

PTSD Signs, Symptoms and When to Seek Help

Recognizing Traumatic Experiences & Presentation of PTSD Symptoms



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“Big T” traumas

“Big T” traumas such as a car accident, an assault, a natural disaster, or even the death of a significant person in your life.

VS

“Small t” traumas

“Small t” traumas which could include the loss of a job, a divorce, or infidelity in a romantic relationship.

Symptoms of PTSD:

PTSD signs and symptoms include but are not limited to the presence of any of the following symptoms as they relate to the sufferer’s traumatic event(s):

Intrusive symptoms:

- Nightmares
- Flashbacks and other dissociative reactions
- Intrusive thoughts
- Severe emotional distress or PTSD physical symptoms or reaction to anything that reminds you of the event(s).



Alterations in reactivity and arousal states:

- Irritable or angry outbursts with seemingly little prompting
- Self-destructive or reckless behavior
- Hypervigilance
- Heightened startle response
- Sleep disturbances
- Difficulty concentrating



Avoidant symptoms:

- Effort to avoid internal reminders of the event, such as thoughts and feelings, including body sensations
- Effort to avoid external reminders, such as the place, activities, and/or people associated with the traumatic event(s).



Negative alterations of cognition and mood associated with the traumatic event(s):

- Inability to remember certain aspects of the event(s)
- Negative beliefs about the world, others, and/or oneself
- Persistent distorted beliefs about the cause of the traumatic event(s)
- Lack of interest and engagement in activities
- Feeling detached or disconnected from others or oneself
- Persistent negative mood states, such as horror, fear, anger, and guilt
- Inability to experience positive emotions such as happiness, satisfaction, and loving feelings



*It is important to note that individuals meeting criteria for PTSD can all present with different combinations of the above mentioned symptoms. Not everyone that experiences trauma symptoms necessarily meets criteria for a PTSD diagnosis. An official diagnosis for PTSD must be determined by a licensed mental health professional. Regardless of official diagnosis, if the individual experiencing symptoms identifies distress and a readiness for treatment, seek treatment as soon as possible.