What is PTSD?

When the past doesn't feel like the past.

After something frightening or overwhelming, it's normal to feel shaken. For most people this eases over a few weeks. With post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), the brain keeps reacting as if the danger is still happening.

What it can look like

Reliving it

Unwanted memories, nightmares, flashbacks, or strong reactions in your body to reminders.

Avoiding it

Staying away from places, people, conversations, or thoughts linked to what happened.

Feeling on guard

Feeling jumpy or on edge, startling easily, trouble sleeping or concentrating, irritability.

Changes in thoughts and mood

Guilt, shame, or blame. Feeling numb or cut off. "The world isn't safe." "I can't trust anyone."

PTSD is not a sign of weakness. **It's the brain's alarm system staying switched on.**

Why it keeps going

1 A reminder → 2 The memory or alarm fires → 3 Avoiding or pushing it away → 4 Short-lived relief

↻ ...but the memory never gets the chance to feel "over."

Avoiding helps in the moment, but it keeps the memory stuck in the present, so the alarm keeps going off.

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Reactions you might not link to trauma

- Feeling unsafe even when you're safe
- Anger or irritability
- Feeling numb or far away
- Feeling unreal or detached
- Tension or pain in your body
- Pulling away from people
- Drinking or using more
- Losing interest in things you enjoyed

How therapy helps

1

Feel safer first

Understand your reactions and learn ways to steady your body and mind.

2

Make sense of it

Work through the memory and what you came to believe because of it, like blame, shame, or danger.

3

Take your life back

Step by step, return to the places, people, and activities you've been avoiding.

You stay in control of the pace. **You don't have to share everything at once.**

Try this

1. **Notice your reminders.** Write down what sets off a memory or a strong reaction.
2. **Ground yourself.** Feel your feet on the floor and name five things you can see right now.
3. **Keep a steady routine.** Regular sleep, meals, and some movement help your body settle.
4. **Notice avoidance.** Jot down what you avoided this week, without judging yourself.

Your reactions make sense. Recovery is possible.

Trauma-focused therapy is one of the most effective treatments for PTSD.

If you feel unsafe, are in danger, or have thoughts of harming yourself, call 112 or reach 113 Suicide Prevention at 0800-0113 (free, 24/7).

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