

medications you use, and other diagnoses. Consider bringing someone along to appointments to help you remember any information.

- ✓ **Practice self-care** – Proper rest, a healthy diet, and exercise are beneficial. Avoid self-medicating with alcohol and drugs.
- ✓ **Seek community** – Isolating yourself from people who care about you won't help. You don't need to talk openly about the event, just spend time with those who care. Also, consider finding a support group. Community resources or your doctor can help you find the right one for you.

KEEP IN MIND

PTSD is not something you need to battle alone. Turn to others, personal or professional, to receive help and learn healthy coping strategies.

What positive steps will you take today to address PTSD and move towards a healthier life?



What is PTSD?
Mental Health

What is PTSD?

TRAUMATIC EVENTS AFFECT EVERYONE, but persistent symptoms for weeks and months could be indicative of PTSD.

Imagine yourself making healthy choices that strengthen you in the face of adversity.

Fear is a normal and even beneficial part of life. In times of danger, fear triggers the body's fight-or-flight response, alerting us to stay on guard. However, a person struggling with PTSD experiences a reaction whether danger is real or perceived.

PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) is most often associated with war veterans, but anyone is susceptible after a traumatic event. Nearly 3.5% of Americans suffer from PTSD after such events, which might include physical abuse, a car accident, natural disasters, sexual assault, or any other traumatic situation.

EVALUATE YOUR STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Physical, emotional, and mental symptoms are natural after a trauma. However, if they persist after several weeks or months, it's important to check in with your doctor or a mental health professional. An official PTSD diagnosis might be warranted. Symptoms include three major categories:

- **Re-experiencing** – Often triggered by words, thoughts, or situations.
 - Flashbacks or reliving the trauma
 - Scary thoughts, nightmares
- **Avoidance** – Switching up a routine to prevent re-experiencing thoughts.
 - Avoiding places that remind you of the event
 - Feeling guilty, depressed, or emotionally numb

- Losing interest in enjoyable activities
- **Hyperarousal** – Experiencing heightened emotions.
 - Difficulty sleeping
 - Angry outbursts
 - Easily startled or tensed

Substance abuse, depression, and anxiety disorders can also accompany PTSD. If you're experiencing suicidal thoughts, ask for help or call a suicide hotline immediately. .

RISKS AND TREATMENT

PTSD is more likely to affect those with a family history of mental illness, no social support network, or a history of childhood trauma. Your brain's chemical response to stress is also a contributor. You can reduce your PTSD risk with healthy coping strategies, such as leaning on family or friends, attending a support group, and eliminating self-blame.

Those seeking PTSD treatment typically use medication, psychotherapy, or both. Talk therapy is also effective to practice anger management, identify guilt or shame, and learn relational techniques. If your loved one is struggling with PTSD, remember to give them space when needed. If they're seeking help, don't pressure them to talk about everything with you too.

ACTION STEPS

- ✓ **Identify** – Make a list of any symptoms you have and how long you've experienced them. Write down anything helpful for your doctor, including past events triggering intense fear,