



# Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)



## What is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder?

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is characterized by persistent distressing thoughts or mental images, feelings of fear, and emotional numbness that occur frequently and for over a month. These symptoms interfere with daily functioning. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder results from exposure to trauma including the threat of death, injury, or sexual violence. This trauma does not need to occur to the individual in order to lead to PTSD, rather PTSD can result from trauma that occurs to a loved one or someone else. The symptoms associated with PTSD can lead to an individual using maladaptive coping mechanisms in the hope of relief, such as drugs or alcohol.

## Who is affected by PTSD?

Not all traumatic experiences lead to PTSD and it is unclear why some people are affected and others are not. Some factors that influence the onset of PTSD include:

- How long the trauma lasted
- The number of traumas experienced
- One's reaction to trauma
- The level of support received after the trauma

Certain individuals are more likely to experience PTSD, such as military personal, first responders, doctors, and nurses.

## What are the signs and symptoms of PTSD?

- Vivid flashbacks (feeling like the trauma is happening right now)
- Intrusive thoughts or images
- Nightmares
- Intense distress at real or symbolic reminders of the trauma
- Physical sensations such as pain, sweating, nausea or trembling
- Alertness or feeling on edge
- Difficulty with sleep
- Irritability or aggressive behavior
- Finding it hard to concentrate
- Avoiding feelings or memories
- Feeling emotionally or physically numb
- Feeling unsafe and like you can't trust others
- Overwhelming feelings of anger, guilt, sadness, or shame
- Being unable to express affection
- Engaging in self-destructive behaviors
- Being jumpy or easily startled
- Panicking when reminded of trauma

## How is PTSD treated?

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Counselling
- Medication
- Support Groups
- Self-Help Strategies
- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)
- Mindfulness/Meditation



## Accommodations for Students with PTSD:

- Reduced course load
- Extra time for tests/assignments
- Condition impacts attendance
- Audio recording device
- Writing tests with AS
- Alternative forms of assessment
- Distraction-reduced environment
- Frequent breaks (classroom/test/exam)
- Low lighting for tests and exams
- Noise cancelling headphones
- Service animal
- No more than one exam in 24 hr period

\*All accommodations are based on individual needs and recommendations.

## For more information:

- Canadian Mental Health Association. (2014). Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Retrieved from <https://cmha.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/PTSD-NTNL-brochure-2014-web.pdf>
- Canadian Psychological Association. (2021). "Psychology Works" Fact Sheet: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Retrieved from [https://cpa.ca/docs/File/Publications/FactSheets/FS\\_PostTraumaticStressDisorder\\_EN\\_2020.pdf](https://cpa.ca/docs/File/Publications/FactSheets/FS_PostTraumaticStressDisorder_EN_2020.pdf)
- Mental health first aid. Retrieved from <http://mhfa.ca/en/course-info/courses/mhfa-basic>