forced to have sex or sexual contact without consent.

04:21.140 --> 04:27.500

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Like if you're asleep or intoxicated.

Other examples of MST include being touched in

04:27.500 --> 04:33.230

a sexual way that made you uncomfortable,
unwanted sexual advances and comments about

04:33.230 --> 04:37.550

your body or sexual activities that you found
threatening MST can also include being

04:37.550 --> 04:42.240

pressured or coerced into sexual activity, like
with threats of negative treatment if you

04:42.240 --> 04:45.690

refuse to cooperate or promises a better
treatment if you comply.

04:45.700 --> 04:48.980

And I really want to emphasize that in any of
these circumstances,

04:48.990 --> 04:54.650

compliance with sexual activities does not mean

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that the person consented to them Jessica for

04:54.650 --> 04:59.260

the experience to be considered. MST.

Does the perpetrator need to be another service

04:59.260 --> 05:01.150

member?

That's a good question.

05:01.150 --> 05:03.220

Wendy and no.

They don't.

05:03.230 --> 05:06.480

No matter who the perpetrator is a fellow
service member,

05:06.480 --> 05:10.920

a civilian, a stranger or romantic partner or
even a spouse.

05:10.930 --> 05:15.590

It's still MST.

Also, regardless of why the sexual harassment

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05:15.590 --> 05:20.430

or assault occurred, like if it was part of a hazing or an initiation ritual,

05:20.440 --> 05:25.470

it's still MST and its MST, regardless of whether it occurred on or off base or while the

05:25.470 --> 05:30.380

service member was on or off duty, Jessica.
Can you tell us who experiences?

05:30.380 --> 05:35.080

MST. Sure.

The short answer is any military service member

05:35.080 --> 05:39.320

can experience MST.

We know that people don't often talk about

05:39.320 --> 05:45.260

sexual assault or sexual harassment for many, many reasons and some MST survivors may think

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05:45.260 --> 05:50.340

that only wants to have experienced it.

So I really want to emphasize to all MST

05:50.340 --> 05:52.440

survivors that you're not alone.

05:52.760 --> 05:57.840

People of all genders, ages, sexual orientations, racial and ethnic backgrounds,

05:57.840 --> 06:03.860

physical sizes and abilities and ranks branches and errors of service have experienced MST.

06:03.940 --> 06:10.610

In fact, via a universal MST screening program finds that about one in three women as well as

06:10.610 --> 06:16.850

one in 50 men respond yes, that they experienced MST when they're asked about it by

06:16.850 --> 06:18.340

their V.

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A healthcare provider.

06:18.760 --> 06:23.160

And this means that there are significant numbers of both women and men who have

06:23.160 --> 06:29.070

experienced MST, Jessica are some veterans more likely than others to experienced military

06:29.070 --> 06:33.860

sexual trauma.

Unfortunately, yes, so I mentioned right that

06:33.860 --> 06:35.870

people of all genders and backgrounds experience M.

06:35.870 --> 06:39.860

S. T.

However, women who serve in the military in

06:39.860 --> 06:43.260

particular are more likely to experience it compared to men,

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06:43.270 --> 06:48.730

women are also more likely to experience multiple instances of MST and more likely to

06:48.730 --> 06:52.200

experience M. S. T.
That occurs along with sexism.

06:52.210 --> 06:58.260

As I'm sure many of your listeners know women in the military can face really significant

06:58.260 --> 07:02.900

pressure to prove their strength and power in a traditionally male dominated environ.

07:03.403 --> 07:08.003

And the experience of MST can then further increased stress related to gender roles in the

07:08.003 --> 07:14.723

military and lead a survivor to blame herself or attempt to downplay the impact of the MST or

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07:14.733 --> 07:18.813

even to choose to leave military service early.

There are some other groups that are at higher

07:18.813 --> 07:23.473

risk to that I want to mention.

