

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Our Vision

At PRIMEXL we aim to be the partner of choice in the creation of better organisations and better lives.

Our Values

We value:

- **Meaningful relationships**
- **Premium quality services**
- **Innovation** – we are always looking for ways to add more value to our clients
- **Accountability for our performance**

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PTSD is a psychological response to the experience of one or multiple intense traumatic events, particularly involving a threat to life. It can affect people of any age, culture or gender.

Trauma is personal. An incident that may traumatise one person may be of less significance to another. This variation in peoples' reactions occurs because of their personality, personal beliefs/values and previous experiences (especially if they have suffered previous traumatic events).

Trauma can stem from man-made events such as physical or sexual assault, accidents, witnessing death/injury of others or from natural disasters such as fires, floods, cyclones or earthquakes.

Symptoms can be classified in three (3) main groups:

1. Intrusive Symptoms

- Distressing memories or images of the incident
- Nightmares of the event or other frightening themes
- Flashbacks(reliving the event)
- Becoming upset when reminded of the incident
- Physical Symptoms such as sweating, heart racing or muscle tension when reminded of the event

2. Avoidance Symptoms

- Trying to avoid any reminders of the trauma
- Gaps in memory – forgetting parts of the experience
- Losing interest in normal activities
- Feeling cut off or detached from loved ones
- Feeling flat or numb
- Difficulty imagining a future

3. Arousal Symptoms

- Sleep Disturbance
- Anger, irritability and easily startled
- Concentration problems
- Constantly on the look-out for signs of danger

PTSD is not the only psychological response to trauma. People may develop a range of problems that can affect their quality of life, their capacity for work and their ability to relate to other people. The most common are anxiety, depression and alcohol/drug use.

There are a range of treatment approaches for PTSD most of which require the services of experienced mental health professionals. These include:

- Crisis stabilisation
- Education about PTSD
- Strategies (sometimes including medication) to manage anxiety, depression and/or sleep problems
- Trauma focused therapy (confronting the painful memories)
- Cognitive restructuring (thinking more realistically and re-evaluating the meaning of the event)
- Relapse prevention

Often some simple strategies and healthy habits can go a long way to better managing PTSD symptoms.

- Remember the basics: healthy eating; regular exercise; and adequate rest (even if you can't sleep)
- Develop an understanding of PTSD through reading and/or talking to your doctor or counsellor
- Set small realistic goals. Things that seem insurmountable can be manageable when broken down into small steps
- Redefine your priorities, work out what's achievable and focus your energy and resources on those; and
- Ask for support and help from family and friends

Partners and close friends are often at a loss to deal with PTSD. The following suggestions may be useful:

- If possible, listen and empathise when the traumatized person wants to talk. A sympathetic listener is important to minimize the tendency of the person with PTSD to withdraw and 'shut down'
- Don't tell them they were 'lucky it wasn't worse' or to 'pull themselves together and get over it'
- If necessary, reassure them that they are now safe
- Don't be afraid to suggest they see their doctor or a counsellor

(Adapted from Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and War-related Stress (1999) published by The Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health)

For more information visit: www.acpmh.unimelb.edu.au

To access the PRIMEXL EAP service simply contact PRIMEXL on 08 9442 8900 and arrange an appointment or visit www.primexl.com.au

In crisis situations, PRIMEXL duty counsellors are available after hours on 1 800 674 188.