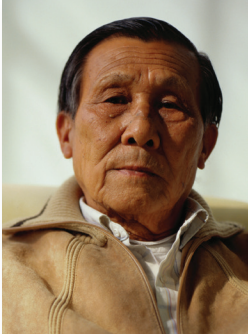


## STORIES

**George** is a Vietnam Veteran. While serving as a medic, he was unable to save an injured boy. The child died in his arms. Back home, he never held his own kids because he couldn't stand being reminded of his trauma. But with the birth of his first grandchild, he decided to get treatment. His therapy was a success. "I love holding my grandson. And you know what? I couldn't hold my kids when they were children, but I'm holding them now."



**Maria** used to enjoy spending time with friends, but after she was mugged, she couldn't even go out. When she did go, she was so anxious that she couldn't enjoy herself. After treatment, things changed. Now, she can dine

out or even spend a day at a crowded amusement park. "I still have things that bug me," she says, "but my life has improved so much that the things that bother me hardly matter."



National Center for  
**PTSD**

POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

ADD LOCAL CLINIC INFORMATION

### Are you in crisis? Call 911

Call 911 or 1-800-273-TALK (8255)  
[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

### Find PTSD treatment

[www.ptsd.va.gov/public/where-to-get-help.asp](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/where-to-get-help.asp)

**The Sidran Institute** (410) 825-8888  
**Mental Health Service Locator (SAMHSA)** (800) 662-4357  
**Veteran Help:** Each VA Medical Center and (877) 222-8387  
many VA clinics treat PTSD. or [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

Updated April 2019

W W W . P T S D . V A . G O V

### WHAT IS

# PTSD?

**Most people have some stress-related symptoms after a trauma. If those symptoms don't fade after a month, it might be posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).**

### TREATMENT WORKS

W W W . P T S D . V A . G O V



## COMMON SYMPTOMS

### ✓ Reliving the event

Memories of the trauma can come back at any time and can be triggered by reminders of what happened. You may have bad dreams, or feel like you are going through the trauma again.

### ✓ Avoiding situations that remind you of the event

You may try to avoid places, people or things that bring back memories of the event.



### ✓ Negative changes in beliefs and feelings

The way you think about yourself and others changes because of the trauma. You may have trouble experiencing your emotions, think no one can be trusted, or feel guilt or shame.

### ✓ Feeling keyed up

You may be on the lookout for danger. You might become angry very easily.

## Other problems following trauma

If you have PTSD you may also feel guilt, shame, or depression. Problems with coworkers, friends, and loved ones are common. Many people with PTSD abuse alcohol or drugs. Often, PTSD treatment can help these problems, too. The coping skills you learn to deal with PTSD work in other areas of your life.

## SCREENING

Only a mental health or medical professional can tell you if you have PTSD. If you went through a trauma and answer “yes” to at least three of the questions below, you should have a PTSD evaluation.



In your life, have you ever had any experience that was so frightening, horrible, or upsetting that, in the past month, you:

- ☐ Have had nightmares about the experience or thought about it when you did not want to?
- ☐ Tried hard not to think about the experience or avoided situations that reminded you of it?
- ☐ Were constantly on guard, watchful, or easily startled?
- ☐ Felt numb or detached from others, activities, or your surroundings?
- ☐ Felt guilty or unable to stop blaming yourself or others for the event or any problems the event caused?



## TREATMENT

**TRAUMA-FOCUSED THERAPIES** are the most effective PTSD treatment. They focus specifically on the memory of the traumatic event or its meaning.

## Psychotherapy/Counseling

### Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)

CPT teaches you how to identify trauma-related thoughts and change them so they are more accurate and cause less distress.

### Prolonged Exposure Therapy (PE)

In PE, you talk about your trauma over and over until the memories no longer upset you. You also go to places that are safe, but that you have been staying away from because they are related to the trauma.

### Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)

EMDR involves thinking about images and feelings that distress you while doing rapid eye movements.

## Medications\*

### ANTIDEPRESSANT MEDICATIONS

can also be used to treat PTSD. Though they may not cure the problem, they can reduce the symptoms.

Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors raise the level of serotonin in your brain. This can make you feel better. The SSRIs that are approved by the FDA for PTSD are sertraline (Zoloft™), paroxetine (Paxil™), fluoxetine (Prozac) and venlafaxine (Effexor).



*\*Some doctors prescribe benzodiazepines (or “benzos”) for people with PTSD. They are often given to people who have anxiety. While they may be of some help at first, these drugs do not treat the core PTSD symptoms. They may lead to addiction and are not recommended for long-term PTSD treatment.*