



# Help is here

## Healthcare workers and post-traumatic stress disorder

Right now you're on the front lines. You may encounter one crisis after another. And like combat veterans, this can put you at risk for developing PTSD.

But it may be hard for health care workers to seek help. Trained to respond to trauma, you might feel pressure to be "trauma-proof." Experiencing distress might make you worry you're not up to the job. You may think your feelings show weakness. And you might be afraid of others' judgment.

But trying to hide or ignore your distress can lead to bigger problems. It can make it harder to deal with those thoughts and feelings. Many mental health professionals are offering telehealth options right now. If you are suffering, you don't have to wait to seek help.

### What is PTSD?

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a type of anxiety disorder some people experience after being exposed to a traumatic event.

You're exposed to distressing events on a regular basis. And you've seen the very worst side of COVID-19. This can lead to PTSD.

A traumatic event is one that's very distressing. It might be an accident, assault, natural disaster, combat, crime or ongoing neglect.

And you don't have to go through the event yourself to experience PTSD. Sometimes seeing, learning about or talking to others who went through the event can lead to a traumatic response.

## What are the symptoms of PTSD?

PTSD symptoms look a little different in each person. Symptoms tend to fall into the following categories:

- **Intrusive memories.** Nightmares, unwanted memories, flashbacks, severe distress in response to reminders of the event
- **Avoidance.** Trying not to think or talk about the event or avoiding people, places and things that are reminders of the event
- **Negative thoughts and feelings.** Emotional numbness, guilt and shame, feeling detached from others and having negative views of yourself, others or the world
- **Changes in physical and emotional reactions.** Emotional outbursts, being easily startled and having trouble sleeping

## Who tends to get PTSD?

Most people will feel some sort of distress after a stressful or upsetting event. But not everyone will develop PTSD. In fact, within a group of people who experience the same crisis, only some might experience PTSD. Others won't.

Doctors aren't sure why this is so. But it may come down to individual differences. These may include a mix of factors like:

- Past trauma
- Family history of depression and anxiety
- Ability to manage stress
- Access to supports

## Treatment for PTSD

Some people with PTSD will try to ignore their symptoms or treat them with things like drugs and alcohol. And this can lead to a substance use disorder, relationship issues and other problems. But there's hope. Treatment can help PTSD.

There are different treatment options. Some involve talking or thinking about the traumatic event under the guidance of a professional. Others may address unhealthy beliefs about the event. And medication prescribed by a doctor may help too. Treatment can be very effective and help people get back to a place of wellbeing.

Trauma can be a normal, human reaction to an abnormal event. But with understanding and treatment, people can recover.



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