

# Understanding Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)



Photo by: David Goehring (Flickr)

PTSD, or post-traumatic stress disorder, affects many people from all walks of life. Most of us think of PTSD as only having a real effect on war veterans and soldiers, but this problem also has dramatic effects on others who have been through something traumatic as well. It can even affect children who have been through a very daunting experience. Some of the causes of PTSD include physical, mental, or sexual abuse, fires, vehicle or airplane accidents, or serious events as a result of natural disasters. Others who

might experience PTSD include rape or assault victims. Children tend to react differently than adults when they are coping with PTSD. For children, they will typically become withdrawn, quiet, and reclusive. When a person goes through a difficult and often life changing event, it can have serious mental impacts on the person's ability to function normally.

Some common symptoms of PTSD include:

- Nightmares or flashbacks of the traumatic event
- Avoiding any dangerous or scary situations, particularly ones that remind the person of the event
- Insomnia, trouble falling and staying asleep, and difficulty concentrating
- Negative thoughts and feelings and occasional thoughts of suicide
- Memory problems or blocking out the memory of the traumatic event
- Lack of interest in activities, social gatherings, and things the person once enjoyed like hobbies or career
- Inability to keep close relationships
- "Jumpiness" at loud sounds, sudden movements, or bright lights
- Avoidance of large crowds and distrust of people
- Depression and/or anxiety

Fortunately, there are ways to treat post-traumatic stress disorder, although the road to recovery can be long and may take several different forms of treatment. Therapy with an experienced psychologist who understands PTSD is a definite must. Some therapists will offer to use a treatment called "exposure therapy," where the patient is reintroduced to the event or things that caused the event slowly until they are less afraid. For example, someone who survived a plane or car crash may need to fly again or take a short drive several times until they become more trusting and used to the situation. Over time, they become more acclimated to the thing that caused the trauma, allowing them to trust again and be able to do the things they once did all the time. Of course, there are also medications that can be prescribed such as anti-anxiety medicines or antidepressants. These medications can help to lessen the effects people feel from suffering PTSD. It is advised that patients only receive these medications from a licensed psychiatrist who can assess their individual needs and keep track of any adverse reactions the patient may experience.

When a person experiences a traumatic event, they will often bury the feelings they felt when the event happened. Over time, these feelings come back and manifest themselves, causing the person to become

extremely nervous and anxious. It is important that people who go through a difficult event seek help and treatment as soon as possible. With therapy, they can better understand and address those feelings ahead of time to prevent the nervousness that can come with PTSD. Talking to others who have survived and been through similar situations can be very helpful as well. Learning to trust and not to be afraid are the building blocks of recovering from PTSD. Many veterans of war deal with post-traumatic stress disorder because they have witnessed the horrors of war first hand. Being on the battlefield and watching people die is a harrowing thing to go through, and when they return from battle and have to deal with the world in the United States, it can become overwhelming. Whether it is a veteran or a person who has just been through a difficult ordeal, it is important that people get a better understanding of PTSD and what it means.

### **General Resources on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**

- [Symptoms, Treatment, and Help for PTSD](#)
- [What is Post-traumatic Stress Disorder \(PTSD\)?](#)
- [Treatment Options for PTSD](#)
- [Coping with a Traumatic Event](#)
- [Links Between Suicide, PTSD, and Sexual Assault](#)
- [Four-Question PTSD Screener](#)
- [Information on PTSD from the Cleveland Clinic](#)
- [Causes, Symptoms, and Treatment](#)
- [Understanding Post Traumatic Stress Disorder: The Basics](#)
- [PTSD: Helpful Information](#)
- [In-Depth PTSD Information: Children and PTSD](#)
- [Kids Health: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder](#)
- [10 Causes of PTSD in Children](#)
- [Treatment of PTSD](#)

### **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Resources for Veterans**

- [PTSD Overview](#)
- [PTSD Counseling Services for Veterans](#)
- [Vietnam Veterans of America's Guide on PTSD](#)
- [What is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder?](#)
- [Ending Nightmares Caused by PTSD](#)
- [PTSD Fact Sheet](#)