

Working With Patients: What Is PTSD?

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that's triggered by a traumatic event.

It can be defined as a reaction to and re-experiencing of a traumatic event that involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror. The person has persistent symptoms of avoidance, numbing, and hyperarousal.

Anyone can be susceptible to PTSD following a traumatic event. It is common for people to show signs of stress-related reactions following traumatic events. However, not everyone develops PTSD.

Common PTSD Triggering Events
Combat Exposure
Sexual Assault
Accidents resulting in loss of life
Accidents resulting in loss of limb
Exposure to physical violence
Exposure to terrorism
Exposure to natural disasters

Veterans and military members are particularly at risk for PTSD.

Identifying immediately if a patient is a veteran is an important first step in establishing risk for PTSD.

The DSM-V revised criteria for defining PTSD can be helpful for providers attempting to recognize veterans suffering from PTSD.