Coping with PTSD

What Causes Traumatic Stress Reactions?

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is caused by witnessing or being part of a frightening or shocking event and can impact day-to-day life and productivity. Most people recover from traumatic events, but some experience severe distress, anxiety, and depression for months or even years. They frequently reexperience the event through intrusive thoughts, upsetting reminders, or nightmares. Being able to relax, concentrate, or sleep becomes difficult. They often feel detached or estranged from loved ones. These are symptoms of PTSD.



Those suffering from PTSD avoid stimuli associated with the trauma by trying not to think, feel or talk about it. They avoid places, activities and people that remind them of the trauma or may be unable to recall specifics about it. They lose interest in things they once cared about and often remain detached from others. Emotions may appear blunted and the person envisions a short future where they don't believe they will have a normal lifespan.

Know the Recovery Process

Following exposure to a trauma most people experience stress reactions. Not every traumatized person develops ongoing (chronic) or even short-term (acute) PTSD. Not everyone with PTSD has been through a dangerous event. Some experiences, like the sudden, unexpected death of a loved one, can also cause PTSD. Symptoms usually begin early, within 3 months of the traumatic incident, but sometimes they begin years afterward. Some people recover within a few months, while others have symptoms that last much longer. In some people, the condition becomes chronic.

Today, people with PTSD may be treated with psychotherapy ("talk" therapy), medications, or a combination of the two. Some ways that are often suggested for PTSD patients to cope with this illness include learning more about the disorder as well as talking to friends, family, professionals and PTSD survivors for support. Joining a support group may be helpful for some individuals.

It is useful for trauma survivors to learn more about common reactions to trauma and about PTSD. Find out what is normal. Find out what the signs are that you may need assistance from others. When you learn that the symptoms of PTSD are common, you realize that you are not alone or unbalanced. It helps to know your problems are shared by hundreds of thousands of others.

Talk to a Professional About PTSD

If you suspect that you or a loved one has post-traumatic stress disorder, it is important to seek help. If you are reluctant to seek help, keep in mind that PTSD is not a sign of weakness, and the only way to overcome it is to confront what happened to you and learn to accept it as part of your past. This process is much easier with the guidance and support of an experienced therapist or doctor. Part of taking care of yourself means using the helping resources around you.

If you or a family member is experiencing symptoms of PTSD, call Interface EAP to receive a confidential referral to speak with a counselor.

For free and confidential assistance, call your **Marital Problems Stress** Employee Assistance Program and speak with a Care Coordinator Financial **Family Problems** Legal (713) 781-3364 Se Habla Español **Alcohol/Drug Problems** (800) 324-4327 (800) 324-2490 **Depression Other Referrals**

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