

Patient Handout: Understanding, Managing, and Treating Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

What is PTSD?

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that may occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event such as a natural disaster, serious accident, terrorist act, war/combat, rape, or other violent personal assault. PTSD is a long-term reaction to these types of high-stress incidents.

Common Signs and Symptoms of PTSD

- Recurrent, intrusive, and distressing memories of the traumatic event
- Nightmares related to the traumatic event
- Flashbacks, or reliving the traumatic event
- Severe emotional distress or physical reactions to reminders of the event
- Avoidance of reminders of the traumatic event
- Negative changes in thinking and mood
- Changes in physical and emotional reactions (hyperarousal)
- Difficulty sleeping or nightmares
- Feelings of guilt or blame
- Detachment from others and difficulty maintaining close relationships

How is PTSD Treated?

PTSD is typically treated with a combination of psychotherapy (talk therapy), medications (like antidepressants), and lifestyle changes.

Managing PTSD

- Engage in Therapy: Cognitive behavioral therapy, exposure therapy, and eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) have been found effective.
- Practice Mindfulness: Techniques such as meditation and yoga can help manage symptoms and promote relaxation.
- Stay Active: Regular physical activity can help reduce symptoms of PTSD by boosting mood and acting as a natural anti-anxiety treatment.
- Connect with Others: Reach out to supportive and understanding friends, family, or find a support group. Isolation can intensify feelings of PTSD.
- Limit Alcohol and Avoid Drugs: These substances can worsen PTSD symptoms and can lead to dependence.

Prognosis for PTSD

With proper treatment, many people with PTSD can significantly reduce their symptoms and improve their quality of life. However, the disorder can be chronic and may recur, particularly if additional traumatic events occur. Adhering to a treatment plan and maintaining a support network can help manage symptoms and reduce the frequency of recurrence.

Resources for Help and Additional Information

1. National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH): Provides information and resources about PTSD. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd>
2. National Center for PTSD (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs): Offers information, resources, and support for individuals and families. www.ptsd.va.gov
3. American Psychiatric Association (APA): Offers resources on understanding PTSD. <https://www.apa.org/topics/ptsd>
4. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: Provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, as well as prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones. **Just dial 988**

This handout is intended to provide a general overview of PTSD and does not cover all potential aspects of the condition.