



## ABOUTFACE

Learn about PTSD from Veterans who've lived it. Visit AboutFace to get the facts about PTSD, learn about treatment options, and explore personal stories from Veterans, family members, and VA clinicians. Watch videos with topics like:

- What is PTSD?
- How can treatment help me?
- How do I know I'm ready for treatment?
- Race, culture, and PTSD
- Military sexual trauma

## VA MENTAL HEALTH APPS

VA offers apps that provide self-help, education, and support following a traumatic experience. There are three categories of apps:

- **Self-Help:** Provides support and tools for living with PTSD.
- **Treatment Companions:** Used as a companion to PTSD treatment with a health care provider—to make treatment easier.
- **Related Issues:** Helps with related issues affecting people with PTSD, like insomnia or substance use.

All VA apps are free, secure, and easy to use. Download the apps or learn more by visiting [ptsd.va.gov/mobile](https://ptsd.va.gov/mobile)

## RESOURCES

The Veterans Crisis Line offers 24/7 confidential crisis support for Veterans and their families—**dial 988 then press 1** or text **838255**

To learn more about your options for PTSD treatment:  
[ptsd.va.gov/decisionaid](https://ptsd.va.gov/decisionaid)

For help finding a therapist or VA PTSD treatment program:  
[ptsd.va.gov/PTSD/gethelp](https://ptsd.va.gov/PTSD/gethelp)



VA



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# WHAT IS PTSD?

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can occur in anyone who has been through a traumatic event, such as a natural disaster, combat, sexual assault, or an accident. While most people who live through a traumatic event will have stress reactions afterwards, if it's been a month or more—you may be dealing with PTSD.

## PTSD TREATMENT WORKS

[ptsd.va.gov](https://ptsd.va.gov)



## COMMON SYMPTOMS

Everyone's experience with PTSD is different, but symptoms fall into four main categories:



### Reliving or re-experiencing the event.

You may have nightmares, experience flashbacks of the event, or get very upset when sights or smells remind you of the event.



**Avoidance.** You may avoid things, places, or people that remind you of the event. This might mean keeping busy to avoid thinking about the trauma or staying away from people because you feel it's just easier to be alone.



### Negative changes in feelings and beliefs.

You may notice changes in the way you think about yourself and others, feel guilt or shame about the traumatic event, or lose interest in things or people you used to enjoy.



**Hyperarousal.** You may feel on edge or be alert and on the lookout for danger more often.

## RELATED ISSUES

Traumatic events can have a serious effect on physical and mental well-being. Many people experiencing PTSD may have symptoms like trouble sleeping or anger issues—**treatment can help.**

## SCREENING

If you've experienced a traumatic event and are wondering whether your feelings and behaviors may be related to PTSD, a 5-question self-screen can help. Only a health care provider can diagnose PTSD, so if you're experiencing symptoms that cause you distress or interfere with your daily life, find a therapist or treatment program that can help.

Visit [ptsd.va.gov/screen](https://ptsd.va.gov/screen) to answer questions about your feelings and behaviors in the last month.

## TREATMENT

PTSD symptoms can show up at any time and any age. If you think you're experiencing any of these symptoms—don't wait. Talk to a mental health care provider who can help you find out whether your feelings and behaviors may be related to PTSD. **Knowing** if you have PTSD is the first step to getting effective treatment. There are treatment options that can help you begin to feel better and take back control of your life, no matter how long you've been living with symptoms of PTSD.

Several types of trauma-focused psychotherapies, or talk therapy that focuses on your memory of the traumatic event or what it means to you, are highly recommended for PTSD.

The best treatment for PTSD is the one that works **for you.** Work with a mental health care provider to explore your options.



## TALK THERAPY

### Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)

- CPT teaches you how to change the upsetting thoughts and feelings you've experienced since your trauma.

### Prolonged Exposure Therapy (PE)

- PE teaches you to gradually approach trauma-related memories, feelings, and situations that you have been avoiding since your trauma.

### Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)

- EMDR helps you process and make sense of your trauma while paying attention to a back-and-forth movement or sound, like a finger waving side-to-side, a light, or a tone.

## MEDICATIONS

There are 3 medications recommended to treat PTSD symptoms: paroxetine (Paxil), sertraline (Zoloft), and venlafaxine (Effexor). If you decide to try a medication, you will work with your health care provider to find the best one for you.

