

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

What is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?

PTSD is an anxiety disorder, characterised by the experience of anxiety, caused by witnessing extremely frightening, tragic or traumatic events. The events often includes the fear of serious injury or death. Related to PTSD is [Acute Distress Disorder](#) or [Trauma](#). Distress from traumatic events if handled well often dissipates within four or so weeks after the event. If untreated or not managed well, they could develop into PTSD. Not be confused with PTSD is OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder), which is not caused by a past traumatic event.

Causes of PTSD

War zones, serious accidents, train wrecks, natural disasters such as earthquakes or floods, captivity, torture, violent attacks and real or threatened rape can cause PTSD. The event has made such an imprint on the person that they can't get it out of their mind. They experience the same upset as when the event occurred, and may have nightmares and or be distressed by objects or places that remind them of the event. Things that have nothing to do with it become entangled in memories, increasing distress. Anniversaries of the event also evoke additional anguish.

The severity of the event was too much for the normal processing function to be completed. Thoughts and feelings that occurred at the time of the event are 'still around,' and intrude into normal consciousness. Other influential factors include the state of the sufferer at the time of the event. If the person were already under stress, had inadequate coping mechanisms, poor self-esteem or limited resilience, he or she is more likely to be adversely affected.

Symptoms of PTSD

Symptoms of PTSD include aggression, anger, anxiety, depression, irritability and violence. Concentration is often impaired, as the normal cognitive functions are taken over by strong, unpleasant memories and anxiety.

Effects of PTSD

Situations reminiscent of the event are avoided. The person may become hypervigilant and easily startled. They may 'numb out' to try to get away from their disturbing thoughts. Family and work life are likely to be negatively affected. Relationships are especially vulnerable. The PTSD sufferer is often in such a heightened state of anxiety that he or she is unable to be responsive to a partner or feel affectionate. They may be unable to give affection or receive it. Most of their emotional resources have been taken over by the trauma of the event.

Managing PTSD

Severe PTSD symptoms may be eased with medications to stabilise the person sufficiently for them to begin recovery work. Appropriate counselling and therapy will be needed for long-term and permanent relief. Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) is especially useful. CBT includes exploration and reconstruction of the beliefs and thoughts that cause the distress. Carrying out appropriate activities helps clients to face and accept their experiences, without the distress attached to them.

[MiCBT \(Mindfulness-integrated-Cognitive Behaviour Therapy\)](#) provides additional relief of the distressing symptoms. You learn the calming techniques of Mindfulness meditation. Don't suffer any longer. Start today to get your life back. Get in touch if you would like to know more, or to get help.