

Here are some things you can do to help support someone with C-PTSD:

- ✓ let them share at their own pace
- ✓ allow them to be upset
- ✓ don't say "it could've been worse"
- ✓ learn their triggers and ask them how to help
- ✓ avoid assumptions and judgments about how they feel
- ✓ don't question why they didn't do something differently in the past

KEEP IN MIND

C-PTSD can be a lifelong condition, but therapy and medication can help. You don't have to walk through it alone. If you know someone with C-PTSD, be patient as you offer support. And let them decide when and how much to share.



Relational Trauma & Complex PTSD
Health & Wellness

Relational Trauma & Complex PTSD

Some people struggle with relational stress but don't know why.

While you might be familiar with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), you might not have heard of complex post-traumatic stress disorder (C-PTSD).

PTSD & C-PTSD are disorders caused by exposure to profoundly disturbing experiences that exceed a person's ability to cope and impact their ability to function effectively in everyday life.

PTSD occurs as a result of single, repeated, or extreme exposure to trauma, such as actual or threatened death, serious injury, sexual violence, or from witnessing trauma experienced by others.

C-PTSD occurs as a result of prolonged exposure to relational trauma involving emotional, sexual, or physical abuse, neglect, betrayal, or abandonment often beginning in childhood.

People with this disorder can experience overwhelming emotions and cognitive distortions that impact how they think about and respond to themselves, others (especially in close relationships), and the world around them.

COMMON SYMPTOMS OF C-PTSD

- **Behavioral:** difficulty trusting others, referencing past negative experiences during present interactions, isolating and avoiding triggers that provoke intense emotions and fear, alcohol/drug misuse, self-destructive patterns of behavior

- **Emotional:** suicidal thoughts, difficulty regulating emotions, and reoccurring overwhelming, powerful negative emotions expressed as physical symptoms
- **Cognitive:** feeling flawed at your core, being disconnected from self and others, difficulty processing the passing of time, feeling like you're not an active participant in your own life

DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

C-PTSD is often diagnosed by symptoms, medical history, mental health history, and exposure to trauma.

For treatment, look for a mental health professional trained in trauma-informed therapy, such as EMDR and Internal Family Systems.

Here are some things that can help in addition to treatment:

- ✓ join a C-PTSD support group
- ✓ share your struggles with people you trust
- ✓ let your brain and body rest
- ✓ prioritize regular physical activity
- ✓ set realistic, achievable daily goals
- ✓ identify and seek out comforting situations
- ✓ avoid self-medicating with drugs or alcohol
- ✓ be kind to yourself/practice positive self-talk
- ✓ learn about C-PTSD, find resources, and advocate for yourself