

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

- Intrusive thoughts. This may include unwanted repeated thoughts, memories, or flashbacks of traumatic event(s) 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 PTS 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 overcoming 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 PTS:**

The good news is there are effective treatments for PTS. Individualized recommendations may vary, but effective treatments may include:

- 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 experience(s)

**Disclaimer:** Please check with your healthcare provider to learn what treatments are recommended for your needs.

**Additional Comments:**

