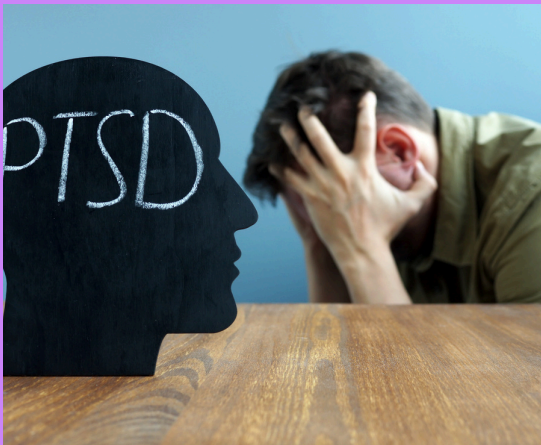




LEARN ABOUT PTSD

Have you ever experienced trauma?
Many people with trauma develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)



Here, you will get information on how to find out if it is PTSD. You can also find helpful books, videos, and frequently asked questions (FAQs). Please note that the information here may be triggering to you. Always seek healthcare advice from a mental health professional.

WHAT IS PTSD?

The word 'PTSD' means a traumatic disorder. It refers to a condition closely related to anxiety and involves exposure to trauma.



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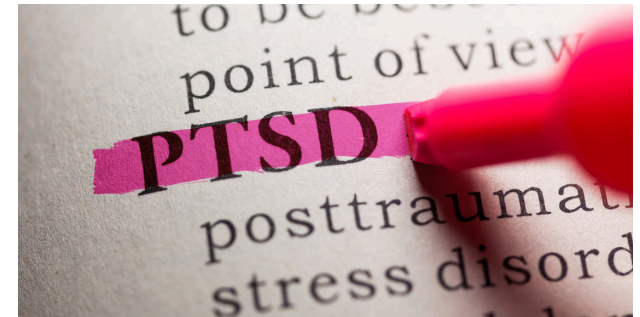
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HOW CAN YOU TELL IF IT IS EVERYDAY STRESS OR PTSD?

It is normal to feel stressed when something traumatic has happened. If you cannot come out of that feeling and have difficulty doing things, it could be a traumatic disorder.¹ It may affect your sleep, personal relationships, or mood.¹ If you are experiencing these symptoms, seek help from a mental health professional.



WHAT CAN YOU DO IF YOU HAVE SOME SYMPTOMS OF PTSD?

Knowledge is power. Learn and take action within your circle of power. The following resources and FAQs provide more information about this disorder.

Here, you can find FAQs by people who have been through trauma and FAQs by loved ones.

7 FAQs BY PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED TRAUMA

01. Can PTSD get better?

Yes, PTSD is treatable with professional help. Most people have experienced trauma, and some go on to develop PTSD. Among the 70% of American adults who go through a traumatic event, 20% develop PTSD. About 1 in 13 people experience PTSD at some point. Watch this video by Dr. Rozina on Salima's story: <https://youtu.be/kZUVYbvlmTE>

02. What is trauma?

Trauma is actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence. This can be from physical or emotional abuse. It may also be an unexpected injury or accident. Trauma can be experienced or witnessed. You might even be traumatized when trauma happens to a close family member or friend.

Trauma can happen to anyone. If you are a first responder exposed to violent injury and abuse, you are at risk for developing PTSD. You might be a nurse, doctor, firefighter, or police officer. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, you are even more likely to experience the trauma of sudden and unexpected loss. You may develop PTSD if you have been seriously injured at work, too. Click here for a great book on trauma, 'The Body Keeps Score': <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/313183/the-body-keeps-the-score-by-bessel-van-der-kolk-md/>

You may have heard of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). ACEs are traumatic events that occur in childhood. Often, people do not remember childhood trauma but they hold it in their body. Many people experience ACEs, which have profound effects on health later in life. Very few people with ACEs have full blown symptoms of PTSD. Unrecognized ACEs can make people with depression treatment resistant due to underlying trauma. Click here for a video by Dr. Rozina on overcoming adverse childhood experiences: <https://buff.ly/39Nelpa>

03. What are the symptoms of PTSD?

There are several symptoms of PTSD. You may have some but not necessarily all of them. You might struggle with depression, irritability, and anxiety. Other symptoms are nightmares, flashbacks, or memories you try to block out. It can become difficult to fall asleep or stay asleep. All of this stress can eventually make it hard to connect with family and friends. As a result, you end up withdrawing from social events or your responsibilities. Unfortunately, you might also have an unexplainable feeling that your life will be cut short. You can even become suicidal. In times of extreme stress, psychotic symptoms can come up. Hallucinations, delusions, or paranoia typically last for a short time. Remember that PTSD is a treatable disorder! If you have thoughts of hurting yourself or others, call 911 or go to an emergency room. Click here for answers on 'What Is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder?': <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/ptsd/what-is-ptsd>