For example, a recent survey of transgender

07:23.473 --> 07:29.406

veterans found that about 30% of transgender men who served as women in the military said

07:29.406 --> 07:34.656

that they had been sexually assaulted during their service data also suggests that lesbian,

07:34.656 --> 07:40.036

gay and bisexual women are approximately twice as likely to experience sexual assault in the

07:40.036 --> 07:44.526

military compared to heterosexual women.

And these individuals may also receive less

07:44.526 --> 07:49.966

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support following the experience of MST
especially during times they needed to hide

07:49.966 --> 07:54.926

their sexual identity within the military
context, as was the case for many years.

07:55.236 --> 07:58.776

These are really unfortunate things to to hear
about.

07:59.090 --> 08:03.680

I'm curious what are the impacts of military
sexual trauma on our veterans?

08:03.690 --> 08:08.390

Yeah, I'm glad you asked.

That's an important question.

08:08.400 --> 08:14.120

So to start, I always like to highlight that
there's no one way that people respond to

08:14.120 --> 08:18.710

experiences of MST veterans are diverse and

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their responses to M.

08:18.710 --> 08:21.670

S. T. are too

To that said M. S. T.

08:21.670 --> 08:27.170

As an interpersonal trauma that involves a profound violation of one's boundaries and

08:27.180 --> 08:31.620

bodily integrity can have a really significant impact on a person's understanding of

08:31.620 --> 08:34.760

themselves and on their current and future relationships.

08:34.770 --> 08:38.580

So keep in mind that those who perpetrate MST are often um like I said,

08:38.580 --> 08:42.890

a friend, an intimate partner, a fellow service member in arms who is supposed to be looking

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08:42.890 --> 08:47.925

out for them or another trusted individual and then to add to that survivors who choose to

08:47.925 --> 08:53.445

disclose that they experienced MST to others unfortunately often encounter negative

08:53.445 --> 08:58.575

reactions, including comments that blame them all of us can have a really significant impact

08:58.575 --> 09:00.985

on a person's healing journey.

For example,

09:00.985 --> 09:05.855

many MST survivors internalize these blaming messages and as a result,

09:05.865 --> 09:10.045

struggle with feelings of shame, self-blame and low self-esteem.

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09:10.055 --> 09:15.240

Many struggle also with difficulty trusting others and feeling safe in the world and then

09:15.240 --> 09:20.420

this can contribute to readjustment issues and disruptions in core areas of functioning and

09:20.420 --> 09:23.800

wellbeing like relationships and employment and for some people,

09:23.800 --> 09:27.050

experiences of MST can also affect their mental and physical health.

09:27.060 --> 09:32.850

Even many years later, research consistently finds that experiencing MST is associated also

09:32.850 --> 09:38.590

with an overall increased risk of suicide, so that's very important to keep in mind.

09:38.600 --> 09:45.540

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And I also want to emphasize that people are remarkably resilient after experiencing

09:45.540 --> 09:50.320

trauma in general, and this certainly holds for MST survivors too,

09:50.640 --> 09:54.140

and I think it's really important to honor their resilience,

09:54.150 --> 09:57.120

however, they're feeling and coping.

So I'm curious,

09:57.120 --> 10:01.140

you mentioned that MST can impact mental and physical health.

10:01.150 --> 10:06.430

Are there some conditions that are more often diagnosed among women who experienced MST?

10:06.440 --> 10:10.820

Yes, there are.

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And I like how you ask that question to Wendy,

10:10.830 --> 10:15.510

you know, sometimes people think that MST
itself is a diagnosis like post traumatic

10:15.510 --> 10:19.160

stress disorder.

PTSD, it's not M. S. T.

10:19.160 --> 10:23.670

Is an experience that someone goes through that
said, like you asked,

10:23.670 --> 10:28.370

many MST survivors do have a mental or physical
health condition related to their experience of

10:28.370 --> 10:32.670

MST.

And PTSD is indeed the most common mental

10:32.670 --> 10:36.170

health diagnosis associated with M. S. T.

