## 10 Things Everyone Should Know About **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**

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Living through a frightening or disturbing experience can cause people to develop a condition called post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In fact in any given year, more than 5 million people in the U.S. suffer from PTSD. This condition can be very difficult, but treatment can help.

#### 1. PTSD is a medical condition.

- It can develop after a person experiences or witnesses a traumatic event.
- Some things that may lead to PTSD include violent crime like rape or assault, military combat, accidents, and natural disasters.
- Anyone can develop PTSD. Men, women and children of all ages can be affected.



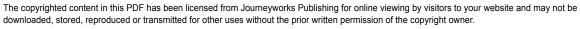
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### 2. Recognize the symptoms of PTSD.

- People with PTSD may have recurring nightmares or thoughts about the trauma. These may be so vivid that it feels like they are reliving the event.
  - They may have sudden outbursts of anger or feelings of mistrust or guilt.
  - PTSD can cause depression, anxiety and problems sleeping. People with PTSD may be unable to feel their emotions at all.

### 3. PTSD may cause physical symptoms.

- People with PTSD may get headaches, have stomach problems or feel dizzy.
- They may have chest pain, discomfort in other areas of the body, or immune system problems.
- If you are having any of these symptoms following a traumatic event, ask your health care provider if PTSD could be the reason.



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## 4. PTSD often starts within 3 months of the event.

 But for some people, symptoms do not begin until years later.

### 5. Previous trauma can increase a person's risk.

Studies show that people who have been through a traumatic event before, either recently or as a child, are at a higher risk for PTSD.

#### 6. PTSD can be treated.

- Talking with a doctor or counselor who is familiar with PTSD helps many people to recover.
- Medication may ease symptoms like fear, anxiety or depression.
- Joining a support group with others who have PTSD can also help.



#### 7. Recovery takes time.

- With treatment, some people are able to recover within six months. For others it can take longer.
- Treatment helps most people.

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# 8. Positive actions can help the healing process.

- Learn and use relaxation techniques.
- Avoid alcohol and illegal drugs.
- Eat a healthy diet and get plenty of rest and exercise.

### 9. Friends and family members can help.

- Learn about PTSD.
- Join a support group for friends and family.
- Be patient and supportive.

#### 10. For more information:

- Talk with your health care provider or contact your local mental health services.
- Visit these websites:
  - National Center for PTSD <u>www.ptsd.va.gov</u>
  - VA Mental Health <u>www.mentalhealth.va.gov</u>
  - National Alliance on Mental Illness <u>www.nami.org</u>
  - Make the Connection <u>www.maketheconnection.net</u>
- If you are in crisis or afraid you may hurt yourself, call 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255).

For more information on VA benefits and services, visit the VA website at <u>www.va.gov</u>, the VA caregiver website at <u>www.caregiver.va.gov</u> or call **1-800-827-1000** for VA Benefits Administration or **1-855-260-3274** for the National Caregiver Support Line.

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This pamphlet is not a substitute for medical care. If you have questions or concerns, please talk with a health care provider.