

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is an anxiety disorder caused by very stressful, frightening or distressing events.

Someone with PTSD often relives the traumatic event through nightmares and flashbacks, and may experience feelings of isolation, irritability and guilt. They may also have problems sleeping, such as insomnia, and find concentrating difficult.

These symptoms are often severe and persistent enough to have a significant impact on the person's day-to-day life.

Any situation that a person finds traumatic can cause PTSD. These can include:

- serious road accidents
- violent personal assaults, such as sexual assault, mugging or robbery
- serious health problems
- childbirth experiences

When you experience a stressful event, your nervous system reacts with the fight-or-flight response. Your heart pounds faster, your blood pressure rises, and your muscles tighten, increasing your strength and reaction speed. Once the danger has passed, your nervous system calms your body, lowers your heart rate and blood pressure, and winds back down to its normal state.

PTSD occurs when you experience too much stress in a situation. Even though the danger has passed, your nervous system is "stuck," unable to return to its normal state of balance and you're unable to move on from the event. Recovering from PTSD involves helping your nervous system become "unstuck" so you can heal and move on from the trauma.

PTSD can develop immediately after someone experiences a disturbing event, or it can occur weeks, months or even years later. It is estimated to affect about 1 in every 3 people who have a traumatic experience, but it's not clear exactly why some people develop the condition and others do not.

People who repeatedly experience traumatic situations, such as severe neglect, abuse or violence, may be diagnosed with complex PTSD. Complex PTSD can cause similar symptoms to PTSD and may not develop until years after the event.

It is often more severe if the trauma was experienced early in life, as this can affect a child's development.

PTSD can be successfully treated, even when it develops many years after a traumatic event. Any treatment depends on the severity of symptoms and how soon they occur after the traumatic event.

Resources:

PTSD Factsheet

PTSD – A Self-Help guide

PTSD thought record sheet

What is PTSD?

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd-and-complex-ptsd/about-ptsd/>

PTSD – An Overview

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/overview/>

PTSD Help

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/ptsd-trauma/ptsd-symptoms-self-help-treatment.htm>

