

CSUDH



SdRC

# Student disAbility Resource Center

Presents

## Post Traumatic Stress Disorder - PTSD Awareness Month - June 2023

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### *Synopsis:*

Student disAbility Resource Center proudly will be celebrating major awareness date and commemorative observance days, weeks, and months of Disabilities and Mental Health challenges in school year 2023-2024.

SdRC is committed to promoting disability and inclusivity awareness, acceptance, and advocacy, and strives to create an inclusive and accessible environment for all students, faculty, and staff regardless of their background, identity, disabilities, and mental health challenges.



“It’s often said that “not all wounds are visible!”



## ***What Is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?***

Post-traumatic stress disorder is a psychiatric disorder that may develop after a person has been through, seen, or been threatened with a traumatic event.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition where a person struggles to recover long after s/he experience or witness a deeply terrifying event. Types of events that can lead to PTSD include a natural disaster, accident, combat, or sexual violence.

About half of American adults experience at least one traumatic event in their lives. While many people have a difficult time coping in the wake of trauma, only a small portion go on to develop PTSD.

If you're living with PTSD, you may find yourself having flashbacks and nightmares, avoiding situations that bring back unwanted memories, and struggling with feelings of anxiety, sadness, or anger. You might feel like it's harder to connect with others or keep up with school or work like you used to.

Know that PTSD is not a sign of weakness but a mental health condition that can be diagnosed and treated. With the help of a mental health professional, you or your loved one can begin to heal.

In the United States, an estimated 7 to 8% of people live with PTSD at some point in their lives, and people who are Latinx, Black, or American Indian are disproportionately affected by this condition.

### ***Background:***

**50 B.C.**

#### **Earliest Recorded PTSD Evidence**

Hippocrates' poem, narrating a soldier's symptoms after a war, becomes the earliest recorded instance of PTSD in history.

**1910s–1940s**

#### **Different Names for PTSD during World Wars**

PTSD is named 'Shell Shock' and 'Battle Fatigue' in WW1 and WW2, respectively.

**1970s**

#### **PTSD Coined During Vietnam War**

The U.S. military veterans describe their trauma and its symptoms after the Vietnam War, resulting in the mental disorder being named 'post-traumatic stress disorder.'

**2014**

#### **U.S. Senate Declaration of PTSD Awareness Month**

The U.S. Senate designates June as the official month for PTSD Awareness.



## HOW TO OBSERVE NATIONAL PTSD AWARENESS MONTH

### - **Learn about PTSD**

Research about PTSD's causes, symptoms, and treatments. You will be better equipped in helping people in the future or even yourself.

### - **Stand with PTSD survivors**

PTSD survivors need care, attention, and love. Research shows that people recover faster from illness if they have supporters in the shape of friends and/or family. Be there for them by being informed about their specific symptoms, directing them to professional help, or just lending them an ear.

### - **Talk about PTSD**

The main aim of National PTSD Awareness Month is to spread awareness about it. Talk to your friends and family, go to events related to it, and donate to PTSD organizations if you can afford to. But whatever you choose to do, don't stop spreading information about the disorder.

## FACTS ABOUT TRAUMA

### - **8% of the population will experience PTSD**

The National Center for PTSD states that around 7–8% of the population will experience PTSD in their lifetimes.

### - **Women are more likely PTSD sufferers**

Women are twice more likely to suffer from PTSD than men due to a sexual assault/trauma event.

### - **'Big T' and 'Small t' types of trauma**

There are two types of trauma and they range in the severity of the causes and triggers: the 'Big T' is any type of trauma that has occurred due to a life-threatening situation like wars, natural disasters, physical assault, etc., while the 'Small t' is caused due to a disturbing event that is not life-threatening like divorce, abrupt relocation, financial woes, etc.

### - **Trembles are normal after trauma**

Experts state that it is completely normal and healthy to experience shivers and trembling after a traumatic, stressful event as it is the body's way to release all of the excess adrenaline.



