

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

What is PTSD?

Post-traumatic stress Disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition triggered by experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event. It can cause severe emotional and psychological distress long after the traumatic event has ended. For victims and survivors of a violent crime, this includes following a trial and conviction. PTSD is characterized by a range of symptoms that interfere with a person's ability to function in daily life. If you have PTSD, there are options for help and support.



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For More Resources Visit: <http://www.pcrc-survivors.org/>

Symptoms of PTSD

PTSD symptoms can vary, but they typically fall into four categories:

Intrusive Thoughts

- **Flashbacks:** Reliving the traumatic event as if it is happening again.
- **Nightmares:** Distressing dreams about the traumatic event.
- **Distressing Memories:** Recurrent, involuntary thoughts about the trauma.

Avoidance

- **Avoiding Reminders:** Steering clear of places, people, or activities that remind you of the traumatic event. Changing the subject to not have discussions about the traumatic event.
- **Emotional Numbness:** Difficulty experiencing emotions or maintaining relationships.

Negative Mood

- **Negative Beliefs:** Persistent negative feelings such as guilt, shame, or hopelessness.
- **Detachment:** Feeling disconnected from yourself, others, or the world around you.

Hyperarousal

- **Hypervigilance:** Being easily startled or feeling on edge.
- **Sleep Disturbances:** Difficulty falling or staying asleep.
- **Irritability:** Outbursts of anger or difficulty concentrating.

Tips for Managing PTSD

There are different practices and tools you can use to help manage PTSD symptoms. Choose from some examples below depending on what seems most beneficial to you.

1. Practice Mindfulness & Relaxation Techniques:

- **Mindfulness Meditation:** A technique that can help reduce anxiety by staying grounded in the present moment.
- **Deep Breathing Exercises:** These can calm your nervous system and manage stress.

2. Stay Active & Engaged:

- **Healthy Lifestyle Choices:** Maintain a balanced diet, get adequate sleep, and avoid excessive alcohol or drug use.
- **Physical Exercise:** Regular activity can improve mood and reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression.
- **Hobbies and Interests:** Engage in activities that you enjoy and that bring you a sense of accomplishment.

3. Build a Support Network

- **Connect with Others:** Reach out to friends, family, or support groups for emotional support and understanding.
- **Share Your Experience:** Talking with others who have experienced similar trauma can be therapeutic and make you feel heard.

4. Maintain a Routine

- **Establish Daily Patterns:** A structured routine can provide stability and predictability.
- **Set Small, Realistic Goals:** Focus on achievable tasks to build confidence and a sense of control.

When to Seek Professional Help

While self-help strategies can be effective, there are times when professional support is essential. Consider seeking help from a mental health professional if you experience the following:

Severe Distress

Symptoms that significantly impact your daily functioning or quality of life.

Persistent Symptoms

Symptoms that do not improve or worsen over time.

Safety Concerns

Thoughts of self-harm or harming others.

Difficulty Coping

Challenges in managing symptoms despite consistent self-help efforts.

Negative Impact on Relationships

Struggles in maintaining personal or professional relationships due to PTSD symptoms.

Types of Professional Help

Mental Health Therapists & Counselors:

Mental health professionals have advanced degrees and are experts in their fields. Some have specialized training to address key problems and challenges.

Here are a few examples of the different types of professionals you might find:

Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor (LCMHC): Offers talk therapy for various mental health issues, often working with individuals and groups.

Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW): Addresses mental health and social issues, often integrating community resources in treatment.

Psychologist (PsyD): A practitioner with a doctoral degree in psychology who conducts assessments, can diagnose disorders, provides therapy, and may specialize in specific psychological conditions.

Psychiatrist: A medical doctor who can prescribe medication to address specific mental health diagnoses. Some may also provide talk therapy.

Recovering from PTSD is a personal journey and it's important to seek support and take steps that are right for you. Remember, you are not alone. There are individuals and resources that can help you navigate this challenging time. Prioritize your mental health and well-being, and reach out for support when you need it. More information is available on the *Post-Conviction Resource Center*.