In fact,

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10:36.170 --> 10:40.060

studies have found that women veterans who experienced MST maybe now nine times more

10:40.060 --> 10:44.550

likely to develop PTSD compared to women veterans who didn't experience MST.

10:44.560 --> 10:48.540

Some other mental health conditions we see among those who experienced MST include

10:48.540 --> 10:52.040

depression, anxiety and substance use difficulties among others.

10:52.050 --> 10:55.790

And then there are also physical health issues that are more likely to occur in in women who

10:55.790 --> 10:59.840

experienced MST.

These include chronic pain,

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10:59.850 --> 11:05.020

gastrointestinal distress, liver disease,
chronic pulmonary disease,

11:05.270 --> 11:10.600

obesity or weight loss, hypothyroidism and
sexual functioning concerns.

11:11.370 --> 11:16.970

And these physical health difficulties could be
due to injuries sustained during the trauma or

11:16.970 --> 11:21.810

related to the impact of living with chronic
stress following trauma and trying to cope with

11:21.810 --> 11:24.500

that stress.

You can probably hear how a terrible

11:24.500 --> 11:28.630

interpersonal trauma like MST really can impact
so much.

11:29.810 --> 11:33.430

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So tell us what does the VA.

Do to help our veterans who have experienced

11:33.430 --> 11:37.690

military sexual trauma.

Yeah, thank you for asking that because some

11:37.690 --> 11:42.450

survivors might not know what via services are available to them or how to access these.

11:42.830 --> 11:47.910

So, I want to emphasize here that free confidential treatment for any condition

11:47.910 --> 11:52.550

related to experiences of MST is available at all via healthcare systems.

11:52.560 --> 11:58.090

MST survivors may even be able to receive this care if they're not eligible for any other via

11:58.090 --> 12:03.230

services you don't need to have reported the

Military Sexual Trauma

MST when it happened or have documentation that

12:03.230 --> 12:06.476

it occurred and they, a number of ways to access this via care.

12:06.476 --> 12:10.246

Probably the most important to know about is that every V.

12:10.246 --> 12:12.736

A.

Healthcare system has an MST coordinator.

12:12.736 --> 12:18.996

That's a point person whose main role is to assist people in accessing MST related services.

12:19.006 --> 12:23.416

You can connect with your local MST coordinator directly by calling your closest V.

12:23.416 --> 12:25.590

A medical center and asking to speak to.

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12:25.802 --> 12:31.152

Or you can also find a list through our website
and that's mental health dot V A dot gov slash

12:31.162 --> 12:34.832

MST. Jessica.

Can you talk with us about the different types

12:34.842 --> 12:38.492

of treatment offered by the V. A.

For MST survivors?

12:38.612 --> 12:40.942

Absolutely.

Wendy VA.

12:40.952 --> 12:46.112

Supports many paths to healing and the services
we offer our individualized and recovery

12:46.112 --> 12:50.580

oriented depending on someone's needs and their
preferences.

12:50.590 --> 12:55.030

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Treatment might involve addressing immediate health and safety concerns.

12:55.040 --> 12:59.890

Learning more about how MST affects people, focusing on strategies for coping with

12:59.900 --> 13:04.160

distressing emotions or for those who choose to do so,

13:04.170 --> 13:08.885

talking more about their memories of the MST experience with a compassionate professional

13:08.895 --> 13:13.245

for people who have mental health diagnoses like PTSD or depression related to their

13:13.245 --> 13:18.155

experience of. M. S. T. V. A.

Offers effective evidence-based therapies and

13:18.155 --> 13:23.045

services like peer support, chaplaincy and

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whole health interventions are also offered as

13:23.045 --> 13:27.505

well as treatment for any physical health condition that's related to the MST experience.

13:28.970 --> 13:32.360

And I do want to highlight the MST related services are available at every V.

13:32.360 --> 13:35.780

A.

Medical center and also MST related counseling

13:35.780 --> 13:39.990

is available at all of Vienna's community based vet centers via also has M.

