Brief Screener Considerations

⭐ **1. Credibility –** Does the app come from a known and trusted source? Does the app identify funding sources and conflicts of interest?

    a. Examples of known/trusted sources from which a user can download an app include the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store. Apps obtained from any other website or third-party app store (e.g., Amazon Appstore, GetJar, AppValley, TutuApp) will carry security risks.

    b. Information regarding funding sources or conflicts of interest may be found in an "About This App" section of an app or on the developer page of the application store. *(See image B1)*

✔️ **2. Validity –** Does the app contain evidence-informed content?

    a. An app may be *evidence-based*[1] if research has been conducted on the app. Within the app itself or on the application description in the application store, is any research cited for the effectiveness of the app? *(See image B2a)*

    b. Or an app may contain *evidence-informed*[2] content if the content is based on techniques that have been researched and found to be effective (e.g., cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), cognitive restructuring, acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) mindfulness, meditation, diaphragmatic breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, visualization/imagery). This information may be found in an "About This App" or "How This App Works" section. *(See image B2b)*

👁️ **3. Privacy –** Is there a transparent privacy policy or terms of service that is clear and accessible?

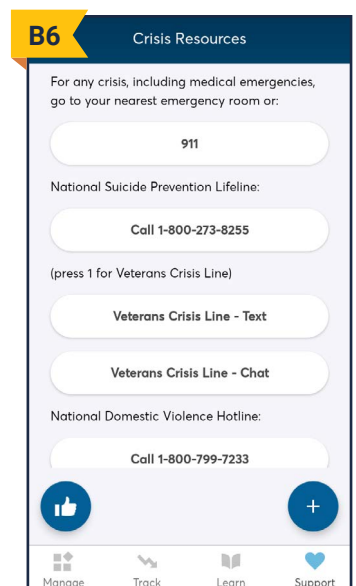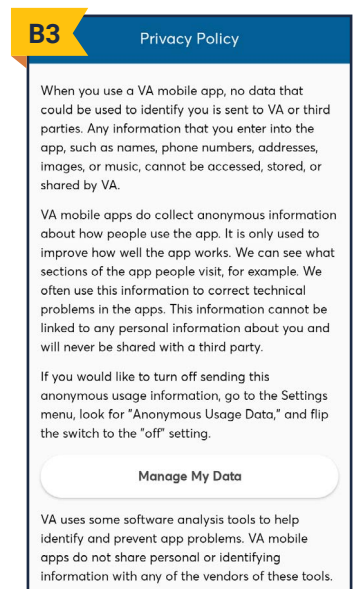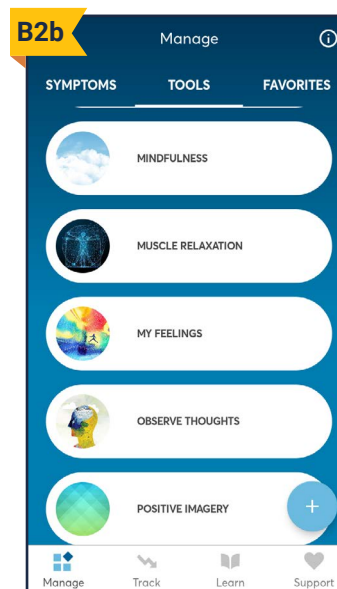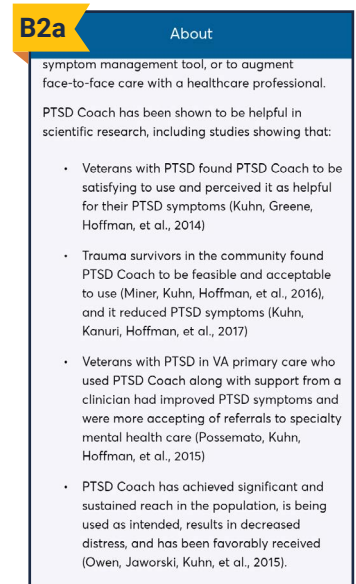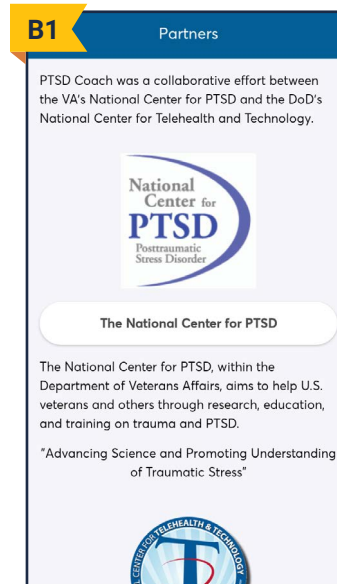   **a.** Privacy policy, terms of service. *(See image B3)*

🔒 **4. Security –** Does the account require a strong password? Is Two Factor Authentication (2FA) enabled?

    a. Does the app require a strong password? (e.g., A strong password is one that is strong, long, and difficult to guess – uses more than 10 characters with letters, both uppercase and lowercase, numbers and symbols and includes no obvious personal information or common words).

    b. Does the app allow you to enable a 2FA method (e.g., push notification, security key, SMS passcode, biometrics) to validate your identity?

