

TIPS FOR COPING WITH TRAUMA

Post-traumatic stress is a collection of symptoms that are experienced in response to an actual or threatened traumatic event. These traumatic events may be experienced directly or indirectly. Below are some symptoms of post-traumatic stress. Do any of these apply to you?

Intrusive symptoms

- Recurrent or involuntary memories
- Recurrent distressing dreams
- Flashbacks

Thinking and feeling

- Exaggerated negative beliefs about self
- Detachment
- Persistent anger, guilt, shame, or horror

Reactivity or arousal

- Engaging in reckless behaviors
- Hypervigilance
- Angry outbursts with little to no provocation



COPING TIPS

Access your support network, such as your doctor or licensed mental health professional, about your symptoms

The structure of routine appointments is an important first step in reducing anxiety. After a traumatic event, trust can be difficult, so be intentional about who is part of your circle.

- ***Can you think of three to four people who would be good supports?***
- ***What qualities of these particular people make them a good fit for your needs?***

Resume familiar routines

Re-establishing familiar routines is one of many ways we can start to restore a sense of safety after dealing with a traumatic event. However, be mindful that everyone does this at their own pace, so check-in with yourself as you do this.

- ***What parts of your routine feel safe to start re-introducing into your schedule right now? Can anyone from your support network help you with this?***

Take time for yourself

This may seem to contradict the suggestion to access your network, but in reality, we need both in balance to effectively manage symptoms of trauma. Alone time might involve having some peace and quiet to read a book, meditate, or write in your journal, or it may involve listening to music or watching a show that you really enjoy.

- ***Is alone time exciting or scary for you? Are there any other activities aside from the ones mentioned that you might want to do in your alone time?***

HELPFUL ACTIVITIES

Window of tolerance

Everyone has a different mental window of tolerance. When you are in the window, you generally feel safe and are in a balanced mental state. After trauma, the window of tolerance might be narrower, but it can grow over time.

- ***Think of two or three activities that you have engaged in within the past week that are within your window, slightly outside your window, and very much outside your window. What supports might you need to try some of those activities that are slightly outside your window?***

Focusing on your five senses

Focusing on your five senses is a great way to get you in the present moment and in touch with your body. For this exercise, you will be identifying five things you can see, 4 you can hear, 3 sensations you can feel, 2 things you can smell, and 1 can you taste (you can have a small food item or beverage for this one).

- ***Practicing a skill like this makes it easier to do when you need it at a moment's notice. What are two or three settings where you might be able to put this into practice?***

12 Seconds of positivity

Research in neuropsychology suggests that intentionally thinking positively about something and focusing on it for 12 seconds is enough to disrupt stress-based thinking and prompt coping. Pick a positive image (a friendly person, an animal you like, or a scene in nature) and try to focus exclusively on this image for 12 seconds. Your mind may start to wander, but that is normal. Just gently redirect your attention back to your image.

- ***Describe the image you came up with? What made this exercise easy or difficult to do?***

Laughter

According to research, laughter is a great way to reduce stress and re-wire your brain. It may be difficult to want to laugh after having experienced a traumatic event, so explore how much you want to dive into this type of activity.

- ***What comes to mind for you when you think of intentionally seeking a humorous outlet? Can you describe some shows or people that are almost always guaranteed to make you laugh?***



WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS?

You can schedule an appointment with one of our clinicians by calling (909) 274-4400, or visit our Mt. SAC mental health webpage at bit.ly/mtsac-mentalhealth

For additional information, visit www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Mental-Health-Conditions/Posttraumatic-Stress-Disorder