



[myfishingcapecod.com](http://myfishingcapecod.com)

## 5 Ways Fishing Has Helped Me Manage My PTSD

Ehud Benharosh struggled with post traumatic stress disorder after his time in combat. Now he wants to give people with PTSD the opportunity to use fishing as a way of healing. Ehud is not yet free of PTSD and once in a while it comes back for a visit. The difference now is that he knows what to do to get it under control, and that is to simply spend more time fishing. Ehud is currently developing fishing programs for people with PTSD. He can be reached at [elbbyo@gmail.com](mailto:elbbyo@gmail.com)



Ehud Benharosh

Over the last 12 years I have lived with a disorder that we all have heard of - post traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD.

Some of us know about PTSD from the news, or may even know a neighbor, a close relative or friend who has experienced it themselves.

I have read that an estimated 70 percent of adults in the United States will experience a traumatic event at least once in their lives, and up to 20 percent of those people will go on to develop post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD.

- ✓ An estimated 5 percent of Americans—more than 13 million people—have PTSD at any given time.
- ✓ Approximately 8 percent of all adults—1 of 13 people in this country—will develop PTSD during their lifetime.
- ✓ An estimated 1 out of 10 Women will get PTSD at some time in their lives. Women are about twice as likely as men to develop PTSD.

*Sidran Traumatic Stress Institute, Inc.*

PTSD usually happens after being exposed to a traumatic event. It is often reported by the victims of rape, murder, car accidents and or course, combat.

Any form or shape of trauma can cause the disorder to ignite, and in some cases PTSD can become a life long “companion”. For me, I was lucky enough to discover a miraculous way of keeping it under control > fishing.

For me personally, I developed post traumatic stress disorder after my experiences in combat. In the rest of this post I would like to share with you 5 specific ways fishing has helped me manage this PTSD.

# 1) Focus

One of the symptoms of PTSD are intrusive thoughts. What I mean by that is those annoying, non-stop, uncomfortable, repetitive thoughts.

Imagine browsing the internet and being bombarded with non-stop pop up ads, which constantly interrupt you and make it impossible to get anything accomplished. That is sort of what it's like.

When I started fishing, my first discovery was that the more focused I was on a thing of interest, the more effectively I could block, or disable those thoughts from arriving. The longer I could keep those thoughts away, the quicker I could start my healing process. In this way focusing on fishing gave my mind a break from handling the thoughts. Instead of focusing on the thoughts, I gave all my attention to the fish.

Slowly I noticed how my thoughts and questions changed from "Why did it happen?" and "How could I prevent it from happening again?" to much more comfortable thoughts like "Where are the fish hiding?" and "What are the fish feeding on?"

The more focused I was on the unending search for the next bite - the greater I was able to distance myself from intrusive thoughts. When fishing, you need focus for tying knots, building your rigs, making an accurate cast or trying a different technique.

These all require focus, and more focus = less intrusive thoughts. For me, a day without any intrusive thoughts is a day full of healing!

## 2) Time On The Water

Another unpleasant part of PTSD is the depression. It comes in many forms and affects us all in different ways. Depression isn't limited to PTSD and can rise from many reasons, or none at all. Researchers still dwell in finding the exact cause or trigger for depression.

What all experts agree upon is that outside activities and physical activities can improve the condition and the symptoms of depression. It doesn't matter if your casting plugs from a jetty for stripers, wading a lakeshore for some hungry trout, chasing Albies from a boat or fishing shoulder-to-shoulder on the canal - spending time on the water is a known medicine for the "down" days.

For me personally, it was searching for sea-run brook trout in the tiny streams along the Southern Massachusetts shores that gave me relief. When fishing for brookies, my life slowly started getting its color back again.

### 3) Filling The "Empty Hours"

For a lot of people, the hardest times with PTSD are the empty hours of the day when you having nothing to do but think.

Having fishing as a hobby got me off the couch and away from the TV. When fishing my days become full of discovery and learning. Every day I am learning how to be a better fisherman. Fishing provides me with positive experiences that fill empty hours.

I went from stressing about free time, to filling that free time with fishing activities. I even began taking action to create more free time in my life so I could get out there and find a new spot, and bigger fish.

Even spending time on organizing fishing gear or washing the reels after a salt water adventure can be a great time filler when not physically on the water. As is tying flies, organizing lures, and sharpening hooks.

Any activity that involves fishing can turn empty hours into an amazing adventure!

### 4) Being A Part Of Something Bigger

I am a fisherman and being able to proudly say that makes me part of something bigger than myself.

I remember back from the old army days how it felt to be part of something bigger. The feeling of unity, the feeling of purpose, and the feeling of accomplishing things together. While being out there on the water, we as fishermen are responsible for the resources that we have been enjoyed by our parents and grandparents, and we are responsible to teach the younger generations how to preserve these resources and how to use them the right way.

We as fishermen are responsible for the fish, and it is up to us to ensure they return to the areas we fish. We need to help with conservation efforts on Cape Cod and throughout the world. We need to follow the rules and regulations, and develop our own moral and ethical rules about how we harvest fish, and how we can minimize our impact on the environment.

When I began fishing, I started to understand how I am responsible for the generations to come, and suddenly I found an entirely new purpose of life.

## 5) The Sun

You know that big round thing in the sky that is there when we wake up, and shines on the other side of the Earth while we sleep, or fish at night for stripers?

Well studies have shown that spending time outside (even on cloudy day) supplies our brain with very necessary Vitamin D, which is a natural anti-depressant!

Exactly how Vitamin D works in the brain isn't fully understood. One theory is that Vitamin D affects the amount of chemicals called monoamines, such as serotonin, and how they work in the brain.

Many anti-depressant medications work by increasing the amount of monoamines in the brain; indeed the rate-limiting enzyme that makes serotonin is at least partially regulated by Vitamin D. Therefore, researchers have suggested that Vitamin D may also increase the amount of monoamines, which may help treat depression.

*Vitamin D Council.org*

You'll be surprised how effective some sunshine can be. Spending a few days in a row outside fishing does wonders in bringing back the color to your cheeks!

## In Conclusion

There are many more great ways how fishing has helped me manage my PTSD, but these are the ones I chose for this article.

This year I will be working on creating and developing the "hooking dreams" project with a set goal to provide free introduction to fishing as well as free fishing trips to those who live with PTSD.

I want to give people who are in an active battle with the disorder the opportunity to use fishing as a true way of healing.

I'm not yet free of PTSD, and once in a while it will come back for a visit. The difference is that now I know what to do to get it under control, and that is to simply spend more time on the water!



### Ehud Benharosh

I want to give people with PTSD the opportunity to use fishing as a way of healing. I'm not yet free of PTSD and once in a while it comes back for a visit. The difference is that now I know what to do to get it under control, and that is to simply spend more time on the water!