



16.10.21

The Giving Group Community

Letter of recommendation for 'B'shvil'

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for reaching out to 'B'shvil', a non-profit organization, and for considering supporting their important activity.

I have been a member of the B'shvil board since November 2020 as the head of the professional committee. As an expert in the field of combat-PTSD, my role includes to advise B'shvil in all professional matters associated with its activities.

B'shvil was created to help IDF veterans overcome the psychological effects of combat-related trauma. Its mission is to help them return to normal lives through support-group activities in Israel and abroad, as nature serves as an invaluable therapeutic setting.

A certain amount of help is provided by the government for veterans who are diagnosed with PTSD.

However, the PTSD diagnosis has been criticized for falling short of capturing the depth of the post-traumatic experience. Many studies have shown that exposure to combat conditions leaves various after-effects on those taking part in such fighting, and these are not necessarily manifested as PTSD, but as symptoms that fall below the clinical range. Many such effects are manifested as depression, anxiety, difficulty in social functioning, domestic violence, consumption of addictive substances, sleep disorders, sexual dysfunction, dissociation and more.

The situation described above is known as **'Subthreshold Posttraumatic Stress Disorder'** (ST PTSD), often widely defined as 'having PTSD symptoms below the threshold for diagnosis'.

Military servicepersons with subthreshold combat-related (PTSD) symptoms often have clinically significant functional impairment, even though they do not meet full PTSD criteria. As a result, awareness of the post-traumatic consequences and identification of the need for intervention are often not straightforward and are therefore frequently delayed. These veterans develop, over time, complex mental health problems that are not necessarily recognized as legitimate by their surroundings.



In addition, Veterans refrain from seeking help due to perceived devaluation by peers and commanders, fear of stigma, and lack of knowledge about PTSD. As a result, many veterans are already deep in the vicious cycle of living with chronic symptoms by the time the decision to seek treatment is made, and many others avoid it altogether.

B'shvil provides a professional and accurate response to the population described, with the understanding that there is a significant shortage of existing responses for these veterans.

In the context of nature and amongst a group of peers who have had similar experiences, the veterans can allow themselves to let down their defenses, mobilize resources from within themselves and the others, and learn new techniques. The participants' resilience is strengthened and improved as they learn new coping methods and find ways in which to regulate and handle their emotions. The decrease in PTSD symptoms helps them achieve a sense of inner control and become better able to accept emotional support.

For many, the setting and the process ease their symptoms and the obstacles they contend with, and for others it creates a path to healing and growth by realizing and acting upon the need to seek more intense treatment so that they are better able to work, engage with family, focus on their studies and enjoy social situations.

Your support will be instrumental in B'shvil's efforts to assist these veterans to overcome traumatic experiences and regain a good quality of life in Israeli society.

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