

Symptoms of PTSD & basic coping skills



● What is PTSD?

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that occurs after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event. This can include combat exposure, physical or sexual assault, accidents, natural disasters, or any other potentially fatal circumstance. PTSD affects everyone differently, but common symptoms are divided into four categories:

● Intrusive Thoughts & Memories

- Flashbacks (feeling like you're reliving the experience)
- Nightmares related to the trauma
- Intense emotional or physical responses to reminders of the trauma (ex. rapid heartbeat, perspiration, fear)

● Avoidance Behaviors

- Avoid places, people, or activities that remind you of the trauma.
- Attempting to repress thoughts or feelings regarding the event.

● Negative Changes in Thinking & Mood

- Consistent negative thoughts about oneself or the world
- Difficulty recalling details from the trauma
- Feeling disconnected from loved ones or losing interest in activities.
- Feeling guilty, ashamed, or hopeless

● Increased Arousal & Reactivity

- Feeling on edge or becoming easily startled
- Insomnia or frequent nightmares
- Irritability, aggressive outbursts, or reckless behavior.
- Difficulty concentrating and/or staying focused

1. Grounding Techniques (Help in managing intrusive thoughts & anxiety)

- 5-4-3-2-1 Technique: Identify 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste.
- Deep breathing involves inhaling for four seconds, holding for four seconds, then exhaling for six seconds.
- Hold onto an object (stone, fabric, fidget toy) to remain present.

2. Self-care

- Participate in activities you enjoy (music, art, journaling, nature hikes).
- Get enough sleep and have a routine.
- Limit your intake of alcohol and caffeine, as they can increase symptoms.

3. Thought Reframing (Challenge Negative Thoughts)

- Identify negative beliefs and ask, "Is this thought 100% true?"
- Replace it with a balanced thought (ex. "I am working on feeling safe, and I have support").

4. Social Support & Communication

- Talk with a trusted friend, family member, or therapist
- Join a PTSD support group (in-person or online)
- Let others know what helps or triggers you so they can support you effectively.

If PTSD symptoms interfere with your daily life, relationships, or career, you should seek treatment or medical help. Trauma-focused therapies, such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), can be fairly effective.

Crisis Resources:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 988

Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741

Veterans Crisis Line: Call 988 and press 1

Find a Therapist at www.psychologytoday.com

Remember that healing from PTSD takes time, and you are not alone.