## Life After Trauma

## Understanding PTSD and Treatment Options

Anyone can go through a traumatic event (or trauma). In fact, about half of all men and women will experience at least one trauma, like combat, a natural disaster, a car accident, or sexual assault, in their lives. It’s normal to think, act, and feel differently than usual after a traumatic experience, but if those reactions don’t improve after a few weeks or months, it may be posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). If you or someone you know is having a difficult time moving past a trauma, take the steps to learn about PTSD and how to get help.

### What is PTSD?

PTSD is a mental health concern that some people develop after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event. About 8 million adults have PTSD during a given year, and this is only a small portion of those who have gone through a trauma. Although we all react to a traumatic event, most people see their symptoms and stress lessen over time.

Everyone’s response and experience after a trauma is different, but people with PTSD have [four main types of symptoms](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/publications/print/NCPTSD-Symptoms-of-PTSD-Infographic.pdf); reliving or re-experiencing the event, avoiding situations that remind them of the event, hyperarousal or being on guard, and negative changes in beliefs and feelings. Not everyone who experiences a trauma develops PTSD, but for those who do, it can have a serious impact on their life, work, and relationships.

### PTSD treatment works

Just like a physical injury, PTSD usually doesn’t get better if it isn’t treated. Without proper care, the symptoms may even get worse over time. PTSD treatment works and can help people make sense of their trauma, learn skills to better handle negative thoughts and feelings, reconnect with people they care about, and set goals for activities, like work or school, that they can handle. The sooner someone with PTSD gets treatment, the sooner they can start to feel better.

There are several proven, effective treatments available for PTSD. The most effective treatments are talk therapies like [Prolonged Exposure](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand_tx/prolonged_exposure.asp) (PE), [Cognitive Processing Therapy](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand_tx/cognitive_processing.asp) (CPT), and [Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand_tx/emdr.asp) (EMDR). PTSD treatment isn’t one size fits all, so the [PTSD Treatment Decision Aid](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/apps/decisionaid/) from the National Center for PTSD (NCPTSD) is a useful tool that people can use to compare effective treatment options and decide what’s best for them.

### NCPTSD can help

NCPTSD is the leader in research and education on PTSD and traumatic stress. Visit the NCPTSD [website](http://www.ptsd.va.gov) for more information on PTSD and treatment options.

Also check out these helpful resources:

* Locate a provider with the [VA PTSD Program Locator](https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/PTSD.asp) or other [tips to find a therapist](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/gethelp/find_therapist.asp).
* Download [free mobile apps](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/appvid/mobile/index.asp) to get self-help information and support.
* Visit [AboutFace](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/apps/AboutFace/Index.html) to hear how PTSD treatment helped Veterans turn their lives around.
* Join the conversation on [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/VAPTSD) and [Twitter](http://www.twitter.com/VA_PTSD_Info).