



Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that occurs when an individual experiences a traumatic event. Traumatic events are shocking and scary events which can cause physical, emotional, or psychological harm. Our disabled brethren and their caretakers often exhibit symptoms of PTSD, and they may not be aware they have PTSD. If you are a veteran, or caretaker, who experiences these symptoms and/or meets the criteria for PTSD, please seek help from a mental health professional. If you are feeling suicidal, please call the hotline below immediately. You are not alone.

Symptoms can include:

-  **ON ALERT FOR DANGER**
-  **HYPERVIGILANCE**
-  **NIGHTMARES**
-  **TROUBLE SLEEPING**
-  **PANIC ATTACKS**
-  **FLASHBACKS**
-  **SUICIDAL THOUGHTS**
-  **FEELING GUILT OR SHAME**
-  **DEPRESSION**

Criteria for PTSD (DSM-5)

Criterion A: Exposure

Being exposed to death, threatened death, actual or threatened serious injury, actual or threatened sexual violence - through direct exposure, witnessing the trauma, learning that a relative or close friend was exposed to a trauma, or indirect exposure to aversive details of the trauma, usually in the course of professional duties (e.g., first responders, medics)

Criterion B: Intrusive Symptoms

The traumatic event is persistently re-experienced in the following way(s): unwanted upsetting memories, nightmares, flashbacks, emotional distress after exposure to traumatic reminders, physical reactivity after exposure to traumatic reminders

Criterion C: Avoidance

Avoidance of trauma-related stimuli after the trauma, in the following way(s): trauma-related thoughts or feelings, trauma-related external reminders

Criterion D: Negative alterations in cognitions and mood

Negative thoughts or feelings that began or worsened after the trauma, in the following way(s): Inability to recall key features of the trauma, overly negative thoughts and assumptions about oneself or the world, exaggerated blame of self or others for causing the trauma, negative affect, decreased interest in activities, feeling isolated, difficulty experiencing positive affect

Criterion E: Alterations in arousal and reactivity

Trauma-related arousal and reactivity that began or worsened after the trauma, in the following way(s): Irritability or aggression, risky or destructive behavior, hypervigilance, heightened startle reaction [getting startled easily], difficulty concentrating, difficulty sleeping

Criterion F: Duration

Symptoms last for more than 1 month.

Criterion G: Functional significance

Symptoms create distress or functional impairment (e.g., social, occupational).

Criterion H: Exclusion

Symptoms are not due to medication, substance use, or other illness.

Depersonalization, Derealization, and Delayed Specification

In addition to meeting criteria for diagnosis, an individual experiences high levels of either of the following in reaction to trauma-related stimuli:

- Depersonalization: Experience of being an outside observer of or detached from oneself (e.g., feeling as if "this is not happening to me" or one were in a dream).
- Derealization: Experience of unreality, distance, or distortion (e.g., "things are not real").
- Delayed Specification: Full diagnostic criteria are not met until at least six months after the trauma(s), although onset of symptoms may occur immediately.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

If you, or anyone you know, meets some or all of the criteria for PTSD, please seek help from a mental health professional. There are many low and no-cost services available for our disabled brethren and caretakers. To view mental health resources available, please visit www.dven.org/mental-health.

EMERGENCY HOTLINE

If you are a service member, veteran, or caretaker in crisis, there are specially trained responders ready to help you, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Phone: Dial 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1
Text: Send a text message to 838255 to connect with a VA responder

**For additional information and resources,
please visit www.dven.org**