



Trauma Awareness Toolkit | *Tip sheet*

Reactions to Trauma: Know the Signs

Trauma affects people in different ways. Some people recover with time. Others may carry emotional, mental or physical effects that last for years. About 70 percent of adults in the United States have lived through at least one traumatic event (National Institutes of Health). Trauma can show up not only through emotions, but also through chronic pain, headaches or stomach problems.

Trauma is not only defined by a diagnosis like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD represents just one part of a wide range of reactions people may have after a distressing event. Many people who do not meet the criteria for PTSD still experience sadness, anger, fear or disconnection that affects their daily lives.

Common reactions to trauma

People respond to trauma in many ways. Some common signs include:

- Nightmares or trouble sleeping
- Flashbacks or moments of reliving the event
- Intrusive thoughts
- Feelings of guilt, shame or sadness
- Feeling numb or cut off from others
- Irritability or anger outbursts
- Avoiding people, places or situations that bring reminders
- Feeling isolated or misunderstood
- Thoughts of self-harm or harming others in severe cases

Understanding the signs of trauma can help you create a supportive and safe environment. If someone is struggling, encourage them to seek help from a mental health professional who can provide the care and tools needed for healing.

#HealTrauma

If you or someone you know is struggling with trauma, you can find additional resources through the National Center for PTSD, including the PTSD Coach mobile app. Veterans can contact the Veteran Crisis Line by dialing 988, then pressing 1.

Reviewed by Medical Director, Doctor of Medicine