Types of Therapy

Specific treatment modalities have been proven beneficial for people who experience PTSD, including:

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

Focuses on identifying and changing negative thought patterns and behaviors.

EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization & Reprocessing)

A therapy that helps process and integrate traumatic memories through guided eye movements.

Medication Management

Psychiatrists may prescribe medications to help manage symptoms of PTSD, such as depression, anxiety, and nightmares.

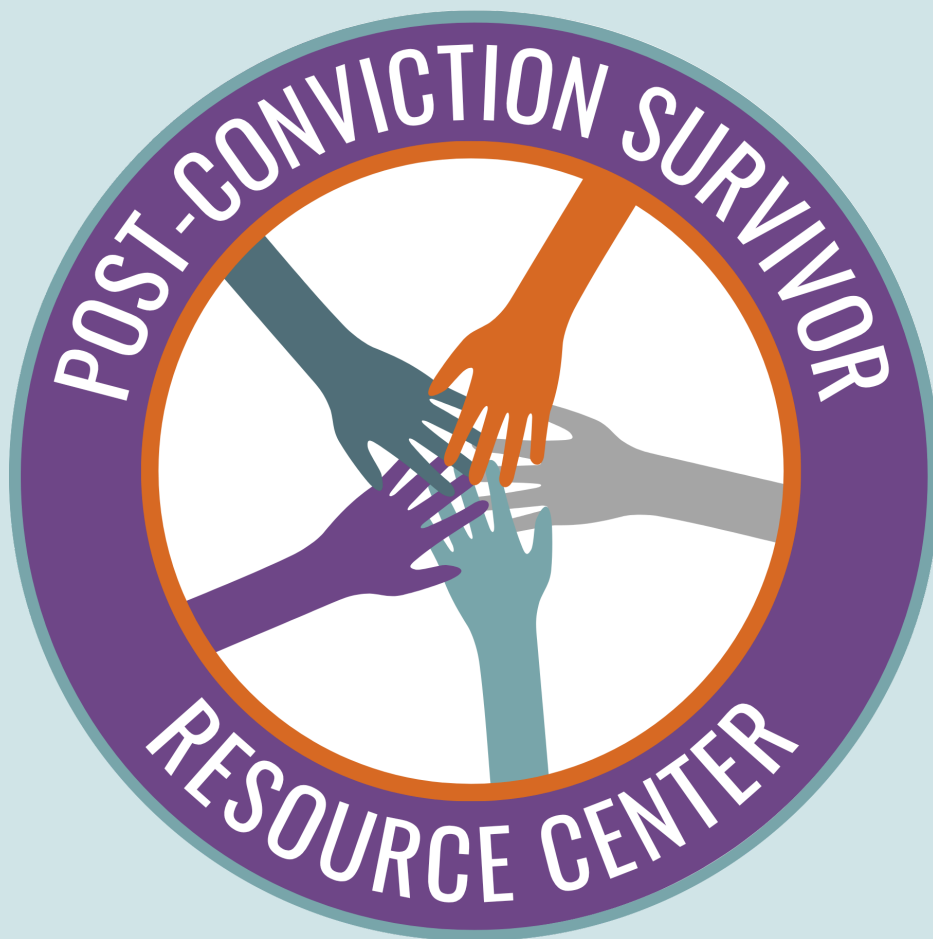
Peer Support Groups

Peer support groups for trauma survivors can provide understanding and validation of your experience.

Additional Resources:

Guided Meditation for PTSD: This resource offers information on PTSD, including key neurological symptoms, management techniques, the benefits of meditation, and a 10-minute guided meditation audio to manage symptoms of PTSD.

10 Grounding Skills to Help Cope with Flashbacks Related to Trauma: Flashbacks are a common symptom of PTSD and trauma. This resource provides 10 grounding techniques you can practice to help you cope with flashbacks.



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This product was supported by grant number 15POVC-23-GK-01412-NONF, awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this product are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.