

Disability awareness

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is one of a number of conditions under the umbrella term 'anxiety disorder'. PTSD can occur in response to a traumatic, very stressful, frightening or distressing event such as:

- ⦿ Serious accidents
- ⦿ Natural or man-made disasters
- ⦿ Violent attack (sexual assault, physical attack, abuse, robbery, mugging)
- ⦿ Military combat or being a prisoner-of-war
- ⦿ Being taken hostage or a terrorist attack
- ⦿ Being diagnosed with a life-threatening illness
- ⦿ Hearing about the unexpected injury or violent death of a family member or close friend.

A natural reaction to a traumatic event is to feel grief-stricken, depressed, anxious, guilty or even angry. But if these feelings are extreme or persistent and are causing you significant difficulties well after the event you may be given a diagnosis of PTSD. The symptoms of PTSD can start immediately or after a delay of weeks or months, but usually within six months. Acute Stress Disorder is a similar condition but lasts only up to a month after the trigger event.

The symptoms of PTSD vary from person to person, and indeed for some people these symptoms fluctuate but for others they are constant. It is likely people will experience some of the following:

Reliving the traumatic event through

- ⦿ Vivid flashbacks and/or nightmares
- ⦿ Intrusive thoughts and images
- ⦿ Physical sensations, such as pain, sweating, nausea, trembling
- ⦿ Feeling of distress when reminded of the event.

Avoiding feeling, thinking or remembering

- ⦿ Avoiding certain people, places or situations that remind you of the event
- ⦿ Not talking about the event at all
- ⦿ Repressing memories
- ⦿ Distracting yourself or keeping so busy you don't have time to think about it
- ⦿ Feeling detached, cut off and emotionally numb
- ⦿ Finding it hard to be close to people or express affection
- ⦿ Not being able to enjoy activities you enjoyed before
- ⦿ Becoming withdrawn and isolated.

Feeling constantly on edge

- ⦿ Absolute panic when reminded of the traumatic event
- ⦿ Irritable, getting easily upset or angry and even aggressive
- ⦿ Constantly on edge/extremely alert/on guard in case something happens
- ⦿ Disturbed sleep
- ⦿ Difficulty relaxing or concentrating.

Other problems

- ⦿ Constant negative thoughts and feelings of guilt or shame
- ⦿ Other mental health problems – such as depression, anxiety or phobias
- ⦿ Self-destructive or reckless behaviour such as drinking excessively or misusing illegal and prescription drugs
- ⦿ Self-harm and/or suicidal feelings
- ⦿ Physical symptoms – such as headaches, dizziness, muscle aches and pains, chest pains and stomach aches
- ⦿ Work-related problems
- ⦿ Breakdown of relationships.

How can you help someone with PTSD?

Listen – if they want to talk about it

- ⦿ Don't ask loads of questions or be judgemental
- ⦿ Allow them time to speak
- ⦿ Understand they may get upset
- ⦿ Find a quiet and private space for this.

Look out for warning signs

- ⦿ Becoming more irritable, seeming low or depressed or depression
- ⦿ Reduced performance at work, lateness or taking sick leave
- ⦿ Change in energy levels, such as alertness or a lack of concentration.

Check if they need help

- ⦿ Ask if they are okay and if not encourage them to seek some professional help
- ⦿ Encourage them to use some self-help strategies such as:
 - Mild physical activity or exercise
 - Identify activities which reduce their stress levels eg. hobbies
 - Breaking large tasks into small ones
 - Setting realistic goals
 - Prioritising what is most important to do first
 - Spending time with other people – try not to get isolated
 - When ready confide in a trusted friend or relative
 - Tell others about things that may trigger symptoms.

Contact us:

If you would like further information on how we can help you, please get in touch with us:
t: 0300 456 8113 e: training@remploy.co.uk w: www.remploy.co.uk/training

If you require this information in an alternative format, please email communications@remploy.co.uk quoting ref. R100 - Nov17