13:39.990 --> 13:42.560

S. T.

Related care in residential or inpatient

13:42.560 --> 13:45.500

settings for those who need more intensive treatment and support.

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13:45.510 --> 13:49.280

And for any of this treatment.

MST survivors can ask to meet with a clinician

13:49.280 --> 13:52.190

of a particular gender if it would help them
feel more comfortable.

13:52.200 --> 13:56.770

We know that many women, veterans, for example,
might prefer to work with a female provider

13:56.770 --> 14:00.270

understandably and finally.

I also want to give a shout out to our great

14:00.270 --> 14:04.370

new self-help mobile app.

And that's beyond MST Jessica,

14:04.380 --> 14:08.640

thank you for mentioning that beyond MST app.

Amy, you spoke about being one of the

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14:08.640 --> 14:12.270

developers of the app.

Can you tell me what the app is for?

14:12.280 --> 14:16.650

Yeah, I'm happy to do that.

And Jessica, thank you for the shout out.

14:16.660 --> 14:21.010

So beyond MST.

It's a self-help mobile app and it's created

14:21.020 --> 14:26.300

specially to support the health and well being
of those who've experienced MST.

14:26.810 --> 14:33.410

The app is not focused on any specific mental
health diagnosis or any one specific issue.

14:33.420 --> 14:39.670

Instead, we designed it to focus on a range of
challenges that MST survivors might experience.

14:39.680 --> 14:45.830

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And we designed it to be appropriate for survivors from all backgrounds,

14:45.840 --> 14:49.870

all gender identities and at all stages of recovery.

14:50.070 --> 14:53.580

We felt like this was pretty important because it's just convention people from all

14:53.580 --> 14:56.330

backgrounds and gender identities can experience MST.

14:56.330 --> 14:59.450

So, we wanted it to be relevant to everyone. Wonderful.

14:59.460 --> 15:03.050

So what might our women find appealing about the app,

15:03.060 --> 15:09.550

even though our app isn't just for women.

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I do think that mobile mental health apps might

15:09.550 --> 15:14.110

be particularly appealing for women.

One of things I know from my own clinical

15:14.110 --> 15:20.195

practice in my own life is that women are often
so busy juggling so many

15:20.195 --> 15:26.325

responsibilities and life demands and so it can
be hard for us to prioritize making time to

15:26.325 --> 15:30.505

take care of ourselves.

And one really nice thing about a mobile app is

15:30.505 --> 15:35.125

that it's always there when we need it in the
middle of the night on the weekends,

15:35.135 --> 15:38.655

whenever we happen to have a few minutes to be
able to focus on ourselves,

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15:39.050 --> 15:44.920

it's kind of a way of finding support and resources without having to make an appointment,

15:44.930 --> 15:50.990

without having to commute in traffic, without having to take time off of work or find someone

15:50.990 --> 15:53.570

to cover our caregiving responsibilities.

15:53.960 --> 16:00.490

So I don't think apps can be or should be a replacement for formal mental health

16:00.490 --> 16:03.700

care.

But I do think they can be really great tools

16:03.700 --> 16:07.220

for getting some additional support right, when you need it.

16:07.230 --> 16:12.380

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Amy, how was the app developed?

Well, the team who developed the app included

16:12.390 --> 16:19.190

experts at VH National Center for PTSD and also
via a national Military sexual

16:19.190 --> 16:25.990

trauma support team and we also developed it
with a ton of input from MST survivors

16:26.000 --> 16:31.270

and also from professionals who have a lot of
expertise and experience working with MST

16:31.270 --> 16:33.840

survivors and supporting them in their recovery.

16:34.450 --> 16:40.640

We went through this very long, very extended
process of getting a lot of that input and we

16:40.640 --> 16:45.040

did that because we wanted to get it right.

We wanted to make sure we were focusing on the

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16:45.040 --> 16:49.640

issues that felt the most relevant for those who experienced MST.

