"TO NO LONGER BE A MYSTERY TO MYSELF": LIVING WITH PTSD
To the Editor:

Thank you so much for the article “The Neurobiology of PTSD: Implications for Nurses” by Terese M. Olszewski and Jeanne F. Varrasse (Vol. 43, No. 6, pp. 40-47). The information in the article confirmed, as well as enlightened, for me and my loved ones the serious consequences of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). We found it reassuring to know that there’s a predictable pattern to PTSD, as well as increasing knowledge and understanding of the debilitating effects of the disorder.

I was diagnosed with PTSD after a serious disassociation at age 54. When I was 12, I was home when my mother shot my father. I didn’t know the concept of disassociation at that time; I only knew that from then on, I thought of myself in the third person for many years. I endured years of physical and emotional “fallout” (exquisitely described in the article) from the shock of the shooting. For example, I had always suspected I lost the capacity to recall geography, which I was studying at the time of the shooting, as a result of something I thought of as “circuit overload.” The explanation of pruning supported my suspicions. That’s reassuring information as far as I’m concerned!

Having the correct diagnosis and knowing there is more information and knowledge forthcoming about PTSD is extremely important. To no longer be a mystery to myself and not just “whip-snapped” by life since my diagnosis of PTSD and treatment is a tremendous relief.

I’m a psychiatric nurse (RN, BSN), so I have also witnessed firsthand the suffering that comes with having PTSD. Thank you again to the authors and to JPN for your efforts and for sharing this vital information, which can only become more pertinent as our soldiers come home from war, as more terrorist attacks occur, and as other events occur in our world that can change our lives and make-up in an instant. My wish is that the information provided in this article reach an even larger audience.

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Continued on page 17.