

PLEASE TAKE SOME TIME TO READ THIS AS YOU MAY BE SUFFERING FROM ONE OR MANY OF THE FOLLOWING AILMENTS. ALL ARE A NATURAL BODY RESPONSE TO TRAUMA

It must be remembered that you have been exposed to a traumatic and extremely stressful event. You will experience a variety of symptoms and emotions, which may include **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder** - PTSD; these symptoms will probably increase and change as time goes by

What causes PTSD and how common is it?

Who gets it?

- Witnessing someone being badly injured or killed
- Being involved in a fire, flood, or natural disaster
- Being involved in a life-threatening accident
- Combat exposure

For women the most common traumatic events more often associated with PTSD are rape, sexual molestation, physical attack, being threatened with a weapon, and childhood sexual abuse.

For men it is rape, combat exposure, childhood neglect and childhood physical abuse.

People with PTSD suffer a number of distinctive neurobiological changes in both the central and autonomic nervous systems, such as altered brainwave activity, decreased volume of the hippocampus, and abnormal activation of the amygdala. Both the hippocampus and the amygdala are involved in the processing and integration of our memory. The amygdala is also involved in co-ordinating our body's fear response.

You will probably also suffer with abnormal levels of key hormones involved in your body's response to stress. Thyroid function will be enhanced. You may also produce higher than normal levels of natural opiates after the trauma has passed.

These and many other factors associated with the trauma will affect your daily functioning. They will give you profound and pervasive problems for a time.

On the medical side, headaches, gastrointestinal complaints, immune system problems, dizziness, chest pain and discomfort in other parts of the body are common in people suffering from PTSD. Often a doctor will treat your other symptoms without being aware that they stem from PTSD.

If left untreated it can become a high prevalent lifetime disorder that may persist for years. In order that you do not suffer from symptom overload, it is important that you seek the right psychological help as soon as possible.

THE FOLLOWING EMOTIONS WILL PLAY A STRONG PART IN YOUR LIVES TO BEGIN WITH:

Anger

High levels of Anger in your body relate to our natural survival instinct. When initially confronted with extreme threat, anger is a normal response to terror, events that seem unfair, and feeling out of control or victimized. It can help a person survive by mobilizing all of their attention, thought, brain energy, and action toward survival. Recent research has shown that these responses to extreme threat can become “stuck” in person with PTSD.

Another line of research is revealing that anger can also be a normal response to betrayal or to losing basic trust in others, particularly in situations of interpersonal exploitation or violence.

Arousal - Anger is marked by the increased activation of the cardiovascular, glandular, and the brain systems associated with emotion and survival. It is also marked with increased muscle tension. Sometimes with individuals who have PTSD, this increased internal activation can become reset as the normal level of arousal and can intensify the actual emotion and physical experience of anger. This can cause a person to feel frequently on-edge, keyed-up, or irritable and they may become more easily provoked. It is common for traumatised individuals to seek out situations that require them to stay alert and ward off potential danger. Conversely, they may use alcohol and drugs to reduce overall internal tension.

Your behaviour thoughts and feelings may change because of the exposure to the trauma. Often the most effective way of dealing with extreme threat is to act aggressively, in a self-protective way.

Avoidance is a common reaction to trauma, and can interfere with emotional recovery and healing. It is understandable that individuals who have experienced stressful events want to avoid thinking about or feeling emotions related to those events. Research with a wide variety of populations (e.g., survivors of sexual abuse, rape, assault and motor vehicle accidents) indicates that those individuals who try to cope with their trauma by avoiding thoughts and feelings about it tend to have more severe psychological symptoms.

Whilst distraction and avoidance can be very useful in the short-term, they become problematic when they are the primary means of coping with trauma.

Chronic pain

Chronic pain involves an individual suffering from pain in a particular area of the body. (e.g., in the back or the neck) for at least three to six months. Chronic pain persists beyond the amount of time that is normal for an injury to heal.

Depression

The symptoms of depression can vary quite a bit, but most people who experience depression feel down or sad more days than not, or find that things in their life no longer seem enjoyable or interesting. Additionally people with depression may notice changes in their sleeping, eating, concentration or feelings about themselves, and may find themselves feeling hopeless.

Depression is a common problem in which severe and long lasting feelings of sadness or other problems get in the way of a person's ability to function.

Psychotherapy treatments will help your progress and will focus on helping you learn about your problems and resolving them, through working with the therapist and learning new patterns of behaviour to help decrease depression. Two of the main types of psychotherapy for depression are interpersonal therapy and cognitive-behavioural therapy. Interpersonal therapy focuses on the patient's relationships with other people, and how these relationships may cause and maintain depression. CBT treatments help clients change negative styles of thinking and acting that can lead to depression.

In addition to our physical health, people tell us they suffer from

Intrusive images, sounds or thoughts or feelings, which are linked, back to the previous event. These are called (flashbacks)

- Nightmares
- Chronic heightened anxiety.
- Sleep problems
- Night terrors
- Panic attacks
- Substance abuse
- Suicide risk
- Self Harm

Self-Harm

Self-Harm refers to the deliberate, direct destruction of body tissues that result in tissue damage. When someone engages in self-harm, they may have a variety of intentions; however, the person's intention is NOT to kill themselves.

Some of the reasons people engage in self-harm:

- To distract themselves from emotional pain by causing physical pain
- To punish themselves
- To relieve tension
- To feel real by feeling pain or seeing evidence of injury
- To feel numb, spaced out, calm, or at peace
- To experience euphoric feelings (associated with release of endorphins)
- To communicate pain, anger, or other emotions to others
- To nurture themselves (through the process of healing the wounds)

AS YOU WILL SEE RAPE CAN LEAD TO A MULTITUDE OF PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS AND YOU WILL NEED HELP TO OVERCOME THESE PROBLEMS AND THE SOONER YOU DO SO THE MORE CHANCE YOU HAVE OF ACKNOWLEDGING THE IMPACT OF THE TRAUMA, UNDERSTANDING AND MINIMISING THE DAMAGE TO YOUR PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH.

If you do not feel able to talk to a counsellor at present please feel free to contact Family Matters in the future on the following number 01474-536661 (office) or the ISVA mobile numbers a published

If you just wish to speak to someone in confidence on the helpline please call 01474-537392.

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