- ***PTSD is not just from personal experience.***

Many people can develop PTSD simply because they heard or witnessed someone else going through a traumatic event.

## **WHY DO WE CAMPAIGN PTSD AWARENESS MONTH?**

- ***It's a reminder of human strength.***

The human mind and body work in complex ways to keep us alive and going. This month, we are reminded not only of the human mind's immense strength but also some of its limitations. It is a reminder that we are not machines and that it is completely normal to feel the emotions that we do. And unlike machines, we have the strength to get better on our own by helping each other.

- ***It's a reminder of this mental disorder and more***

The more talk there is about PTSD, the more people will become aware of it, and the more people will seek treatment for it. This domino effect will also help shed light on other types of mental disorders that people suffer from after a traumatic event.

- ***It's a reminder of the road to recovery***

The road to recovery may look different from one person to another, but it is always there. The month raises awareness about better treatment options. It also talks about the different trigger points and what people can do to reduce or avoid them.

## ***PTSD Symptoms***

It's common to experience distressing memories and feelings immediately after a traumatic event and from time to time as life goes on. However, for people living with PTSD, these intrusions last longer and disrupt your ability to function in day-to-day life.

Symptoms of PTSD fall into four categories and include:

### ***Intrusive symptoms:***

- Repeated, unwanted memories of the traumatic event
- Recurrent nightmares
- Flashbacks as if you're re-living the traumatic experience



- Severe distress when you're reminded of the event.
- Physical reactions to reminders of the event such as increased heart rate or sweating

### **Avoidance:**

- Avoiding thoughts or feelings of the traumatic event
- Staying away from reminders of trauma such as people, places, objects, or situations
- Resisting conversations about what happened or how you feel about it

### **Increased arousal:**

- Being easily startled or fearful
- Struggling with irritability or angry outbursts
- Having trouble concentrating
- Having difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Behaving recklessly or self-destructively
- Being overly aware of your surroundings and potential threats to safety

### **Changes in thoughts and feelings:**

- Struggling to remember important parts of the traumatic event.
- Ongoing, distorted beliefs about yourself or others (such as "I'm a bad person" or "No one can be trusted")
- Recurrent feelings of fear, horror, anger, guilt, shame, or hopelessness
- Loss of interest in once enjoyable activities
- Feeling detached from others or struggling to maintain close relationships.
- Having difficulty experiencing positive feelings like joy or satisfaction

Often, people living with PTSD also have other physical and mental health problems including depression and substance abuse. Symptoms of PTSD can waver in intensity or become worse over time.

If you or someone you love is struggling with PTSD, reach out for help as soon as possible

### **Diagnosis**

When these symptoms last over a month and cause significant distress or impairment, you may be diagnosed with PTSD.

Keep in mind that there's no need to check off every box for a diagnosis of PTSD. You only need to experience a certain amount of symptoms from each category for an official diagnosis from a qualified mental health professional.



They'll go over your symptoms and history with you in order to determine your diagnosis and what you need in order to cope and recover.

## Causes

People may develop PTSD after experiencing or being exposed to an exceptionally stressful event that involves someone's death or the threat of it, serious injury, or sexual violation.

It's unclear exactly why some people develop PTSD and others don't. As is true for many mental health conditions, it's likely that there is a slew of potential causes at the root of this condition including:

- Stressful life experiences, including how much trauma you've experienced and how severe it was.
- A family history of mental health conditions such as anxiety or depression
- Your temperament or inherited personality traits
- The way your brain regulates chemicals and hormones when you experience stress.

Certain risk factors could also increase your chances of developing PTSD, such as:

- Having experienced intense or prolonged trauma
- Previous experiences of trauma such as childhood abuse
- Having a job that increases your risk of exposure to trauma (such as military personnel or first responders)
- Having other mental health conditions such as anxiety or depression
- Having problems with substance abuse
- Not having a solid support system

## Treatment

Fortunately, there are many research-backed treatments that can help people living with PTSD cope with symptoms and begin to recover. Effective treatments for PTSD include:

### Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) helps you learn how to recognize thought patterns that fuel negative beliefs about yourself, deal with reminders and emotions associated with the trauma and help reduce maladaptive behaviors associated with PTSD.

