

PTSD Awareness Day – June 27

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)



TOOL BOX TALKS

What is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?

PTSD stands for post-traumatic stress disorder, which is a mental health condition that's triggered by a traumatic event. Many individuals who experience or witness a terrifying event develop PTSD. This disorder develops when a person is unable to adjust to life after experiencing trauma. While many get better after time and self-care, others may have difficulties getting better and may experience symptoms that interfere with their daily function. Symptoms can worsen over time without mental health treatment and may vary from person to person.

Symptoms of PTSD fall into the following four categories. Specific symptoms can vary in severity.

Intrusion: Intrusive thoughts such as repeated, involuntary memories; distressing dreams; or flashbacks of the traumatic event. Flashbacks may be so vivid that people feel they are reliving the traumatic experience or seeing it before their eyes.

Avoidance: Avoiding reminders of the traumatic event may include avoiding people, places, activities, objects and situations that may trigger distressing memories. People may try to avoid remembering or thinking about the traumatic event. They may resist talking about what happened or how they feel about it.

Alterations in cognition and mood: Inability to remember important aspects of the traumatic event, negative thoughts and feelings leading to ongoing and distorted beliefs about oneself or others; distorted thoughts about the cause or consequences of the event leading to wrongly blaming self or other; ongoing fear, horror, anger, guilt or shame; much less interest in activities previously enjoyed; feeling detached or estranged from others; or being unable to experience positive emotions.

Alterations in arousal and reactivity: Arousal and reactive symptoms may include being irritable and having angry outbursts; behaving recklessly or in a self-destructive way; being overly watchful of one's surroundings in a suspecting way; being easily startled; or having problems concentrating or sleeping.

Some common signs and symptoms include:

- Recurring distressing memories of the traumatic event
- Reliving the event as if it were happening all over again (flashbacks)
- Disturbing dreams or nightmares about the event
- Severe emotional or physical reactions to any reminders of the traumatic event
- Trying to avoid thinking or talking about the event
- Avoiding places, activities, or people that remind you of the event
- Negative thoughts about yourself or others
- Difficulties maintaining close relationships
- Feeling detached from loved ones
- Difficulties experiencing any positive emotions
- Feeling emotionally numb
- Being easily frightened
- Always being on guard or prepared for any danger
- Difficulties sleeping
- Difficulties concentrating
- Engaging in self-destructive behavior, like substance abuse
- Feeling overwhelming guilt and shame
- Frequent emotional outbursts



List of PTSD organizations and resources for more information:

- International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS)
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)
- National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
- PTSD Alliance
- PTSD Foundation of America
- PTSD United
- SIDRAN Institute: Traumatic Stress Education and Advocacy



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