



POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

What is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder?

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a mental disorder that is triggered by the experience of (or exposure to) a traumatic event. Traumatic events can include: car accidents, combat, natural disasters, sexual and/or physical assault, or a near death experience. An individual does not need to be a part of the event to form PTSD, but just has to feel a significant level of powerlessness over the negative affects the event had on them or someone else.

A person with PTSD will usually experience four categories of symptoms:

Intrusion – Persistent and distressing memories that come in the form of nightmares and/or flashbacks.

Avoidance – The avoidance of any triggers that may remind the person of the traumatic event; triggers can be both internal and external (ex. avoiding intrusive thoughts or avoiding the place where the trauma occurred).

Negative Cognition & Mood – Feelings of guilt, numbness, anger, fear, and negative beliefs about self, others, and the world.

Arousal & Reactivity – Difficulty sleeping and/or concentrating, irritability, reckless or self-destructive behaviours.

The development of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and the severity of its symptoms is different for everyone and depends on the nature of the trauma, the environment, as well as personal characteristics.



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Who can have Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder?

While PTSD can occur in anyone who has experienced or witnessed a traumatic life event, it is most commonly experienced by those in veteran populations, as well as survivors of sexual assault. PTSD is also 3 times more prevalent in females than in males in the general population.

Should I be concerned?

PTSD can very quickly disturb an individual's ability to perform daily tasks, as their symptoms often prevent them from wanting to do something that may trigger a trauma memory. If this is the case, support is likely needed in order to help the person work through their trauma and develop coping strategies.

Individuals with PTSD are also more likely to have other anxiety disorders and depression. The combination of these disorders can be extremely debilitating.

How can I help?

If you know someone who has been through a traumatic event and is experiencing symptoms of PTSD, reach out to them and let them know that you are there to support them. One thing that can intensify symptoms, or make them harder to remit, is a feeling of loss of support. Be patient with the person and find out what they need to do to feel better. You can also direct them to the appropriate community and/or online resources, and continue to be supportive during their recovery process.

Resources

- <http://www.amhs-kfla.ca>
- TALK (Listening Support – Kingston) 613-544-1771
- <https://cmha.ca/documents/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd>
- <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/index.shtml>