

# **POST TRAUMATIC STRESS**

## **Disorder**



**09**

# POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Traumatic events—such as an accident, assault, military combat or natural disaster—can have lasting effects on a person's mental health. While many people will have short term responses to life-threatening events, some will develop longer term symptoms that can lead to a diagnosis of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

## SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of PTSD usually begin within three months after experiencing or being exposed to a traumatic event. Occasionally, symptoms may emerge years afterward. For a diagnosis of PTSD, symptoms must last more than one month. Symptoms of depression, anxiety or substance use often accompany PTSD

- **Re-experiencing type symptoms**, such as recurring, involuntary and intrusive distressing memories, which can include flashbacks of the trauma, bad dreams and intrusive thoughts.
- **Avoidance**, which can include staying away from certain places or objects that are reminders of the traumatic event. A person might actively avoid a place or person that might activate overwhelming symptoms.
- **Cognitive and mood symptoms**, which can include trouble recalling the event, negative thoughts about one's self. A person may also feel numb, guilty, worried or depressed and have difficulty remembering the traumatic event. Cognitive symptoms can in some instances extend to include out-of-body experiences or feeling that the world is "not real" (derealization).
- **Arousal symptoms**, such as hypervigilance. Examples might include being intensely startled by stimuli that resembles the trauma, trouble sleeping or outbursts of anger.

# **COMPLEX POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER**

Complex post-traumatic stress disorder (complex PTSD, sometimes abbreviated to **c-PTSD or CPTSD**) is a condition where you experience some symptoms of PTSD along with some additional symptoms, such as:

## **SYMPTOMS**

- difficulty controlling your emotions
- feeling very angry or distrustful towards the world
- constant feelings of emptiness or hopelessness
- feeling as if you are permanently damaged or worthless
- feeling as if you are completely different to other people
- feeling like nobody can understand what happened to you
- avoiding friendships and relationships, or finding them very difficult
- often experiencing dissociative symptoms such as depersonalisation or derealisation
- physical symptoms, such as headaches, dizziness, chest pains and stomach aches
- regular suicidal feelings.

**A person is more likely to develop complex PTSD (c-PTSD) if:**

- you experienced trauma at an early age
- the trauma lasted for a long time
- escape or rescue were unlikely or impossible
- you have experienced multiple traumas
- you were harmed by someone close to you