

TRAUMA AND PTSD

Factsheet

Trauma is the initial shock of a stressful event or incident, either psychological, physical or both which can stir or create strong, unwanted and disturbing feelings.

There are many different types of stressful event or incident which might bring this on, including harmful or life threatening events, for example:

- sudden illness or accident
- violent assault
- death of somebody close
- seeing other people hurt or killed
- abuse, harassment or bullying
- extreme violence or war e.g. military combat

What happens after a traumatic event

Feelings can range from those of shock, feeling stunned, dazed or numb through to anger, self-harming and potentially suicidal. There can also be feelings of denial, sometimes the person cannot accept what has happened to them so may behave as if it had not. Certain reactions may manifest differently for individuals over time and should not be dismissed.

It is important not to be judgemental or make assumptions about how someone is coping. People react differently to traumatic events and take varying amounts of time to come to terms with and deal with what has happened to them. They may feel a range of feelings and emotions, including:

- **Fear** – that the same thing will happen again or that they may lose control of their feelings and breakdown.
- **Helplessness** – that the event has taken place and they could do nothing about it. They may feel helpless, vulnerable and completely overwhelmed.
- **Anger** – about what has happened and with whoever was responsible.
- **Guilt** – that they have survived when others have suffered or died. They may feel that they could have done something to prevent it.
- **Sadness** – if people were injured or killed, especially if it was someone they knew.

- **Shame or embarrassment** – that they have these strong feelings they can't control, especially if they need others to support them.
- **Relief** – that the danger is over and gone.
- **Hope** – that their life will return to normal.

Physical effects

In the weeks after a traumatic event a person may start to experience the resulting physical effects. They may experience the following:

- Sleeplessness
- Change in appetite, sex drive or libido
- Tiredness
- Aches and pains
- Dreams and nightmares
- Heart beating faster
- Poor concentration or memory
- Anxiousness
- Difficulty thinking clearly
- Low mood or mood swings
- Headaches or light headedness

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

PTSD is a type of anxiety disorder which may develop after experiencing a traumatic event. A diagnosed individual might be told they have mild, moderate or severe PTSD, or one of the following:

- **Delayed-onset PTSD** – if symptoms emerge more than six months after experiencing the trauma.
- **Complex PTSD** – if the trauma was experienced at an early age or it lasted for a long time.

In addition to the physical effects after trauma, if somebody is suffering from PTSD they might also experience the following:

- Flashbacks or nightmares about the event.
- Avoidance and numbing, trying to keep busy and avoid thinking about the event.
- Being tense and on alert at all times, in case the event happens again.

It is important to note that experiencing one or more of these effects does not mean somebody is definitely experiencing PTSD. A full diagnosis must be sought from a GP.

Treatment

The main treatments for trauma and PTSD are talking therapies and prescriptions. It is possible to be successfully treated many years after the traumatic event/s occurred, which means it is never too late to get help. If somebody is suffering they should be encouraged to speak to their GP or seek further support from a specialist organisation. For further information on treatment visit; www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/treatment

Ways to help

Giving somebody reassurance, validating their feelings, experiences, behaviours and physical symptoms is really important. They should be encouraged to:

- Give themselves time to accept what has happened.
- Not cut themselves off from others.
- Take some time for themselves.
- Talk it over at a pace they feel comfortable with.
- Carry out normal everyday activities with other people, including resuming any hobbies or interests they had once enjoyed.

Find out more

The following list is a small selection of the wide range of organisations which provide support and publish information on trauma and PTSD. *The MCF does not endorse or recommend any of the organisations listed.*

- **Anxiety UK**
Support, help and information for those with anxiety disorders including PTSD.
Call 03444 775 774
www.anxietyuk.org.uk
- **ASSIST trauma care**
Information and specialist help for people with PTSD and anyone supporting them.
Call 01788 551919
www.assisttraumacare.org.uk
- **Childline**
Help for anyone under the age of 19 with any issue they're going through.
Call 0800 1111
www.childline.org.uk
- **Combat Stress**
Provides UK wide support to veterans from every service and every conflict.
Call 0800 1381619
www.combatstress.org.uk

- **Help for Adult Victims of Child Abuse**
Information and support for adults who have experienced any type of childhood abuse, run by survivors.
www.havoca.org
- **Mind**
Provides advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health issue.
Call 0300 123 3393
<https://www.mind.org.uk/>
- **PTSD UK**
Campaigns to improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding of the condition and treatments available for those dealing with trauma.
www.ptsduk.org
- **Victim Support**
Provides emotional and practical support for people affected by crime and traumatic events.
Call 0808 168 9111
www.victimsupport.org.uk
- **Young Minds**
Leading the fight for a future where all young minds are supported and empowered.
www.youngminds.org.uk

Other information

Masonic Charitable Foundation

The MCF provides grants and support for Freemasons and their family members. A wide range of help is available for daily living costs; health, care and wellbeing; and education-related costs for children and young people.

Call 0800 035 60 90 or visit www.mcf.org.uk

You may also be interested in the following Masonic Charitable Foundation resources:

MCF Factsheets:

- **Bereavement**
- **Domestic abuse**
- **Loneliness**
- **Mental health**

Scan the QR code below or visit mcf.org.uk/resources/almoner-resources



Whilst every care has been taken to verify accuracy, the information in this factsheet is for guidance only.

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