

What is POST TRAUMATIC STRESS?

Post Traumatic Stress (PTS) is a disorder that develops when a person either experienced, witnessed or even heard about a scary, dangerous or shocking event. It is natural for a person to go into the “fight-or-flight” mode when experiencing a traumatic event, this triggers the body to respond to the situation and protect the person from harm. It is also natural to feel frightened (or a range of other reactions) after the event, but most people recover from these symptoms naturally. It is when the feelings of stress and fright continue to last for at least a month, even though that person is no longer in danger, when it is classified as PTS Disorder. Sometimes symptoms may not appear until months or even years after the traumatic event. Traumatic events can be war, abuse, physical and sexual assault, accident, threatened death, serious injury, disaster or other serious events.

Symptoms of PTS:

Person must have all of the following for at least a month:

- At least one re-experiencing symptom
 - At least one avoidance symptom
 - At least two arousal and reactivity symptoms
 - At least two cognition and mood symptoms
- ❖ **Re-experiencing Symptoms**
 - Frightening thoughts or intrusive distressing recollections of the traumatic event
 - Recurrent bad dreams and nightmares where the content is related to the traumatic event
 - Flash-backs where the person is reliving the trauma over and over and presenting physical symptoms like heart racing and sweating
 - Psychological reactions to reminders of the traumatic event
 - ❖ **Avoidance Symptoms**
 - Avoiding thoughts or feelings related to the traumatic event
 - Avoiding places, people, situations, activities or objects that are reminders of the traumatic event
 - ❖ **Arousal and Reactivity Symptoms**
 - Reckless or destructive behaviour
 - Hypervigilance
 - Feeling jumpy or are easily startled
 - Feeling tense or “on edge”
 - Being easily irritated and angered and having anger outbursts
 - Having difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep or restless sleep
 - Having difficulty concentrating
 - ❖ **Cognition and Mood Symptoms**
 - Trouble remembering important aspects of the traumatic event (not linked to drugs, alcohol or brain injury)
 - Negative thoughts, beliefs or expectations about the world, others or oneself
 - Distorted feelings of blame and guilt of self and others about the cause and consequences of the traumatic event
 - Loss of interest or participation in enjoyable activities
 - Feelings of detachment or estrangement from others
 - Inability to experience positive emotions



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