⚙️ **5. Operability –** Does the app work across different operating systems or platforms such as Apple, Android, and desktop versions? *(See images B5a, B5b)*

♿ **6. Accessibility –** Is the app accessible for those who have disabilities?

    a. Key questions to consider include: Is there enough color contrast?, Is there limited motion and animation?, Are there any flashing lights without warning?, Is the audio clear?, Are there visual and sound notifications?, Are there large enough touch areas for actions?, Are there content warnings?, Are there directions to send emergency services (if necessary)? *(See image B6)* For more information, please visit https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/

B1 Partners

PTSD Coach was a collaborative effort between the VA's National Center for PTSD and the DoD's National Center for Telehealth and Technology.

National Center for PTSD — Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

The National Center for PTSD

The National Center for PTSD, within the Department of Veterans Affairs, aims to help U.S. veterans and others through research, education, and training on trauma and PTSD.

"Advancing Science and Promoting Understanding of Traumatic Stress"

B2a About

symptom management tool, or to augment face-to-face care with a healthcare professional.

PTSD Coach has been shown to be helpful in scientific research, including studies showing that:

- Veterans with PTSD found PTSD Coach to be satisfying to use and perceived it as helpful for their PTSD symptoms (Kuhn, Greene, Hoffman, et al., 2014)
- Trauma survivors in the community found PTSD Coach to be feasible and acceptable to use (Miner, Kuhn, Hoffman, et al., 2016), and it reduced PTSD symptoms (Kuhn, Kanuri, Hoffman, et al., 2017)
- Veterans with PTSD in VA primary care who used PTSD Coach along with support from a clinician had improved PTSD symptoms and were more accepting of referrals to specialty mental health care (Possemato, Kuhn, Hoffman, et al., 2015)
- PTSD Coach has achieved significant and sustained reach in the population, is being used as intended, results in decreased distress, and has been favorably received (Owen, Jaworski, Kuhn, et al., 2015).

B2b Manage

SYMPTOMS | TOOLS | FAVORITES

- MINDFULNESS
- MUSCLE RELAXATION
- MY FEELINGS
- OBSERVE THOUGHTS
- POSITIVE IMAGERY

Manage | Track | Learn | Support

B3 Privacy Policy

When you use a VA mobile app, no data that could be used to identify you is sent to VA or third parties. Any information that you enter into the app, such as names, phone numbers, addresses, images, or music, cannot be accessed, stored, or shared by VA.

VA mobile apps do collect anonymous information about how people use the app. It is only used to improve how well the app works. We can see what sections of the app people visit, for example. We often use this information to correct technical problems in the apps. This information cannot be linked to any personal information about you and will never be shared with a third party.

If you would like to turn off sending this anonymous usage information, go to the Settings menu, look for "Anonymous Usage Data," and flip the switch to the "off" setting.

Manage My Data

VA uses some software analysis tools to help identify and prevent app problems. VA mobile apps do not share personal or identifying information with any of the vendors of these tools.

B5a

PTSD Coach
⭐⭐⭐⭐☆
Average: 3.7 (244 votes)

🍎 iOS Download
🤖 Android Download

B5b

PTSD Coach Online

If you do not have a smartphone but have a computer with internet access, try PTSD Coach Online. The online version includes additional tools and videos for problem-solving and setting and understanding your goals.

For best results with PTSD Coach Online, use Google Chrome.

B6 Crisis Resources

For any crisis, including medical emergencies, go to your nearest emergency room or:

911

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:

Call 1-800-273-8255

(press 1 for Veterans Crisis Line)

Veterans Crisis Line - Text

Veterans Crisis Line - Chat

National Domestic Violence Hotline:

Call 1-800-799-7233

Manage | Track | Learn | Support

Expanded Screener Considerations

1. **How often is the app updated? When was the app last updated?** *(See image E1)*

2. **Does the app explain its security features, including collection, storage, and transmission of data?** *(See image E2)*

3. **Is the data that the app is asking for something that the user is comfortable sharing?** *(See image E3)*

4. **Do users own their data, and can users opt out of data collection or delete data?** *(See image E3)*

5. **Can users download/export or backup their own data?** *(See image E3)*

6. **Can/does the app share data with other apps, networks, or medical record systems?** *(See image E3)*

7. **Is the app easy to use?**

8. **Does it look like the app will keep the user active and engaged?** *(See image E4)*

9. **Is app content well written and relevant?**

10. **Is the app content free from bias?** Examples of bias to look for in app content may be bias related to gender, race, politics, or weight.

