

**Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)** is a mental health condition that can develop after a person experiences or witnesses a traumatic event. Common symptoms of PTSD include:

- Intrusive thoughts. This may include unwanted repeated thoughts, memories, or flashbacks of the traumatic event that are not easily stopped.
- Nightmares (or repeated dreams that are distressing)
- Other problems with sleep
- Avoidance of people, places and things that resemble or represent traumatic memories
- Startled easily by loud noises, fireworks, helicopters, etc.
- Irritability or angry outbursts

**How PTSD can affect families and other people in a person's support system:**

- Feeling emotionally distant from your loved one
- Reduced or lack of communication with loved one
- Your loved one may express a reduced desire to participate in family social activities
- Decreased sexual activity or desire
- Your loved one may be pre-occupied with keeping the family safe
- Feeling anger toward your loved one (sometimes for no clear reason)
- Feeling hurt by your loved one (again, sometimes for no clear reason)
- Feeling helpless in supporting your loved one overcome their trauma
- Feeling discouraged that your loved one cannot overcome the effects of their trauma
- Feeling rejected by your loved one

**Best-practice treatment for PTSD:** The good news is there are effective treatments for PTSD. Individualized recommendations may vary, but effective treatments may include (check with your healthcare provider to learn what treatments are recommended for you)

- Individual psychotherapy and/or group education and therapy which may address:
  - Trigger awareness (identifying what causes or worsens symptoms)
  - Grounding techniques (learning tools to stay in the moment/connect to the present)
  - Relaxation skills (breathing techniques, mindfulness meditation, etc.)
  - Sleep hygiene (learning and practicing healthy sleep habits)
  - Learning the difference between helpful and unhelpful coping strategies
  - Processing traumatic experiences
- Medication (managed by the physician)

Additional Comments:

