

A photograph of a man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a blue shirt, hugging a woman with long brown hair from behind. The woman is wearing a pink top. The image is partially covered by a large blue diagonal shape that also serves as a background for the title text.

PTSD and Recovery

National Centre of Excellence
in Posttraumatic Mental Health

What is PTSD?

Following trauma, some people develop posttraumatic stress disorder.

The main symptoms of PTSD are:

- Re-living the traumatic event
e.g., nightmares, flashbacks
- Avoiding reminders of the traumatic event
e.g., activities, places, people
- Negative thoughts and feelings
e.g., fear, anger, guilt
- Feeling wound-up
e.g., difficulty sleeping or concentrating, irritable, easily startled

There are many reasons a person may develop PTSD. It can happen to anyone.

5-10%

of Australians will suffer from PTSD at some point in their lives

1/3

of children who experience a traumatic event will develop PTSD



What can I do?

If you have experienced trauma:

- Look after yourself: rest, relax, exercise, eat well
- Get back to your normal routine as soon as possible
- Every day, do something that you enjoy
- Spend time with people you care about
- Try not to bottle up your feelings
- Talk about your how you feel when you are ready

If you know someone who has experienced trauma:

- Encourage them to look after themselves
- Give them space by taking on some of their everyday tasks
- Join them in doing enjoyable activities
- Encourage them to limit their exposure to media coverage of the event
- Provide opportunities to talk about what happened, when they are ready
- Encourage them to seek help if they are not getting back to normal after two weeks

If your child has experienced trauma:

- Reassure them that they are safe now
- Enjoy activities together as a family
- Give them special attention
- Provide opportunities to talk about what happened
- Encourage them to express their emotions through play

If your workforce is at risk of exposure to traumatic events

- Recognise the risk to your staff and minimise that risk
- Provide a supportive trauma-informed workplace
- Promote trauma awareness amongst staff and management
- Task and train managers and supervisors to provide support to their staff
- Provide access to trained counsellors to discuss work, and non-work related stresses

Treatments for PTSD

Effective treatments include counselling, medication, or a combination of both.

Recommended counselling approaches include:

- **trauma-focussed cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)**
- **eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing (EMDR)**

These treatments can work even if your traumatic experience was a long time ago. It's never too late to get help.

Ask your GP, a psychologist, social worker or psychiatrist about the best treatment for you.

Getting help

Having trouble coping with life? Always uneasy, angry or unhappy? Not sleeping well? **If so, ask for help.**

Lifeline 13 11 14

(confidential 24/7 counselling and referrals)

1800RESPECT (1800 737 732)

www.1800respect.org.au

National sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service
(online counselling available)

Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800

(free call) or www.kidshelp.com.au
(online counselling available)

MensLine Australia 1300 78 99 78

or www.mensline.org.au

(online and video counselling available)

VVCS 1800 011 046

Veterans and Veterans Families
Counselling Service
(free and confidential counselling)

Phoenix Australia

www.phoenixaustralia.org
Information about trauma,
recovery and treatment

What is trauma?

There are moments in life that test us, that challenge our understanding of the world and our sense of safety.

A traumatic event involves exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence, such as:

- a serious accident
- sexual or physical assault
- war
- natural disaster

For some people, the nature of their work increases their risk of experiencing traumatic events, for example, those in the military, and workers in the emergency services.

Experiencing a traumatic event can be overwhelming and distressing. Most people recover using their own coping strategies and with the support of friends and family.

For those needing extra help, there are effective treatments.

Trauma can lead to:

- posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- depression
- anxiety
- alcohol and drug use
- anger
- problems in relationships with family & friends
- reduced capacity to work



75%

of Australians are exposed to at least one traumatic event in their lifetime

For more information about trauma,
its effects and best practice treatments,
visit www.phoenixaustralia.org