

Join a community support group.

One of the best ways of dealing with a traumatic event is to interact with people who can understand what you are going through.

Community support groups can go a long way in helping you achieve this. For instance, survivors of a natural disaster can bond together and meet regularly for facilitated group therapy. Similarly, looking for organizations that cater precisely to your unique situation (e.g. a non-profit for women survivors of abuse) can help you get in touch with others who have similar lived experiences.

Increase Sense of Safety. Healing and Post-Traumatic Growth can be facilitated by a restoration of a sense of safety and balance. After a natural disaster, for example, get yourself to a shelter that can protect you from harm. Surround yourself with other people who can make you feel safe. Practice physical or emotional defensive strategies to feel more empowered about tackling some of the triggers of our fears.

Reach Out.

And of course, never underestimate the value of reaching out to understanding friends and family members. Having those who care about you around you can go a long way in helping you cope with trauma and stress.



If you or someone you know may be suffering with traumatic stress or PTSD, you can contact us for professional psychotherapy, assessment, and/or psychiatric consultation.



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MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE

Understanding PTSD

Finding Ways to Cope and Grow Amidst Traumatic Stress

What is Trauma?

“Trauma” refers to the impact of an event or series of events intense and out of the ordinary, that it causes significant changes in a person’s physical, emotional, mental and spiritual well-being.

What is traumatic for one person is not necessarily traumatic for another, although there are major life events generally considered as traumatic: violence, physical/ verbal/ sexual abuse, a natural or a man-made disaster, terrorism and war, and bankruptcy.

An event need not happen directly to a person for the event to be traumatic; at times, merely observing a traumatic event can cause trauma, as is the case with witnessing violence or hearing about someone else’s difficulties.

When a person’s coping resources is not enough to deal with the impact of traumatic event, a traumatized person can experience PTSD or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

What are the symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder?

a. Persistent re-experiencing of traumatic event.

A person with PTSD is often troubled by unwanted recollections of the traumatic event. For example, a person who survived a robbery can have intrusive mental pictures of the robber while he or she is doing regular tasks at work. Sensory hallucinations can also occur; for example a tsunami survivor can have moments when he or she hears the sound of waves, or smell the cadavers after the tragedy.

These unwanted recollections don’t just occur during waking hours; persistent nightmares can also be a symptom of PTSD.

b. Avoidance of stimuli associated with trauma.

A person with PTSD also finds it extremely difficult to be around anything that reminds him or her of the traumatic event. Reactions to proximity to such stimuli can range from feelings of fear, anger or sadness, to extreme panic attacks.

Avoidance of traumatic information can include physically staying away from a particular location, inability to remember painful information, numbing of one’s feelings and a feeling of detachment from people or situations that serve as reminders of the traumatic event.

c. Hyper-arousal

People experiencing PTSD often become overly vigilant and excessively aware of their surroundings. Hyper-arousal can involve difficulty in falling asleep, oversensitivity to certain sights, sounds or smells, and a feeling of constant alertness in case the traumatic event should recur. For example, survivors of war often find themselves on the constant look-out for signs of combat or danger.

d. Having more negative thoughts and feelings than before the event.

Emotional distress and/or changes and impairment in thinking can result from trauma. Feelings of sadness, fear, numbness or anxiety can accompany PTSD. Not remember the traumatic event or aspects of the traumatic event, as well as not being able to talk about them can also be a result of trauma. You may start to think there is danger everywhere, or that the people around you cannot be trusted. You may feel shame or guilt about not being able to have prevented the traumatic event, or not done more to cope or help others.

Symptoms have to be present for at least one month before a mental health professional can consider if the condition qualifies as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. The above mentioned symptoms are normal after any stressful event, which is why the duration and intensity of symptoms are factors in diagnosis.

What to do if you have PTSD?

Self Care.

When trauma survivors take direct action to cope with their stress reactions, they become more empowered to deal with the extraordinary situation they experienced. Learn about grounding exercises (see tip box), yoga, mindfulness strategies, journaling, and spending time with emotional support animals. These activities trigger relaxation which helps during trauma reactions.

Consult a Mental Health Professional.

Talking to a mental health professional can assist in trauma recovery and post-traumatic growth.

These treatments include trauma-informed cognitive-behavioral therapy, EMDR therapy, behavioral therapy, supportive counseling and mindfulness interventions. You may also take medication, if needed, to manage your symptoms.

Consult a licensed counselor, psychiatrist or psychotherapist in your area to know how you can avail of these treatments.

