

Symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

According to the DSM IV, a medical reference commonly used by health care professionals to aid in diagnosis, being exposed to a traumatic event in which the following were present:

- The person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others;
- The person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror. (Note: In children, this may be expressed instead by disorganized or agitated behavior.)

The person re-experiences the traumatic event through

- Intrusive, upsetting memories of the event
- Flashbacks (acting or feeling like the event is happening again)
- Nightmares (either of the event or of other frightening things)
- Feelings of intense distress when reminded of the trauma
- Intense physical reactions to reminders of the event (e.g. pounding heart, rapid breathing, nausea, muscle tension, sweating)

There is persistent avoidance and emotional numbing by:

- Avoiding activities, places, thoughts, or feelings that remind you of the trauma
- Inability to remember important aspects of the trauma
- Loss of interest in activities and life in general
- Feeling detached from others and emotionally numb
- Sense of a limited future (you don't expect to live a normal life span, get married, have a career)

There are symptoms of increased arousal

- Difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Irritability or outbursts of anger
- Difficulty concentrating
- Hypervigilance (on constant "red alert")
- Feeling jumpy and easily startled

Other common symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder

- Anger and irritability
- Guilt, shame, or self-blame
- Substance abuse
- Depression and hopelessness
- Suicidal thoughts and feelings
- Feeling alienated and alone
- Feelings of mistrust and betrayal
- Headaches, stomach problems, chest pain