

Posttraumatic Stress Awareness

In addition to many other topics, June is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Month. PTSD is triggered by a traumatic event — either experienced or witnessed. After exposure to a traumatic event, it is extremely common to have difficulty adjusting and coping; but with time, good self-care, and proper treatment (when indicated), people usually do get better.

Symptoms – There are four types of PTSD symptoms that can vary over time or person to person.

Intrusive memories:

- ✓ Recurrent, unwanted distressing memories of the traumatic event
- ✓ Reliving the traumatic event as if it were happening again (flashbacks)
- ✓ Upsetting dreams or nightmares about the traumatic event
- ✓ Physical or emotional distress to something that reminds you of the traumatic event

Avoidance:

- ✓ Trying to avoid thinking or talking about the traumatic event
- ✓ Avoiding places, activities or people that remind you of the traumatic event
- ✓ Negative changes in thinking and mood

Negative changes in thinking and mood:

- ✓ Negative thoughts about yourself, other people or the world
- ✓ Hopelessness about the future
- ✓ Memory problems, including not remembering aspects of the traumatic event
- ✓ Difficulty maintaining close relationships
- ✓ Feeling detached from family and friends
- ✓ Lack of interest in activities you once enjoyed
- ✓ Difficulty experiencing positive emotions
- ✓ Feeling emotionally numb
- ✓ Changes in physical and emotional reactions

Changes in physical and emotional reactions (arousal symptoms):

- ✓ Being easily startled or frightened
- ✓ Always being on guard for danger
- ✓ Self-destructive behavior, such as drinking too much or driving too fast
- ✓ Trouble sleeping
- ✓ Trouble concentrating
- ✓ Irritability, angry outbursts or aggressive behavior
- ✓ Overwhelming guilt or shame

PTSD symptoms can vary in intensity over time. You may have more symptoms when you're stressed (in general), or when you come across reminders of what you went through. However, if you have disturbing thoughts and feelings about the traumatic event for more than a month, if symptoms are severe, or if you feel you're having trouble getting your life back under control, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional. Getting treatment as soon as possible can help prevent PTSD symptoms from getting worse.

Additional information: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20355967>

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