

Understanding Post Traumatic Stress: For Self-Advocates

Page 1/2

What is Traumatic Stress?

Many things can happen that makes people feel very upset, confused, anxious and even afraid. Everyone feels this way sometimes. When this happens, you might find it hard to deal with your feelings and emotions, you may feel helpless, and be unable to get started and do the things you usually do. It is important to understand how you are feeling and what might be causing you to feel that way. It is also important to think about what you can do or who can help if you are feeling this way.

What Kinds of Things Can Cause Traumatic Stress?

A disaster, crisis, or other troubling event can cause traumatic stress, make you feel unsafe, and leave you feeling helpless. Some things that may cause you to experience traumatic stress could include:

- Seeing something that is violent or that hurts others.
- Having someone you love or care about being hurt or injured.
- Being physically hurt by someone or something.
- Getting a serious illness or injury.
- Having someone you love or care about become seriously ill.
- Having someone you love or care about die.
- Seeing things on TV or the news that are very upsetting.

What are Signs That You Might Be Suffering from Traumatic Stress?

- Upsetting thoughts or pictures that come into your head when you don't want them to.
- Bad dreams, nightmares, trouble falling asleep, or trouble staying asleep.
- Feeling upset when you remember what happened (scared, angry, sad, guilty, confused).
- Feelings in your body when you remember what happened (sweating, heart beating fast, stomach or head hurting).
- Trying not to think about it and/or staying away from anything that makes you think of it.

Understanding Post Traumatic Stress: For Self-Advocates

Page 2/2

What are Signs That You Might Be Suffering from Traumatic Stress? (continued)

- Bad thoughts about yourself, other people, or the world (“I can’t do anything right”, “All people are bad”, “The world is a scary place”).
- Having less interest in doing things you used to enjoy.
- Getting angry easily (yelling, hitting others, throwing things).
- Trouble having good feelings (like happiness or love) or trouble having any feelings at all.
- Doing things that might hurt you (taking drugs, drinking alcohol, running away, cutting yourself).
- Being very careful or on the lookout for danger.
- Being jumpy or easily scared.
- Trouble paying attention.

What You Can Do To Help Yourself.

- Do things that relax you or make you feel calm.
- Do outdoor activities, eat healthy, and get enough sleep.
- Spend time with positive people who make you happy and feel safe.
- Avoid watching the news, the internet, or looking at social media.
- Confide in a person you trust.

When You Might Need To Ask for Help

- Getting angry easily (yelling, hitting others, throwing things).
- Trouble having good feelings (like happiness or love) or trouble having any feelings at all.
- Doing things that might hurt you (taking drugs, drinking alcohol, running away, cutting yourself).
- Being jumpy or easily scared.
- Having trouble paying attention.
- Having trouble falling or staying asleep.
- Having much less interest in doing things you used to enjoy.

Reference: The Child PTSD Symptom Scale for DSM-V (CPSS-V SR)
<http://www.afcbt.org/materials/Downloads/CPSS-V%2003-15-17.pdf>

Helpful Numbers to Know

- PA Support & Referral Helpline; 1-855-284-2494 (TTY: 724-631-5600).
- PA Crisis Text Line; Text “PA” to 741741.
- NAMI Helpline; 1-800-950-NAMI (6264) or info@nami.org.