16:49.650 --> 16:53.760

And there's a lot in the app.

I don't think everything in the app will be

16:53.760 --> 16:59.370

relevant for every person, but I do hope that every person can find a few things in the app,

16:59.370 --> 17:02.500

at least that are a good fit for them.

17:02.760 --> 17:06.830

How does the app work?

Let's say I've downloaded it and I've opened it.

17:06.840 --> 17:09.700

What's next?

Well, the first thing that you see when you

17:09.700 --> 17:15.990

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open it is the homepage of the app and this is something actually that I really love every day.

17:15.990 --> 17:22.450

The homepage of the app gives you some new piece of information that kind of helps keep us

17:22.450 --> 17:28.040

focused on our recovery and our wellbeing.

So it might be an inspirational quote that's

17:28.040 --> 17:32.990

relevant to recovering following sexual trauma.

Or it might be a recommendation to try

17:32.990 --> 17:35.920

something specific in the app that you've never tried before.

17:35.920 --> 17:40.900

Some piece of information like that by chance.

Do you have a favorite quote that's in the app?

17:40.910 --> 17:45.440

I like all the quotes.

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I'm kind of a sucker for quotes in general,

17:45.450 --> 17:49.550

especially the ones that we picked for the app
because they're pretty short,

17:49.550 --> 17:54.310

but they give you a lot to think about.

But one that I've been thinking about a lot

17:54.310 --> 17:59.130

lately, especially when I need to tackle
something that feels particularly challenging

17:59.140 --> 18:06.040

is um sometimes what you are afraid of doing is
the very thing

18:06.040 --> 18:09.590

that will set you free.

That's a good quote.

18:09.600 --> 18:14.320

It does give you a lot to think about.

It keeps me inspired to keep doing things even

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18:14.320 --> 18:17.080

when they're hard.

I also do actually think the recommendations

18:17.080 --> 18:23.660

are really great too on the home screen because they're a way to find new parts of the app that

18:23.660 --> 18:27.100

you might not know about yet, but that you'd want to try out.

18:27.620 --> 18:31.790

And one of the first recommendations that the app gives you,

18:31.800 --> 18:35.520

it's one of my favorite tools actually, it's called self-compassion,

18:35.530 --> 18:41.540

that's the name of the tool and the self compassion tool has a bunch of mindfulness

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18:41.550 --> 18:48.070

exercises that are focused on cultivating compassion, especially compassion for

18:48.070 --> 18:51.970

yourself.

I think that can be really challenging,

18:51.970 --> 18:54.070

but it's also super important.

18:54.570 --> 19:00.570

One of the reasons why I think self-compassion can be so critical especially for those who've

19:00.570 --> 19:07.330

experienced MST is it can help counter feelings of shame or self-blame that are unfortunately

19:07.340 --> 19:10.880

really common for those who have experienced MST.

19:10.890 --> 19:15.520

I really like those recommendations.

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What other parts of the do you think that our

19:15.520 --> 19:17.770

listeners might find particularly useful?

19:18.060 --> 19:23.190

Well, many, like I mentioned before, I think every veteran's experience of recovering from

19:23.190 --> 19:28.240

MST looks different.

And so we have included a lot of options and

19:28.240 --> 19:33.240

we're hopeful that every veteran can find tools or learn topics that are the most relevant to

19:33.240 --> 19:39.440

them, all of those tools and learn topics fall into one of six major focus areas

19:39.450 --> 19:42.170

and there's actually one tool that I really like.

Military Sexual Trauma

19:42.170 --> 19:47.810

It's called finding inspiration and one of our main goals for the beyond M.

19:47.810 --> 19:52.410

S. T.

App was we wanted to make it really hopeful and

19:52.410 --> 19:59.380

inspiring had real encouraging feel.

