

How to help

In order to best help your child, it is important that you don't pretend the traumatic event didn't happen, and instead acknowledge it.

Be supportive of your child. Listen to what they say and take what they say seriously.

Make sure you get counselling for your child, it's great if your child feels comfortable enough to talk to you, but they also need to speak with a professional in order to help them move through it and put coping strategies in place.

Keep any and all appointments for your child – even if they are distressing, they are/will help, it just takes time sometimes

Get to know your child's healthcare team – their doctors, psychiatrists, healthcare workers, social workers, counsellors, so you know who to speak to if you need to

Talk to people about your child's PTSD, and make others aware of their struggles

Seek out support for yourself too – speaking with others who are going through similar situations can be extremely beneficial

Take any and all signs and symptoms of depression, self-harming, and suicidal thoughts very seriously, and remember that suicide is an urgent health emergency

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Information



The Lotus Mental Health

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.

Causes of PTSD

PTSD is triggered by something that happened either to themselves, to someone close to them, or in direct response to something that they witnessed.

Older children, teenagers, and adolescents can also suffer from PTSD, and the more common causes are:

- Having intrusive medical procedures – particularly when they were younger
- Being attacked by an animal – such as being bitten by a dog or other animal
- Natural disasters – earthquakes, tornados, floods, severe storms etc
- Acts of war – bombings, terror attacks etc
- Personal, violent attacks on themselves such as rape, kidnapping, torture, imprisonment, molestation etc
- Sexual abuse
- Sexual assault
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect

Signs and Symptoms

If you think your child is suffering from Post-traumatic stress disorder, there are signs and symptoms that you can look out for. They include:

- Exposure to similar situations
- Nightmares
- Sleep problems – unable to sleep, often due to nightmares
- Always being on alert – nervous, jumpy, guarded, scared
- Detachment from people and things they used to enjoy
- Appearing 'numb' to everything
- Have difficulty showing affection – especially if this was never an issue before
- Aggressive/violent tendencies
- Refuse to go to certain places/watch certain tv shows/films
- Experience flashbacks – triggered by noises, smells, tastes, places
- Lose grip on reality – not sure what's real and what isn't
- 'Re-enact' the traumatic event
- Having trouble at school
- Having trouble concentrating
- Fears of death
- Acting younger than they are/regressing – sucking thumb, clingy behaviours, bedwetting
- Headaches with no medical or obvious reason why
- Stomach-ache with no medical or obvious reason why