

Understanding Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

*By Connie Almeida, PhD and Toi B. Harris, MD,
Members of Fort Bend County Mental Health Task Force*

What are symptoms of PTSD?

PTSD can occur at any age and is directly associated with exposure to trauma.

- ✚ Reliving the event or flashbacks: unwelcomed, distressing memories about the trauma
- ✚ Avoiding specific things that remind you of the event. For example: a specific location, sounds, or smells
- ✚ Depression, negative thoughts, and loss of interest
- ✚ Feeling on edge and jittery. This could include trouble sleeping or concentrating, always being on the lookout (hypervigilance), irritable, and startled easily.

What we can do to cope:

- ✚ Recognize symptoms and reach out for support and professional help
- ✚ PTSD is traditionally treated with therapy using techniques such as group therapy, EMDR, exposure therapy, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- ✚ Medication paired with therapy
- ✚ People with PTSD may also experience anxiety, depression and substance use. Addressing these co-occurring disorders is important.
- ✚ Avoid recreational drugs and alcohol use.
- ✚ Connecting with others that have PTSD to ask questions and share thoughts
- ✚ Practicing mindfulness to bring yourself back to the present moment.
- ✚ Practicing healthy lifestyle habits, such as a healthy diet, exercising regularly, and a consistent sleep schedule.

Resources:

- The National Alliance on Mental Illness offers an online discussion groups <https://www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Mental-Health-Conditions/Posttraumatic-Stress-Disorder/Discuss>
- <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/index.shtml>
- <https://www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Mental-Health-Conditions/Posttraumatic-Stress-Disorder>
- National Center for PTSD: <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/> or call 1-866-948-7880
- **Texana Center 24 Hour crisis Hotline (1-800-633-5686)**
- COVID Mental health support line from Harris Center **833-986-1919**
- Visit www.mhahouston.org for all mental health resources in our area
- National Suicide Prevention Hotline: **1-800-273- TALK (8255)**
- For additional information about mental health services, call **281-238-3079**.

