
The Symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

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About Dr. Brady:

Dr. Brady developed the Lindner Center of HOPE's psychiatric rehabilitation programming. The goal of the program is to teach people to set goals for their lives and guide them through illness management and recovery. Dr. Brady oversees the Center's Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and Anxiety treatment programs and Supported Employment program.

Dr. Brady is a clinical psychologist with 16 years of experience on the staff and faculty of the University of Cincinnati's Department of Psychiatry.

Dr. Brady earned his Doctorate of Clinical-Community Psychology from University of South Carolina. Dr. Brady completed his post-doctoral fellowship in the Department of Psychiatry at the University Cincinnati College of Medicine. He also has completed advanced training in the treatment of OCD and OCD spectrum disorders through the Behavior Therapy Institute. Dr. Brady is Board Certified in Clinical Psychology by the American Board of Professional Psychology.

His advanced training and experience in providing Cognitive Behavioral Therapy have earned Dr. Brady the designation of regional expert in the treatment of obsessive-compulsive disorder. Dr. Brady has expertise in psychological assessment and has several scholarly presentations and publications in the subject matter.

In 2009 he was honored with the Exemplary Clinical Psychologist Award from NAMI Hamilton County.

Summary:

A large number of troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan have been diagnosed with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). However the grasp of this anxiety disorder extends well beyond the battlefield. This article provides some background on PTSD and the symptoms related to the disorder.

The Symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is an anxiety disorder some people develop after experiencing a traumatic event. Often associated with military veterans suffering from combat trauma, PTSD can also develop in anyone grappling with a distressing, life-changing event, such as a serious accident, sexual abuse or natural disasters. Combat and sexual assault are more likely to evoke PTSD than other traumatic events.

Roughly 20 percent of men and 8 percent of women experiencing a traumatic event develop PTSD. Those more likely to develop the disorder include minorities, females and individuals with mental health problems or little education.

Typically, there are a number of stress-related reactions people experience after going through a traumatic event. These include:

Fear or anxiety: These emotions are sometimes more prevalent in people dealing with the trauma of combat-related events. Symptoms include feelings of tenseness and fear, a need to constantly stay alert and a sense of agitation or jumpiness.

Sadness or depression: The loss of a loved one or a way of life are examples of things that might heighten this emotion. Symptoms include crying spells, losing interest in things you previously enjoyed, a desire to be constantly alone and feelings of being tired or empty.

Guilt and shame: Being ashamed about your behavior during a traumatic event or feeling guilty about not preventing a particular situation from happening are things that can elevate these emotions beyond normal levels.

Anger and irritability: Traumatic events where a person feels they were treated unfairly can cause them to overreact about small things as well as lose their temper and patience more easily.

Mental and physical behavioral changes: Making uncharacteristic choices that affect the well-being of self and others, in some cases. Examples include aggressive driving, negligence of personal health, avoidance of social interaction and drug, alcohol or cigarette use.

These reactions tend to dissipate in most people over time. However, people with PTSD continue to experience these reactions for periods as long as their entire lives if left untreated. Individuals displaying any of these stress-related reactions for more than three months need to be evaluated by a medical professional for PTSD.

In addition to the stress-related reactions mentioned above, PTSD sufferers also experience one or more of the following symptoms:

Flashback: When a person feels as if they are reliving the experience of a traumatic event in real time. Flashbacks can be triggered by sight, sound or just thinking about the event. Many people with PTSD also experience flashbacks while sleeping.

Avoidance: Some PTSD sufferers try to avoid certain situations or actions that might provoke thoughts or discussion on the traumatic event in question. Additional focus on activities such as work is another example of an avoidance tactic.

Numbness: Examples include difficulty expressing emotions, lack of positive feelings toward others and avoiding activity and interaction with friends and family.

Hyperarousal: This includes feeling jittery or always on the lookout for potential danger. Sudden anger and irritableness are other common examples.

Most people with PTSD are diagnosed following one or two evaluation sessions. The administration of PTSD treatment typically includes one or a combination of medication and counseling therapies.

More information on PTSD and a screening test can be found at www.ptsd.va.gov.

Source:

United States Department of Veterans Affairs. *Understanding PTSD*. Retrieved on at December 1, 2010 from http://www.ptsd.va.gov/PTSD/public/understanding_ptsd/booklet.pdf.