

What is PTSD?

National
Center for
PTSD
Posttraumatic
Stress Disorder

PTSD stories

Maria used to enjoy spending time with friends, but after she was mugged, she couldn't even go out. When she did go, she was so anxious that she couldn't enjoy herself. After treatment, things changed. Now, she can dine out or even spend a day at a crowded amusement park. "I still have things that bug me," she says, "but my life has improved so much that the things that bother me hardly matter."



George is a Vietnam Veteran. While serving as a medic, he was unable to save an injured boy. The child died in his arms. Back home, he never held his own kids because he couldn't stand being reminded of his trauma. But with the birth of his first grandchild, he decided to get treatment. His therapy was a success. "I love holding my grandson. And you know what? I couldn't hold my kids when they were children, but I'm holding them now."



Are you in crisis?

Call 911 or 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Find treatment

www.ptsd.va.gov/public/where-to-get-help.asp

- The Sidran Institute: (410) 825-8888
- Mental Health Service Locator (SAMHSA): (800) 662-4357
- Search online for "find a therapist" and look for someone who specializes in trauma.
- **Veteran Help.** Each VA Medical Center and many VA clinics treat PTSD: (877) 222-8387 (VETS)
www.va.gov



Add local clinic information here.

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Most people have some stress-related symptoms after a trauma.

If those symptoms don't fade after a month, it might be **posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).**

**TREATMENT
CAN HELP**

PTSD *Treatment*

Treatments for PTSD include psychotherapy (counseling) and medication. Sometimes, the two are used together. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is the best treatment for PTSD. There are different types of CBT, including Cognitive Processing Therapy and Prolonged Exposure.

<i>Psychotherapy/Counseling</i>	
Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)	CPT teaches you how to identify trauma-related thoughts and change them so they are more accurate and cause less distress.
Prolonged Exposure Therapy (PE)	In PE, you talk about your trauma over and over until the memories no longer upset you. You also go to places that are safe, but that you have been staying away from because they are related to the trauma.
Stress Inoculation Training (SIT)	SIT teaches patients a set of skills they can use to manage their anxiety. These skills might include relaxation, thought stopping, and positive self-talk.
Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)	EMDR involves thinking about images and feelings that distress you while doing rapid eye movements.
<i>Medications*</i>	
Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs)	SSRI's raise the level of serotonin in your brain. This can make you feel better. The two SSRIs that are approved by the FDA for PTSD are sertraline (Zoloft™) and paroxetine (Paxil™).

**Some doctors prescribe benzodiazepines or "benzos" for people with PTSD. They are often given to people who have anxiety. While they may be of some help at first, these drugs do not treat the core PTSD symptoms. They may lead to addiction and are not recommended for long-term PTSD treatment.*

PTSD *Screening*

Only a mental health or medical professional can tell you if you have PTSD. If you went through a trauma and answer "yes" to at least three of the questions below, you should have a PTSD evaluation.

In your life, have you ever had any experience that was so frightening, horrible, or upsetting that, in the past month, you:

- Have had nightmares about the experience or thought about it when you did not want to?
- Tried hard not to think about the experience or avoided situations that reminded you of it?
- Were constantly on guard, watchful, or easily startled?
- Felt numb or detached from others, activities, or your surroundings?

PTSD *Symptoms*

- ✓ **Reliving the event**
Memories of the trauma can come back at any time and can be triggered by reminders of what happened. You may have bad dreams, or feel like you are going through the trauma again.
- ✓ **Avoiding situations that remind you of the event**
You may try to avoid places, people or things that bring back memories of the event.
- ✓ **Feeling numb**
You may find it hard to express your feelings. You may feel distant or cut off from others.
- ✓ **Feeling keyed up**
You may be on the lookout for danger. You might become angry very easily.

Other problems following trauma

If you have PTSD you may also feel guilt, shame or depression. Problems with coworkers, friends, and loved ones are common. Many people with PTSD abuse alcohol or drugs. Often, PTSD treatment can help these problems, too. The coping skills you learn to deal with PTSD work in other areas of your life.