

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

This factsheet provides brief information on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and on services that are available for help.

What is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder?

PTSD is one possible outcome of exposure to an extreme event. It might develop due to someone experiencing or witnessing a terrible incident. This event may have been life-threatening or resulted in physical harm, and have happened either once or repeatedly over time. During the experience the person may have felt helpless, stunned, and a sense of intense horror or fear.

After such an incident many people notice signs of mental distress, such as poor sleep or nervousness, but these often diminish over a few days or weeks. These are normal reactions to distressing events and generally do not require professional intervention. Gradually most people are able to cope or come to terms with what has happened. When symptoms go relatively quickly this is seen as an acute reaction.

However some people find that their symptoms persist and they are still unable to cope with the traumatic event they have experienced. This is when a clinician may diagnose Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Symptoms

A combination of symptoms need to be met for such a diagnosis. The more common features include:

- flashbacks / feelings of re-experiencing the event or part of it
- intrusive thoughts and images
- nightmares or disturbed sleep
- distress or panic at reminders of the trauma
- trying to keep busy to divert attention
- avoiding situations associated with the trauma
- feeling detached, apathetic, emotionally numb, unable to express affection
- irritable and aggressive
- unable to concentrate / forgetfulness
- extreme alertness, easily startled

- Feelings of guilt, self-blame, shame

What contributes to PTSD?

There are many events that might, for some people, constitute personal trauma. These include road accidents, near misses, natural disasters, wars, sexual and physical assault. Those who have been abused or exposed to disturbing events as children may still be affected as adults. People who have witnessed horrific events but were not directly involved in them may also develop PTSD. Some people may develop PTSD months or even years after an event. This is known as delayed onset PTSD.

Acts of violence can have long lasting and emotionally painful repercussions. Some peoples' trust in others may be shattered and they may lose their faith in the humanity of mankind.

However, it is not just a matter of being directly involved in a trauma which may cause someone to develop PTSD. For example, people who are trained to deal with disasters or terrible injuries may also experience PTSD. Others cope well with a certain number of exposures, for example to combat, but then find they have exhausted their mental reserves.

Much of PTSD involves disturbances in memory. The person recalls the trauma memory with great distress and the memory may feel very real, as if it is happening again in the here and now. The person with PTSD wants to avoid that distress but finds it difficult to do so.

Many who have survived traumatic events may feel guilty in ways that make no sense to others. Some people unreasonably blame themselves for not having done things to prevent a tragedy or to have been of more to help others. In situations where people have died, those who survived may feel guilty that they have survived. Some people may also have feelings of shame - this is especially common with traumas such as rape.

Where can I get help?

You should initially speak to your GP, who may be able to refer you on to a mental health professional for treatment. People suffering from PTSD generally respond well to psychological treatment, either cognitive behavioural therapy or person-centred counselling. There are specialist services for people who have experienced trauma due to war, or as refugees. You may also be given some medication to help alleviate some of your symptoms.

Local Statutory Services

Harrow Educational Psychology Service

Alexandra Avenue Health & Social Care Centre, 275 Alexandra Avenue, South Harrow, HA2 9DX

Tel: 020 8966 6480, Fax: 020 8966 6489 Mon- Fri 9.00am - 5.00pm

Email: educationalpsychology.services@harrow.gov.uk

Website: www.harrow.gov.uk/info/200220/special_educational_needs_and_disabilities_send/251/harrow_educational_psychology_service

The psychologists work with a child through consultation with schools or parents.

Community Mental Health Teams

We offer a comprehensive service for adults with mental health problems covering assessment of need and care management,

[**Harrow Assessment and Brief Treatment Team:**](#)

Honeypot Lane Centre, 839 Honeypot Lane, Stanmore HA7 1AT.

Tel: 020 8951 3770 (9am-5pm)

Fax: 020 8951 0756

Harrow Community Recovery Team:

Atkins House, 19 Marshall Close, Harrow HA1 4DH.

Tel: 020 8422 9443 (9am-5pm)

Fax: 020 8422 2890

Harrow IAPT - Improving Access to Psychological Therapies

T Block, Northwick Park Hospital, Watford Road, Harrow HA1 3UJ

Tel: 020 8515 5015

Email: harrow.iapt@nhs.net

Referral to Harrow IAPT can only be accepted via a Harrow GP. If other professionals or clinicians wish to refer to the service, this needs to be requested via the GP.

Local voluntary Sector services

Hestia Women's Aid Harrow

PO Box 863, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 4NR

Tel: 020 8357 0126, 020 8864 7575

Email: info@womensaid.org.uk

Website: www.hestia.org

Opening times: 10-6pm for Refuge, 10-5.30 for outreach.

Provide temporary, emergency accommodation, emotional support, advice and advocacy, to women and their children who have experienced or are exposed to domestic violence and or/abuse.

Older Person's Placement Support: 0208 429 8791

Helplines

ASSIST (Assistance Support and Self Help in Surviving Trauma)

11 Albert Street, Warwickshire CV21 2RX

Helpline: 01788 560 800 or Tel: 01788 551 919

Email: helpassist-trauma-care.co.uk

Website: www.assisttraumacare.org.uk

Support, understanding and counselling for people experiencing PTSD, their families and carers.

Refugee Action

Tel: 0808 800 0630, advice and support provided by Asylum Help

Web: www.refugee-action.org.uk

Watford Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Line

WRC PO Box 2356, Watford, WD18 1QD

Helpline: 0845 3011165 Or 01923 249 511 for cheaper mobile rates

Open: Mon 10am-12pm, Wed 7-9pm, Sat 10am-12pm.

Email: info@wrc-info.org

Website: www.wrc-info.org

A free and confidential helpline offering support and information for women who have been raped or sexually abused.

National Organisations

Combat Stress (for ex-service people)

Head Office Tyrwhitt House, Oaklawn Road, Leatherhead, Surrey, KT22 0BX.

Tel: 0800 138 1619, 24hour helpline

Email: contactus@combatstress.org.uk

Web: www.combatstress.org.uk

Provides specialist treatment and welfare services for veterans suffering from psychological issues associated with service trauma.

Freedom From Torture

111 Isledon Road, Islington, London N7 7JW

Tel. 020 7697 7777

F fax: 020 7697 7799

Email: clinical@torturecare.org.uk

Web: www.freedomfromtorture.org

Provides medical treatment and psychotherapeutic support for those who have survived torture.

Waterloo Community Counselling

Barley Mow Clinic, Greet House, Frazier Street, London, SE1 7BD

Tel: 020 7928 3462, 9:30 to 5:30pm

Email: info@waterloocc.co.uk

Web: www.waterloocc.co.uk

Provide free or low-cost professional counselling and psychotherapy to help resolve emotional issues, reduce anxiety and depression, and gain self-confidence.

Websites

Bullying

Website: www.bullyonline.org/

A large resource on bullying, including bullying in the workplace, and in relationships and within the family. There is also a forum and an e-newsletter available on the site.

National Institute for Clinical Excellence - Guidance on good practice

www.nice.org.uk/guidance

Rape Crisis

Tel: 0808 802 9999, 12noon-2: 30pm and 7-9:30pm

Email: rcewinfo@rapecrisis.org.uk

Website: www.rapecrisis.org.uk

An informative website for those who have been sexually violated or for friends and family.

Created by:

Mind in Harrow

First floor

132-134 College Road

Harrow

HA1 1BQ

T: 020 8426 0929

www.mindinharrow.org.uk

info@mindinharrow.org.uk

Registered charity number 1067480