

# FACTS ABOUT PTSD

## WHAT IS POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)?

PTSD is an enduring, distressing emotional disorder that follows exposure to a traumatic event during which one feels fear, helpless or horror.

The individual re-experiences the trauma, avoids stimuli associated with it, and develops a numbing of emotional responsiveness. Further, it markedly interferes with the individual's ability to function. In some people, signs of the disorder do not develop until several weeks, sometimes months or years after the event has occurred.

Around 20-25% of people exposed to a traumatic event develop PTSD. A traumatic event may be direct experience of an event that involves death, injury or threat or witnessing a threat, injury or death of another person.

## SYMPTOMS

- A sense of despair or hopelessness
- Anxious and fearful, especially when exposed to events or situations reminiscent of the trauma
- Emotional numbness
- Depression
- Guilt and Worry
- Persistent re-experience of event (Flashbacks)
- Dreams or recurring nightmares
- Intrusive recollections of event
- Difficulty making decisions
- Unable to focus on work or daily activities
- Spontaneously crying
- Avoidance of people or places that are reminiscent of the event
- Disturbed sleep
- Easily startled

## CAUSES

When an individual experiences or witnesses a traumatic event, they may in turn develop PTSD. However, an individual may experience PTSD even if trauma is indirect such as, family member or friends experiencing a danger or harmed.

## TREATMENT

- Psychological intervention and/or counselling
- Psychiatric treatment
- Medication
- Relaxation and meditation education
- Support Groups to provide support and understanding to the individual, friends and family

## HOW TO HELP YOURSELF

Almost all people with PTSD can be treated successfully. Recovery requires action, and getting support plays a big role, as doing it alone may be difficult.

It is important to cultivate supportive relationships and share your experience with friends and family so they may be able to provide the support you need.

Joining a support group and being with others who may be experiencing similar problems can be reassuring and assist in the recovery process.

Many people with PTSD think the feelings will go away and they will forget about their traumatic experience. However, most clinicians agree that the original trauma should be faced in order to develop effective coping strategies and overcome the debilitating effects of the disorder.

Talk to your doctor at any time following a traumatic experience if you feel distressed, or your reactions are significantly interfering with your daily living, work and your relationships.

## HOW CAN FAMILY AND FRIENDS HELP?

Be understanding and empathic, reminding the person they can recover, including providing emotional support and reassurance. It is important to be non-judgemental and encourage them to talk about their recovery.

## REFERRAL/SUPPORT INFO

**Drug ARM** 1300 656 800  
info@drugarm.com.au  
drugarm.com.au

**Drug ARM Central Intake**  
07 3620 8880

**Lifeline Australia** 13 11 14  
24/7 crisis support

**Or contact your local GP (General Practitioner)**

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## REFERENCES

1 Crino, R. (2014). Treatment guidance for common mental health disorders: obsessive-compulsive disorder. InPsych October 2014. Retrieved from <https://www.psychology.org.au/Content.aspx?ID=6212>



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