11. **Does the app state that it is not a replacement for traditional therapy, medical advice, or medical treatment?** *(See image E5)*

12. **Can the user opt out of personalized ads, if desired?**

13. **Is the price structure transparent and free of hidden costs?**

14. **Are contact details, including technical support, listed?** *(See image E6)*

15. **Are there any other considerations to keep in mind for the target user?** Examples of other factors to consider when reviewing an app include income (e.g., Is the app free? If not, can users afford the app?) and education/reading level (e.g., Is the reading level of the app appropriate for intended user?)

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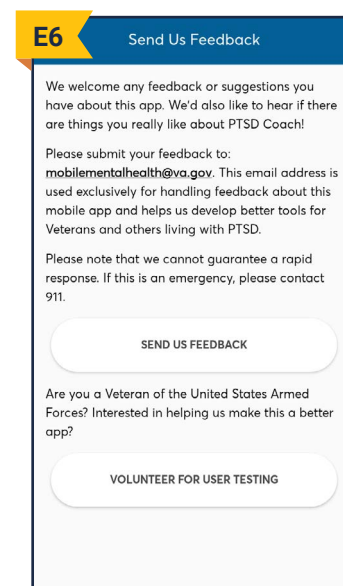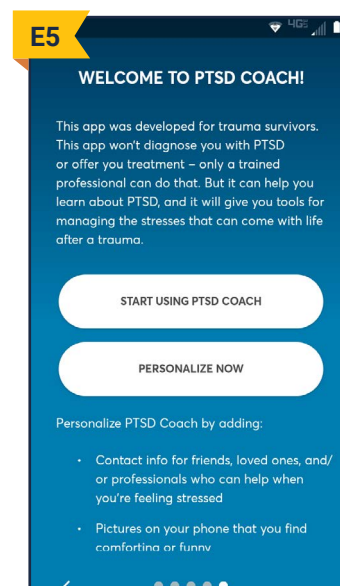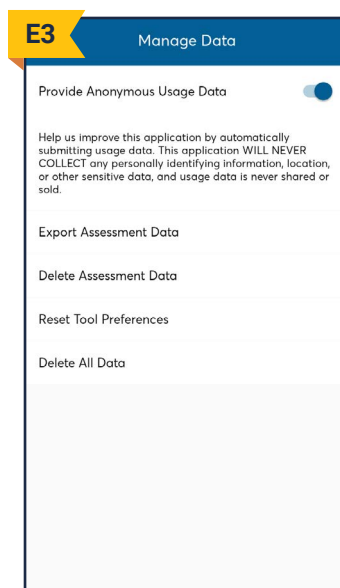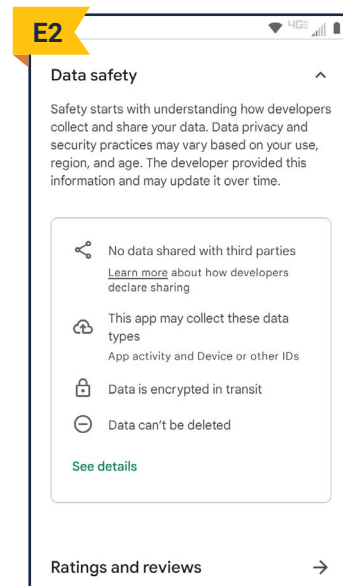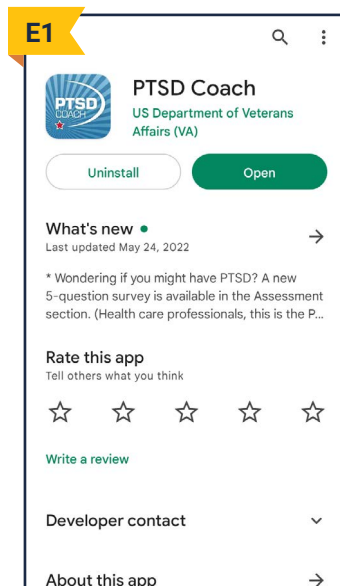
[1] **Evidence based:** An app is evidence-based if evaluations of the effectiveness of the app have been performed (either by app developers or by those not affiliated with developers) and published in a peer-reviewed journal.

[2] **Evidence-informed:** An app is evidence-informed (rather than evidence-based) if there have been no evaluations of the app, but the content of the app is based on strategies and components that have been evaluated and shown to be effective (e.g., cognitive behavioral therapy).

For more information on review and selection of apps, please visit **https://militaryfamilies.psu.edu/resources/app-vetting**

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FOR MILITARY FAMILY READINESS

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