

## Fast Facts

### Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

- A condition that arises after experiencing or witnessing a harrowing event
  - Exact cause unknown, thought to be a mix of experiencing a traumatic event, especially the amount and severity of the event, inherited mental health risks, your temperament and the way your brain controls chemicals and hormones that your body releases when you're stressed
  - Most common events that lead to it: combat exposure, sexual violence, child abuse, physical assault, being threatened with a weapon or being in an accident
  - Other possible events: fire, natural disaster, robbery, mugging, plane crash, torture, kidnapping, terrorist attack and life-threatening medical diagnosis
  - Symptoms usually appear about one month after, they might not appear for several years
  - Symptoms vary over time and from person to person
- When you're stressed, more likely to have symptoms and certain things can trigger them
- Seek treatment if you have symptoms for more than a month, if they're severe or you feel like you're struggling to get your life in order
  - Get help early to prevent the symptoms from getting worse

<i>Symptoms</i>	<i>Treatment</i>	<i>Prevention</i>
<p><i>Intrusive memories:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Recurrent, unwanted distressing memories of the event</li> <li>-Reliving the event as if it was currently happening (flashbacks)</li> <li>-Nightmares</li> <li>-Severe emotional/physical distress to something that reminds you of the event</li> </ul> <p><i>Avoidance:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Not talking/thinking about the event</li> <li>-Staying away from places, activities or people that remind you of the event</li> </ul> <p><i>Negative changes in thinking/mood:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Having negative thoughts about yourself/others/world</li> <li>-Feeling hopeless</li> <li>-Having memory problems</li> <li>-Not being able to maintain relationships</li> <li>-Feeling detached</li> </ul>	<p><i>Goal:</i> To help you get control over your life by teaching you necessary skills to address your symptoms, helping you think better about yourself and others, learning coping mechanisms and treating any other problems that have occurred</p> <p><i>Psychotherapy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Cognitive therapy</li> <li>-Exposure therapy</li> <li>-Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR)</li> </ul> <p><i>Medications:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Antidepressants</li> <li>-Anti-anxiety medications</li> </ul> <p><i>Coping:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Follow the treatment plan</li> <li>-Remind yourself that it takes time</li> <li>-Learn as much as you can about PTSD</li> <li>-Don't self-medicate with alcohol and drugs</li> <li>-If anxious, find some way to break the cycle</li> <li>-Avoid caffeine and nicotine</li> <li>-Get plenty of rest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Not everyone that goes through a traumatic event ends up with PTSD-</li> <li>-It's normal to initially feel fear, anxiety, guilt, anger or depression after experiencing an upsetting event</li> <li>-Get timely help and support</li> <li>-Talk to family and friends who are willing to listen</li> <li>-Speak to a mental health professional</li> <li>-There is nothing wrong with getting therapy to help you process what you've gone through</li> <li>-Getting support can help prevent you from developing unhealthy coping mechanisms</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Lacking interest in activities that you used to enjoy</li> <li>-Difficulty having positive emotions</li> <li>-Feeling emotionally numb</li> </ul> <p><i>Changes in in physical/emotional reactions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Being easily startled/frightened</li> <li>-Trouble sleeping</li> <li>-Issues concentrating</li> <li>-Always being on guard for danger</li> <li>-Self-destructive behavior</li> <li>-Irritability</li> <li>-Angry outbursts</li> <li>-Aggressive behavior</li> <li>-Overwhelming feelings of guilt/shame</li> </ul> <p><i>For children who are 6 years old or younger:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Nightmares that may or may not include aspects of the event</li> <li>-Re-enacting the event or aspects of it while playing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Eat a healthy diet</li> <li>-Exercise regularly</li> <li>-Take time to relax</li> <li>-Stay connected to family/friends</li> </ul> <p>Someone you care about has PTSD:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Remember you can't change them</li> <li>-Learn as much as you can about the disorder</li> <li>-Understand that avoidance and withdrawal are part of the disorder</li> <li>-Give your loved one space, but reassure them that when they're ready, you're there to help</li> <li>-Encourage them to participate in activities with family and friends</li> <li>-Take care of yourself, by eating healthy, being physically active, getting enough sleep and doing activities that help you to recharge</li> <li>-If you're having difficulty dealing with the situation, seek help from a medical professional</li> <li>-Have a plan in place for you and your children if your loved one becomes violent or abusive</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Note:</b> If you're having suicidal thoughts, reach out to a friend or loved one, contact a minister/spiritual leader or call a suicide hotline. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is 1-800-273-TALK (8255). If you're a veteran, call the number and press 1 to get to the Veterans Crisis Line. If you think that you might hurt yourself or attempt suicide, call 911 immediately. If you're with someone that you're concerned might attempt suicide, don't leave them alone and call 911 immediately.</p>		

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