

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)



The Mecca of Black Wellness



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PTSD is the development of symptoms that occur after a traumatic or stressful life event. Many people may think that only military service members or veterans are diagnosed with PTSD, which is not true. In fact, there are many different types of stressful or traumatic experiences that could contribute to PTSD, which includes a number of different stressful or traumatic situations where you or someone you know could have been badly hurt, injured, or killed.

Common Traumatic Experiences Include:

1. Community/ neighborhood violence
2. Sexual abuse
3. Physical abuse
4. Neglect
5. Domestic violence
6. Grief and loss (i.e., death of someone close to you)
7. Natural disaster (e.g., hurricane, tornado)
8. Car accident
9. Military/Combat exposure

PTSD typically begins or worsens after exposure to a stressful or traumatic event. In some cases, individuals may not develop symptoms immediately, but instead, develop PTSD symptoms several weeks or months later, after the traumatic event occurred.

Black/African Americans are at increased risk of being diagnosed with PTSD due to their increased likelihood of living in communities with poverty, racism, crime and violence⁽¹⁾. Police brutality and the fatal shootings of unarmed Black men, women, and teenagers, shown throughout the news and social media networks, further creates a heightened sense of fear and anxiety among Black/African American individuals and communities. Research has found that Blacks/African Americans perceiving greater injustice and racism are more likely to develop PTSD than individuals who perceive it less⁽²⁾. Trauma informed treatment is found to reduce traumatic stress symptoms. Unfortunately, Blacks/African Americans are less likely, compared to Whites, to receive treatment for PTSD⁽⁴⁾.

Everyone who is exposed to a stressful or traumatic life experience may not display any PTSD symptoms. Review the list of common symptoms of PTSD, and think about yourself. If you think that you may be experiencing PTSD, review the treatment options below.

COMMON SYMPTOMS OF PTSD

Re-experiencing

- Reminders of the traumatic experience when you do not want to think about them
- Flashbacks
- Nightmares

Avoidance

- Staying away from people, places, or things that remind you of the traumatic situation
- Avoidance of places or memories

Negative Thoughts or Feelings

- Difficulty trusting others and building relationships
- Feeling disconnected from your body
- Being on guard/on watch, especially in public places
- Avoiding large crowds
- Feeling numb

Negative Thoughts or Feelings

- Feeling numb
- Thoughts that the world is dangerous
- Increased sadness, shame, and/or guilt
- Isolation

Arousal

- Anger and/or irritability
- Easily startled, nervous, or scared (e.g., feeling jumpy after you hear a loud noise)
- Being on guard/on watch, especially in public places
- Difficulty focusing or making decisions
- Difficulty falling asleep

Reminder: When first processing trauma you may initially experience increased depression, anger, agitation, and anxiety; however, overtime you will likely start to notice changes and improvements.

TRAUMA INFORMED THERAPY OPTIONS

There are different treatments that are useful in reducing PTSD symptoms. When seeking talk therapy or counseling for PTSD, we recommend that you find a **trauma-informed** mental health provider. Trauma-informed therapy is offered by mental health providers who help clients understand and recognize how their past trauma affects them physically, psychological, and socially while helping them to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment. Many trauma-informed psychotherapies are age-specific and are useful for either children and families or adults. If you think that you or your child may be experiencing PTSD, please review a few trauma-informed treatment options listed below.

Trauma Informed Therapy for Children/Adolescents:

- *Parent-Child Interaction Therapy* – A form of behavioral-parent training for children ages 2-7 and their parent/caregiver
- *Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy* – Treatment for children and adolescents impacted by trauma and their parents/caregivers

Trauma Informed Therapy for Adults:

- *Prolonged Exposure Therapy* – A therapy that teaches individuals to gradually approach trauma related memories, feelings, and situations that they been avoiding since their trauma
- *Cognitive Processing Therapy* – A therapy that helps the individual learn how to modify and challenge unhelpful beliefs related to the trauma

(1) Beckett, L. (2014, February 3). The PTSD crisis that's being ignored: Americans wounded in their own neighborhoods. Propublica. Retrieved from <https://www.propublica.org/article/the-ptsd-crisis-thats-being-ignored-americans-wounded-in-their-own-neighbor>

(2) Williams, M.T. (2015, September 6). The link between racism and PTSD. Psychology Today. Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/culturally-speaking/201509/the-link-between-racism-and-ptsd>

(3) Roberts, A. L., Gilman, S. E., Breslau, J., Breslau, N., & Koenen, K. C. (2011). Race/ethnic differences in exposure to traumatic events, development, of posttraumatic stress disorder, and treatment-seeking for posttraumatic stress disorder in the United States. *Psychological Medicine*, 41, 71– 83.

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Resources During Crisis or Distress

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a national network of local crisis centers that provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Visit, <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/> or dial 1-888-628-9454 to speak to someone.

The Veterans Crisis Line

The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text. Responders will work with you to help you get through any personal crisis, even if that crisis does not involve thoughts of suicide. Dial 1-800-273-8255 and (Press 1) to talk to someone now. A confidential chat is also available online or through text. To [chat](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/ChatTermsOfService.aspx) online (<https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/ChatTermsOfService.aspx>) or send a text to 838255 to receive confidential support anonymously.

To Learn More About PTSD

Center for Deployment Psychology

<https://deploymentpsych.org/disorders/ptsd-main>

Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress

<https://www.cstsonline.org/>

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

<https://www.nctsn.org/>

National Center for PTSD

<https://www.ptsd.va.gov/>

Center for Child and Family Traumatic Stress

<https://www.kennedykrieger.org/patient-care/patient-care-centers/traumatic-stress-center>

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