



## What might I experience after a traumatic event?

Immediately after a traumatic event (during the first month) you may experience acute symptoms: such as anxiety; changes in previous behaviours; disconnection from your thoughts, feelings, memories or your sense of self; being easily startled or feeling 'on edge' all the time; avoiding memories related to the trauma; and experiencing flashbacks and/or nightmares about the trauma. These symptoms are normal and help us to process the traumatic event.

However, if you're finding that these symptoms are not getting better after a month or so, and they're impacting negatively upon your life, then you might be experiencing Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (P.T.S.D.).

## What is P.T.S.D.?

According to criteria (from the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition*) – individuals over six years of age would need to meet specific conditions (see below), for at least a month in duration after the traumatic event(s).

- A. exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence – either through direct experience, witnessing in person, hearing about a family member or close friend, or being repeatedly exposed to traumatic events (such as through a work situation)
- B. experiencing intrusive symptoms associated with the traumatic event; such as memories, nightmares, feeling like the event was happening again, and psychological and physiological reactions to reminders of the event
- C. avoidance of distressing memories, thoughts or feelings about the traumatic event; or avoiding other reminders of the event, such as people, places, conversations, activities, objects or situations

- D. negative changes in thoughts and mood after the traumatic event; such as an inability to remember an important aspect of the event(s); negative beliefs about self, others, or the world (e.g., "I am bad", "No one can be trusted", "The world is an unsafe place"); blaming oneself for the event(s); experiencing fear, horror, anger, guilt or shame persistently; not enjoying or participating in activities; feelings of being separate from others; and an inability to experience positive emotions
- E. reacting differently after the traumatic event(s); such as being irritable or having angry outbursts; engaging in reckless or self-destructive behaviour; being over cautious or vigilant; being easily startled; having difficulty concentrating; and difficulties sleeping

*Also something further to note : we know that the age you experienced the trauma at, whether you had multiple traumatic experiences, whether you had supports available, whether the perpetrator was a trusted family member or friend, whether you felt heard and validated, whether the event was part of your job, and/or whether you're male or female – all impact upon how you experience the traumatic event(s), and how you cope with the traumatic event(s).*

So keep watching your Inbox for next week's article on what the common signs of P.T.S.D. are.

If you believe you're experiencing P.T.S.D. and it's affecting your life negatively, seeking professional assistance could be useful.

If you would like help in managing your thoughts, feelings or behaviours, please feel free to contact us on 0488 954 195, [amanda@awakenpsychology.com.au](mailto:amanda@awakenpsychology.com.au) or [click here](#)

---

## AWAKEN PSYCHOLOGY

Healing Through Growth  
335 Brighton Road  
North Brighton SA 5048

**e** : [amanda@awakenpsychology.com.au](mailto:amanda@awakenpsychology.com.au)  
**w** : [www.awakenpsychology.com.au](http://www.awakenpsychology.com.au)  
**fb** : [www.facebook.com/awakenpsychology](https://www.facebook.com/awakenpsychology)  
**t** : [www.tumblr.com/blog/awakenpsychology](http://www.tumblr.com/blog/awakenpsychology)

**p** : 0488 954 195  
**f** : 08 8377 1877