So those who use it would feel

19:59.380 --> 20:04.770

encouraged to keep going on that recovery journey even when times get tough and the

20:04.770 --> 20:10.120

finding inspiration tool is a place where we've included inspiring quotes and images and

20:10.120 --> 20:13.510

inspiring stories from others who have experienced MST.

20:13.520 --> 20:19.370

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Talking about their own path to recovery,
Anyone who's using the app can add in their own

20:19.370 --> 20:23.190

quotes that they find inspiring or pictures
that are particularly inspiring for them

20:23.190 --> 20:26.500

personally.
I think the idea is that having those hopeful

20:26.500 --> 20:32.060

reminders right there on your phone to pull out
during difficult times can just be helpful to

20:32.060 --> 20:37.450

remind you of why you're focused on your
recovery, What inspires you to want to build

20:37.450 --> 20:43.360

your best life may, where can our veterans go
to get the beyond MST app.

20:43.370 --> 20:47.820

That is a great question Wendy, I guess I

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should be sure to say that the app is free,

20:47.830 --> 20:54.330

free, that's important and it can be downloaded
in the Apple store for

20:54.330 --> 20:58.680

iPhone and the google play store for android
phones.

20:58.730 --> 21:04.630

So just search beyond MST in either of those
app stores to find it,

21:05.170 --> 21:10.720

it's already been downloaded well over 10,000
times and it was just so important to us to

21:10.720 --> 21:16.230

make it free and to make it easy to find so
that everyone who has experienced MST can

21:16.240 --> 21:21.950

easily downloaded, check it out and see if it's
for them because it's a self-guided app,

Military Sexual Trauma

21:21.960 --> 21:26.360

it works really well for people who are currently in mental health treatment,

21:26.370 --> 21:31.470

but also for people who are not and they're just looking for a little bit of additional

21:31.470 --> 21:35.080

support.

So I'm curious, Amy can you tell us how it is

21:35.080 --> 21:38.890

that you protect veterans privacy when they're using the app yet?

21:38.900 --> 21:45.070

Wendy thinks this is a really important question and it's one that we get a lot because

21:45.070 --> 21:49.820

privacy is often a concern for veterans who have experienced MST.

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21:50.130 --> 21:55.260

This is something that we thought a lot about when we were developing the act,

21:55.270 --> 21:58.970

let me be really clear.

I don't believe that experiences of MST are

21:58.970 --> 22:05.400

shameful or something that should be kept hidden, but I do strongly believe that it is

22:05.410 --> 22:11.300

veterans choice decide when and where and how information about their MST experiences are

22:11.300 --> 22:14.890

shared.

So that's why we thought a lot about privacy

22:14.890 --> 22:19.400

concerns and took a lot of steps to be sure that veterans privacy would be protected.

22:19.970 --> 22:25.160

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The app doesn't collect any demographics or diagnoses or any other personal health

22:25.160 --> 22:31.440

information if there is any information that someone who's using the app chooses to enter.

22:31.450 --> 22:36.510

So like I mentioned, those inspirational quotes or photos before that someone can add to the

22:36.510 --> 22:42.280

app if they want to do that, those things can't be access or shared by via or anyone else.

22:42.290 --> 22:47.390

And if someone wants to make the app even more secure, like for example,

22:47.390 --> 22:51.670

to keep it secure and private from anyone who might pick up your phone.

22:51.680 --> 22:57.200

There is an option to set a four-digit passcode

Military Sexual Trauma

of like a pin lock for some added security.

22:57.710 --> 23:04.290

I do want people who are thinking about using the app to know that it does collect anonymous

23:04.290 --> 23:10.240

data about how the app is being used.

This is just data that we use to track bugs.

23:10.250 --> 23:13.910

Like if a tool is quitting all the time and not working at,

23:13.910 --> 23:17.440

allow us to track that kind of information so we can improve the app.

23:17.450 --> 23:22.420

But this anonymous data can't be linked to any personal information about you.

23:22.430 --> 23:26.420

And if you're not comfortable with even anonymous data being collected,

Military Sexual Trauma

23:26.420 --> 23:30.430

that is a feature that can be switched off easily in settings.

