

## Fireworks Etiquette

Did you know that fireworks are very difficult for some military veterans?

This fact does not mean that you shouldn't enjoy this quintessential American tradition, please... get out there and celebrate summer and our Independence! Enjoy that BBQ, splashing in the lake, ice cream and fireworks. Do so proudly but do so respectfully. Its common courtesy, but even more so respectful when you consider the impact your fun might have on those around you. Please practice some fireworks etiquette this summer:

- 1) Keep the at-home fireworks to a minimum (preferably none). Your town probably spends a lot of money each year on a wonderful display, enjoy it! Support your local BOOM!!**
- 2) If you must light fireworks at home or in your neighborhood:**
  - a) Avoid lighting fireworks outside of the July 3<sup>rd</sup> to July 5<sup>th</sup> window**
  - b) If at any time you are planning to light fireworks, alert all of your neighbors. Leave them a note, knock on the door, whatever it takes, just let them know what time you will be setting them off and what time they will end. It's just courteous.**
  - c) At-home fireworks should be capped by 2 hours past dusk. You don't have to be a Combat Veteran to be upset and annoyed by fireworks going off late into the night.**

Here are a few explanations about why fireworks can be so tough for Combat Veterans:

*The sudden, unexpected crack or boom is extremely startling and reminiscent of taking enemy fire. Having a reaction to this is not PTSD, it is simply body memory. A sound that at one time indicated a serious risk for death or injury is going to leave its mark. It is the rare Combat Veteran who doesn't jump at the sound and find him or herself feeling at least a little amped up and vigilant. Even the sound far off in the distance can have an effect (sometimes worse) because it meant that a threat was on its way (imagine what that grim anticipation must have been like!)*

*Now take that sudden crack or boom and chain them together, for hours on end, from all directions, unpredictably... very quickly your neighborhood (and every neighborhood around for miles) has the feel of a warzone. Not fun if you've ever been in one.*

*Here's where the etiquette comes in: fireworks are tough to tolerate, but they are easier to handle for many Combat Veterans if they are predictable and visible. The town fireworks display has a beginning and an end and a predictable date; if you must light off an at-home display, yours should too.*

*For some Combat Veterans, even the town display can be intolerable. The whistles and crackling and sparks in the sky, not-to-mention the chest pounding booms (and even the smell) can come with very specific reactions to some very specific memories of types of bombs, explosives, artillery and the like. These folks need to take good care of themselves during this time. Be respectful and understanding of their self-care, even if it means they do not join in the "fun."*

This is a wonderful time of year! Celebrate!

Respect and common courtesy for our loved ones and neighbors is just good form.

Be safe everyone! Have a great Summer!

*Brought to you by Nicole L Sawyer, PsyD PLLC*