



**Connect With Others :** While you may want to hide away from others, and in some cases seek safety in an isolated environment, you will only decrease your anxiety in the *short-term*. In the long run it is likely that you will become more anxious and more stressed about going out and connecting with others, and you'll feel more down and flat because you're not relating to others. Also, connecting with trusted others (face-to-face) helps to calm your nervous system. Speaking about what you're thinking and feeling without fear of judgement or criticism can help you to process the traumatic experience.

**Educate Yourself :** Learn about what you can expect immediately after a trauma, and what is common when you have P.T.S.D. Also, learn that you cannot expect to not have any anxiety at all, but that you can learn to manage your anxiety (including flashbacks and nightmares).

**Find Your Power :** Experiencing a traumatic event can leave you feeling powerless and vulnerable. It's important to remind yourself that you have strengths and resources that can help you cope in everyday life, and in stressful situations. Sometimes, helping others can be a way to reclaim your sense of power (volunteer, give blood, help a friend, donate). You might also consider joining a support group to help you feel less isolated and alone.

**Take Care of You :** Experiencing a traumatic event often leaves you feel depleted – mentally, emotionally and physically. It's good to take care of yourself ... even if you don't feel like it. Take time to relax, avoid alcohol and drugs, eat whole unprocessed foods, do things that make you feel good, and get enough sleep.

**Get Back Into Your Life :** A bit like not wanting to connect with others, stepping out of your life can seem like a good idea ... however this will only work short-term. For most individuals doing things that they love and things that they are good at is a great way of feeling some satisfaction about life and themselves again. It can also help you to not avoid difficult situations or experiences (which is common in P.T.S.D.).

**Find a Professional :** Recovering from P.T.S.D. is often very difficult to do by yourself, so finding a professional who deals with trauma is a great first step on your road to recovery. A professional can help you to work with the trauma so that it has less of a hold on you and your life. They will also help you explore your thoughts and feelings about the trauma; work through any feelings of guilt, self-blame and mis-trust; teach you how to deal with intrusive memories; and address any problems that P.T.S.D. has caused in your life. It's really important that you feel relaxed with the professional you're working with, as you'll need to trust them and confide in them. So don't be afraid to find someone you're comfortable working with, after all ... it's your therapy.

**But What Can I Do For Someone Who Has P.T.S.D.?** Unfortunately P.T.S.D. not only impacts the person who is living with it, it also affects those around them – whether they are partners, children, parents or friends. It can be hard sitting on the sidelines watching your loved one in so much pain, and it can also be challenging to understand why your loved one is more withdrawn, less affectionate, or more volatile. Or to watch them lose a job, or abuse drugs and/or alcohol.

Looking after yourself is important, because if you don't you'll be facing burnout. It's also helpful to learn all you can about P.T.S.D. – the more you know, the better equipped you'll be to help your loved one and to keep things in perspective.

Also keep the following in mind:

**Be patient and understanding :** P.T.S.D. can take time to heal, so be patient with the pace of recovery and offer your support. Your loved one may need to talk about the traumatic event over and over again ... this is part of the healing process. While it might be tempting to tell your loved one to “get over it” or “get on with life”, the greatest gift you can give is to be present with them in whatever they're thinking and feeling.

**Try to anticipate and prepare for triggers :** Understanding what triggers your loved one in relation to the traumatic event (whether that's an anniversary date, specific people or places, or certain sights, sounds or smells), will put you in a better position to offer support and help your loved one when they do become triggered. And beware, while it can seem more loving to avoid any triggers, in the long run, it won't help your loved one work through their P.T.S.D.

**Don't personalise P.T.S.D. :** If your loved one seems distant, irritable, or closed off, remember that these are common symptoms of P.T.S.D., they don't necessarily mean that there is anything wrong with you or your relationship.

**Don't pressure your loved one to talk :** Never try and force your loved one to open up (you could innocently be doing more harm than good). Instead however, let them know that you're there when and if they want to talk. And also encourage them to talk to someone else if they don't feel like they can talk with you. Holding on to painful thoughts and feelings is damaging for most people.

If you, or a loved one, is 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](#)

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