23:30.870 --> 23:35.030

Thank you for that information.

Amy what is the one thing you would want all

23:35.030 --> 23:39.670

folks who have served or are currently serving to know about in regards to the beyond?

23:39.680 --> 23:43.260

MST app.

Wow, that's a big question.

23:43.440 --> 23:49.440

You know, our main goal in creating this app was to get tools and resources into the hands

23:49.440 --> 23:55.530

of MST survivors that were specifically curated for MST survivors.

Military Sexual Trauma

23:56.240 --> 24:02.270

We wanted to focus on issues that are common concerns for those folks and we also wanted to

24:02.270 --> 24:08.810

help veterans who might be struggling and their recovery to feel less isolated and to be

24:08.810 --> 24:13.600

reminded that they aren't the only one who might be struggling.

24:13.610 --> 24:17.880

So I think that's what we hope we've accomplished and I'm pleased to say we have

24:17.880 --> 24:21.480

gotten some very positive feedback from those who use the app.

24:21.480 --> 24:24.850

So so I know that's how it's working for at least some folks out there.

24:25.110 --> 24:28.220

Military Sexual Trauma

Thank you.

And Jessica, what is the one thing you would

24:28.220 --> 24:32.790

want all folks who have served or are currently serving to know about services offered to

24:32.790 --> 24:38.850

support survivors of MST Wendy. Yes.

Following from what Amy just shared about the

24:38.850 --> 24:44.910

importance of feeling less isolated.

I also want to emphasize to all veterans who

24:44.910 --> 24:51.800

experienced MST that you are not alone.

We are strongly committed to ensuring that all

24:51.800 --> 24:57.470

MST survivors have access to the help you need to heal from the impact of MST whenever you're

24:57.470 --> 25:01.520

ready to call on us.

Military Sexual Trauma

So I want everyone to know,

25:01.520 --> 25:07.010

please don't hesitate to reach out to us to
call your local via medical center and asked to

25:07.010 --> 25:11.340

Speak to the MST coordinator there to get the
help you need.

25:11.460 --> 25:15.730

Amy Jessica, thank you so very much for taking
the time to speak with me and our listeners

25:15.730 --> 25:20.120

today about services offered at the V. A.
Are there any last comments you'd like to add

25:20.120 --> 25:23.450

before we end?

I just really want to thank you Wendy for

25:23.450 --> 25:27.890

hosting this episode on such an important topic
that people often don't talk about

Military Sexual Trauma

25:27.890 --> 25:30.980

unfortunately.

And I want to thank all veterans,

25:30.980 --> 25:34.890

especially the women veterans listening for
your service to our country.

25:35.300 --> 25:37.400

Thanks Jessica.

How about you, Amy?

25:37.410 --> 25:43.870

I'll add my thanks to all the veterans who are
listening for their service and and I'll also

25:43.870 --> 25:49.380

add especially for those veterans who did
experience MST during your service.

25:49.390 --> 25:56.390

I'm sorry that shouldn't have happened to you.

And I hope that some of the resources

Military Sexual Trauma

25:56.390 --> 26:01.930

that we've talked about today can help you
lighten your load even just a little bit.

26:02.130 --> 26:07.520

There are many, many people out there who would
like to take some of that load off your

26:07.520 --> 26:12.060

shoulders.

Thank you and thank you for listening to she

26:12.060 --> 26:15.700

wears the boots.

If you are a woman who served in the military

26:15.710 --> 26:18.480

and have questions about services available at
the V.

26:18.480 --> 26:20.990

A.

Please contact the Woman Veterans Call center

26:20.990 --> 26:24.950

Military Sexual Trauma

at 1-855-829-6636.

26:25.410 --> 26:28.710

The Woman Veterans Call center Staff is trained
to connect women veterans,

26:28.720 --> 26:32.090

their families and caregivers with V. A.
Services and resources