### Exposure Therapy

Exposure therapy repeatedly exposes you to memories and reminders of trauma in order to learn how to effectively cope with distressing symptoms of PTSD like anxiety and avoidance.



## Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing

Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) allows you to process traumatic memories in a new and more positive way with the help of guided eye movements.

## Complementary Therapies

Additionally, there are a number of promising alternative therapies to consider adding to your treatment regimen such as animal-assisted therapy and trauma-sensitive yoga.

## Coping

Learning to cope with symptoms of PTSD can be challenging, which is why it's important to seek treatment and develop healthy ways of managing your symptoms along the way.

Here are a few coping strategies to add to your skillset:

- Learn how to deal with distressing thoughts and memories of trauma.
- Find ways to cope with reminders of trauma and flashbacks.
- Address sleep problems related to PTSD.
- Learn how to cope with related mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, and substance abuse.
- For more help and community, consider joining a support group.

## How do you spread awareness about PTSD?

You can spread awareness about PTSD by making/sharing social media posts related to it, participating in/organizing PTSD-centered events, designing posters and hashtags, and sharing resources, helplines for PTSD survivors, and referring them to CSUDH – SdRC office for professional accommodations.

## A Word from SdRC:

If you have been diagnosed with PTSD by a qualified licensed mental health professional, and you feel that it may impact your academic performance or require accommodations, it is generally advisable to confidentially register with CSUDH- Student disAbility Resource Center (SdRC), dedicated to supporting students with disabilities, or you may ask help from the campus Student Health Center.

To apply for service accommodations through the SdRC, here's how you can go about it:

- ✓ Contact the Student disAbility Resource Center office, and ask information about the registration process and accommodations. You can typically find this information on SdRC's website or by reaching out to the office of SdRC.



- ✓ *Schedule an appointment:*  
Contact the Student Disability Resource Center to schedule an appointment with a disability services coordinator. Let them know that you would like to discuss accommodations for your PTSD diagnosis.
- ✓ *Gather necessary documentation:*  
Prior to your appointment, gather any relevant documentation that confirms your diagnosis of PTSD. This may include medical records, letters from healthcare professionals, or any other documentation that supports your need for accommodation.
- ✓ *Discuss your needs:*  
During your appointment, have an open and honest conversation with the disability services coordinator about your specific needs related to your PTSD. Share how your diagnosis may impact your academic life and any accommodations you believe would be helpful, such as extra time for exams, a quiet testing environment, or flexibility with deadlines.
- ✓ *Understand your rights and available accommodations:*  
The SdRC Disability Management Advisor will inform you about your rights as a student with a disability and the accommodations that may be available to you. They will explain the process for requesting accommodation, any required forms, and the timeline for implementing them.
- ✓ *Maintain confidentiality:*  
The information you share with the Student Disability Resource Center is typically confidential and protected by privacy laws. The office will not disclose your diagnosis or accommodation to anyone without your consent, ensuring your privacy is maintained.
- ✓ *Follow up and advocate for yourself:*  
Stay in contact with the disability management advisor throughout your academic journey. If you encounter any difficulties or need additional support, reach out to us for guidance and assistance. We are here to help you succeed.

Remember, registering with the Student Disability Resource Center is a personal decision, and you have the right to disclose or not disclose your diagnosis to your professors or classmates. However, registering with SdRC can provide you with access to valuable resources and support to help you thrive academically while managing your PTSD.

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*Always remember, if you have been diagnosed with PTSD, it is not a sign of weakness; rather, it is proof of your strength, because you have survived!"*



# CSUDH



# SdRC

## References:

- American Psychiatric Association. [What is posttraumatic stress disorder?](#)
- National Center for PTSD. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. [How common is PTSD in adults?](#)
- National Center for PTSD. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. [PTSD and DSM-5: DSM-5 criteria for PTSD.](#)