04. How can you reduce your PTSD?

The first thing you can do is recognize it, so kudos for taking this step! Also, being compassionate and kind to yourself can go a long way. If you struggle with that, just imagine what you would say to your best friend. Staying connected with loved ones and engaging in self-care can be very healing, too. When you have a tough day, make time for something you enjoy or call a trusted companion. If you are already doing all of this, you may need a higher level of support through professional help. Additionally, it helps to know your triggers and tell your loved ones. Finally, take care of your mind, body, and spirit. Do this by eating healthy foods, exercising regularly, and tuning into your spirituality. Whether it is meditation or going into nature, we all have a spiritual side that guides us through difficult times.

Mindfulness meditation will help you promote positive thinking by changing your attitude and behavior.

It reduces your stress by transforming negative feelings. There are a variety of relaxation exercises and techniques your healthcare provider may recommend. These can be helpful tools you utilize anytime and anywhere. Avoiding alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs also dramatically improves your mental health. Watch this video by Dr. Rozina on how to start practicing mindfulness: <https://youtu.be/WxNxKMDfEEA>

05. What are some common symptoms for PTSD?

There are a variety of options for PTSD treatment, including natural supplements. The following is not an exhaustive list, there are many more treatments you may choose to try. Medications, therapy, or a combination of the two are common treatments. According to a nationally recognized clinical guideline, the best treatment for PTSD is trauma-focused therapy. Trauma-focused therapy, which includes prolonged exposure (PE) and eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR), have a very high level of evidence. The guideline strongly recommends PE and EMDR. Both improve PTSD symptoms; there is no difference between them. Mindfulness and physical activity are also growing areas of interest in the treatment of PTSD.

Medication is also a good option when therapy is unavailable or not preferred. Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) and serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs) are antidepressants that can help you. There are other medications and therapies that your healthcare provider may recommend to you. The care plan depends on your preference, cost, availability, and other medicines you take.



06. What is Prolonged Exposure Therapy or PE?

PE is one form of approved PTSD treatment. If you go for this therapy, your therapist will help you construct specialized homework and treatment. This trauma-focused work involves relieving avoided situations in your imagination. You then discuss your reaction and record it. Later, you listen to it with your therapist. This allows you to develop coping skills while not actually in a dangerous situation. The more you expose yourself to the problem, the less scary and the easier it becomes.

07. What is Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Therapy or 'EMDR'?

EMDR is another form of approved PTSD treatment. In many ways, it is similar to PE. It is also equally effective. If you choose EMDR, you follow a therapist who moves their fingers (or another stimulus) back and forth. You do this while imagining the trauma, focusing on your body, and rehearsing negative thoughts. Then, you do it again while rehearsing a new, preferred belief. By doing this in a safe environment with your therapist's support, reminders of trauma become more comfortable to confront.



3 FAQs FOR LOVED ONES

01. What are triggers?

Things that remind an individual with PTSD about the traumatic event are triggers. The result is a sudden and severe increase in PTSD symptoms such as anger. Triggers can be a sight, sound, or something else. It might be obvious or not. The trigger often brings flashbacks. A flashback makes a person with PTSD feel as though they are in danger, and the trauma is happening now. Experiencing trauma can make them feel violated, angry, and afraid. It can feel like nowhere is safe, and they are trapped.

02. What can you do to help someone having a flashback?

A flashback is an intense, terrifying memory of the trauma. Triggers can cause them, or they can come out of nowhere. Fortunately, there are many things you can do to help. Make supportive statements to let them know you are there for them. You can say, "I'm here for you." You can also make neutral observations to help them get grounded in the present. You might state, "We are in our home." Remember, they are feeling like the trauma is happening again. Their fight or flight response is activated, so they have a surge of stress hormones. You might consider reducing environmental stimulation to keep the setting calm. Turn down the TV, stereo noise, and bright lights. Remove any possible triggers. Ask them to feel their feet on the ground or rub their fingers together. You could suggest they place their hand on their heart. These techniques help a person get grounded in the now. They might only need one. Note that everyone is different, too. Listen to what they say is most effective, know their triggers, and prepare for these experiences beforehand.



03. When someone has PTSD, what should you not say or do?

It can be challenging to know what to say or do, especially if you are anxious. Remember that it is okay not to say anything and just be there. If your family member or friend allows it, hold their hand. Or, just stand nearby. Avoid saying things that are critical, argumentative, or invalidating. You may make comparisons if you or someone you know also have been through trauma. However, this is usually unhelpful. Ask yourself if what you are about to say or do is kind and helpful. Take care of your mental health and see a professional if you are struggling, too. Click here to discover organizations for further support: <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/anxiety-disorders>

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