

# Occupational Therapy Intervention for Combat Stress Reaction in a Military Unit

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Combat stress reaction (CR) is a syndrome with a wide range of symptoms including changes in soldiers' behaviors, emotional and physiological responses, avoidance and a decrease in both personal and military functioning. The short-term goal in treating CR is a speedy return to healthy functioning, whereas the long term goal is to prevent the development of PTSD. Previous research has indicated that the achievement of this short-term goal impacts on the achievement of the long-term goal and vice versa. Effective treatment requires intervention by trained professionals proficient in reinforcing personal and functional identity without psychiatric labelling. Occupational therapy (OT) intervention that focuses on functioning, participation in occupations, and the development and preservation of skills and abilities is a perfect fit. The present paper presents a therapeutic model integrating OT in treating CR within a military setting. The proposed model emphasizes the importance of preventing fixation to the role of 'patient' and a rapid return to maximal functioning. We propose an intervention unique to the OT profession based on Kielhofner's Model of Human Occupation, which aims to promote adaptive and efficient functioning by engaging soldiers in tasks supporting their military identity,

empowering functionality, and increasing their perceived competency. The model is congruent with the IDF and US modus operandi, emphasizing the therapeutic milieu within a military environment. Practical application of this model focuses on interdisciplinary aspects and client-focused application. The application includes integrating occupational therapists in inter-disciplinary work focused on the recovery of functional abilities and identified roles. Recovery would be indicated through the improvement and preservation of motor performance skills, cognitive skills and interpersonal communication as well as the participation of the soldier through the promotion of performance patterns (habits and routines) within the military context.