

# Coping Mechanisms

Due to the complexity of PTSD, there are no 'quick fixes', however, there are strategies that you could try...

- Use regular reassurances
  - Remind your child that they are loved
  - Remind your child that their safety is your priority
  - Remind your child that they aren't alone through this
  - Give physical reassurances, such as hugs, hand holding – where appropriate and if your child is comfortable with physical contact
- It can be helpful for your child to have a designated safe space – this can be their bed, your bed, a certain chair, a certain place, or a specific item. It can be helpful for your child to designate such a place/item ahead of particularly difficult PTSD triggers
- Help maintain normality:
  - Make routines and keep to them as best you all can
  - Discuss any and all upcoming changes to existing routines/changes in familiarity, in order to limit the 'surprise' element
- Practice relaxation techniques:
  - Deep breathing exercises:
    - Take a deep breath in through the nose
    - Hold for 2 seconds
    - Breathe out through the mouth
    - Wait 5 seconds, and try again (repeat as needed)
  - Blowing bubbles can also be a good form of breathing exercise
- Ensure regular exercise is had

# Post-traumatic stress disorder

## Coping Mechanisms



The Lotus Mental Health

[www.thelotusmentalhealth.org](http://www.thelotusmentalhealth.org)

## What is Post-traumatic stress disorder?

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental health disorder that can affect people of all ages, including children. A child with PTSD will continue to experience scary thoughts and replay memories that are associated with the traumatic event that they experienced or witnessed that caused them physical and/or psychological damage.

The symptoms associated with PTSD can start soon after the traumatic event, or they can be delayed by six months or more. PTSD can leave long-term effects and can often become chronic.

Anxiety, depression, and substance abuse can all be present with PTSD.

## What can you do?

Having a child with post-traumatic stress disorder is incredibly difficult, not only because of the reason why it began in the first place, but also because of the distressing nature of the condition.

It's extremely upsetting to see your child in any kind of pain, and to know that their pain is caused by something that happened to them, that they may not be able to process, it can feel almost impossible to get through.

It's important to find what coping mechanisms work for your child, so here are a few examples...

## Coping Mechanisms

If your child is struggling, there are things that you can encourage your child to do that can help them. They are:

- Nobody should go through difficult times alone, and this is something that your child needs to learn to understand, because of this, it is important for your child to learn how to open up to people about how they are feeling. A parent, carer, brother, sister, grandparent, auntie, uncle, cousin, a trusted friend, a counsellor – it doesn't matter who, as long as your child feels comfortable talking to someone who they trust, about how they are feeling.
- Encourage your child to get the thoughts that are in their head – out. An effective way that they can do this by keeping a diary. Simply writing down how they are feeling can be really useful. Not only will that work because it helps them put a place for their negative thoughts, but it can also be used as a point of reference for any particular anxiety triggers that they didn't realise they had.
- Writing a letter – this might seem a bit daft, but if they can write letters to themselves, particularly after particular difficult PTSD attacks, they can use the letters to read back and see themselves, through their own words, that they have overcome their distress in the past, and therefore they know that they are capable of overcoming them.