

Just What is PTSD?



■ by Diane Kapp, MA
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How often have we all heard someone say that they now have PTSD after, perhaps, hearing that their favorite Hollywood couple has just broken up or that something they loved at a certain restaurant is no longer being served? We laugh and move on to another topic, continuing to casually use the acronym, PTSD, without ever really knowing what it means!

The essential feature of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is the development of certain symptoms after we have been exposed to an extremely traumatic event. What are some of the things we consider to be psychologically “traumatic?” The most common include:

- Military combat
- Being taken hostage
- Natural or manmade disasters
- Violent personal assault
- Terrorist attack
- Severe automobile accidents
- Being kidnapped
- Torture
- Being diagnosed with a life-threatening illness

We either personally experience, witness, or hear about the unexpected traumatic event. This event involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, causing us to experience intense fear, helplessness, or horror.

Other symptoms that we characteristically develop are:

- Persistent experiencing of the traumatic event
- Persistent avoidance of things associated with the trauma
- Numbing of our general responses to people and things
- Persistent symptoms of increased anxiety
- Significant impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas in which we function

The individual suffering from this disorder may often feel hopeless about ever recovering from the trauma that has so negatively affected his or her life. However, the research shows that some people have shown complete recovery in as little as 3 months. A combination of several treatments has been shown to be most effective. Some of the most common are:

- Relaxation therapy
- Cognitive therapy
- EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization Retraining)
- Neurofeedback
- Medications
- Supportive environment
- Prayer



We, who are psychotherapists, often remind our clients that they have SURVIVED the ACTUAL TRAUMATIC EVENT and now they have to learn how to manage their physical and emotional responses to what happened.

We who know God have the additional “coping skill” of knowing that He is ultimately redeeming this broken and fallen world and that one day ALL anxiety will cease to exist. Until then, we can receive comfort, strength, peace, and hope from what is written in Scripture. ■

Diane Kapp sees individuals, couples, & families in our Orland Park location.

Romans 8:35, 38 and 39

“Who shall ever separate us from Christ’s love? Shall suffering and affliction and tribulation? Or calamity and distress? Or persecution or hunger or destitution or peril or sword? For I am persuaded beyond doubt (am sure) that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things impending and threatening, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

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