PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS:

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that can develop after someone experiences or witnesses a traumatic event that involves intense fear, helplessness, or horror. It's not just about "having bad memories": it can deeply affect thoughts, emotions, behaviour, and even physical health. It's a psychiatric disorder that may occur after exposure to things such as war, assault, accidents, natural disasters, abuse, or other life-threatening situations, and is the brain's stress response system to stay in a "high-alert" mode long after the danger is gone.

Symptoms typically include intrusive memories, avoidance of trauma reminders, negative mood, and hypervigilance.

1 Types of PTSD

Acute: Symptoms last less than 3 months.
Chronic: Symptoms last 3 months or more.
Delayed: Symptoms appear months or years after trauma.
Complex (C-PTSD): Typically results from prolonged or repeated trauma (e.g., ongoing abuse, captivity, war). Includes all PTSD symptoms plus additional issues: severe emotional regulation problems, deep mistrust, feelings of worthlessness, relationship difficulties.
Dissociative Subtype: Prominent symptoms include depersonalisation (feeling detached from self) or derealisation (feeling the world is unreal).

2 Symptoms

Typical symptoms fall into four main categories:

- Intrusion: unwanted, distressing memories, flashbacks, or nightmares.
- Avoidance: staying away from reminders of the trauma (people, places, conversations).
- Negative changes in thinking and mood: persistent fear, guilt, shame, emotional numbness, loss of interest.
- Changes in arousal and reactivity: hypervigilance, irritability, exaggerated startle response, difficulty sleeping or concentrating.

Potential Causes and Risk Factors

- Experiencing or witnessing trauma (combat, sexual assault, serious accidents, disasters, violent crime).
- Previous trauma, especially abuse in childhood.
- Pre-existing anxiety, depression, or other disorders.
- Severe, prolonged, or repeated trauma increases risk.
- Certain brain structures, genetic predisposition, and high stress hormone responses can contribute.
- Military personnel, first responders, emergency medical workers are at high risk.

Help Available

- Psychological therapies such as Trauma-focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (TF-CBT), Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR), Prolonged Exposure Therapy. and group therapy.
- Medication including anti-depressants (SSRIs).
- Lifestyle and self-management techniques such as good sleep, regular exercise, meditation, and limiting drugs/ alcohol.
- Charity organisations such as PTSD UK and Mind.

For more information, make sure you contact your GP or visit the NHS website