

WEISE WORDS

WORDS OF WISDOM FOR HEALTHY LIVING

WHAT IS POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)?

There is a growing awareness in today's society that traumatic experiences are widespread. It is common for people who have been traumatized to develop medical and psychological symptoms associated with the experience.

Although many people equate Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) solely with combat trauma, in reality it is a long-term problem that affects many people and without treatment can continue to impact them for decades after the traumatic event.

Anyone at any age who has been exposed to a traumatic event where he/she experienced terror, threat (or perceived threat) to life, limb or sanity, and his/her ability to cope was overwhelmed may suffer from PTSD. Conservative estimates show that 9-10% of the general population has PTSD. Among people who were victims of specific traumatic experiences (rape, child abuse, violent assaults, etc.), the rate of PTSD is 60-70%.

SYMPTOMS

PTSD symptoms are divided into three categories. People who have been exposed to traumatic experiences may notice any number of symptoms in almost any combination. The symptoms are listed below.

- **Intrusive Re-experiencing**

People with PTSD frequently feel as if the trauma is happening again. This is sometimes called a flashback. The person may have intrusive pictures in his/her head about the trauma, have recurrent nightmares, or may even experience hallucinations about the trauma. Intrusive symptoms sometimes cause people to lose touch with the "here and now" and react in ways that they did when the trauma originally occurred. For example, many years later a victim of child abuse may hide trembling in a closet when feeling threatened, even if the perceived threat is not abuse-related.

- **Avoidance**

People with PTSD work hard to avoid anything that might remind them of the traumatic experience. They may try to avoid people, places, or things that are reminders. They may also numb out emotions to avoid painful, overwhelming feelings. Numbing of thoughts and feelings in response to trauma is known as "dissociation" and is a hallmark of PTSD. Frequently, people with PTSD use drugs or alcohol to avoid trauma-related feelings and memories.

WHAT IS POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)? (Continued)

- **Arousal**

Symptoms of psychological and physiological arousal are very distinctive in people with PTSD. They may be very jumpy, easily startled, irritable, and may have sleep disturbances like insomnia or nightmares. They may seem constantly on guard and may find it difficult to concentrate. Sometimes individuals with PTSD will have panic attacks accompanied by shortness of breath and chest pain.

THERE IS HELP AND THERE IS HOPE

Often it can take months or even years of therapy to help those with PTSD. However, a new drug-free therapy method, Accelerated Resolution Therapy or ART has been developed over the past few years. It can accomplish emotional healing and enable people to experience a rapid recovery from traumatic experiences in a very short time frame. ART offers help to those suffering from PTSD process specific scenes or events from the past that may still be troubling. It can also be effective with overcoming fears, phobias, and other problematic behaviors. Negative images can be eliminated when an individual, under the guidance of a trained ART therapist, chooses a positive image to replace a disturbing memory. Although they retain the knowledge of their memory, they lose the pain associated with it.

ART is an exciting option for those suffering from PTSD and is both effective and long-lasting. It can ease emotional and mental distress in a fast, safe and non-invasive way.

For more information about PTSD or ART, please contact me at pwcounseling.com or call 813.643.2600. I am here as a resource for you.