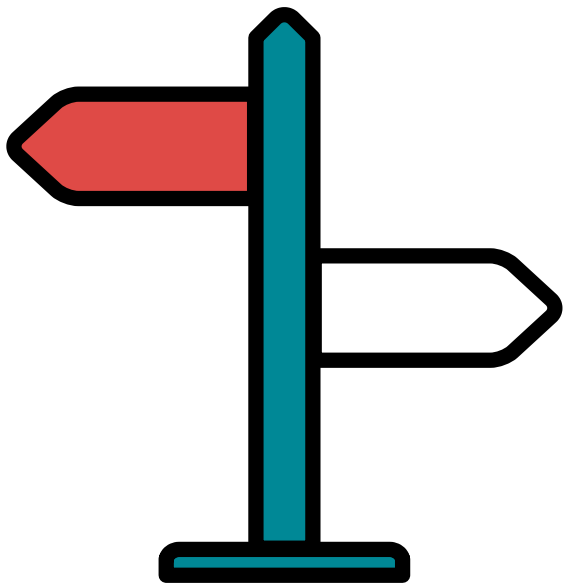


Trauma and PTSD Factsheet



What is trauma?

Trauma is the initial shock of a stressful event or incident, either psychological, physical or both. There are many different harmful or life-threatening events including:

- sudden illness or accident
- violent assault
- death of somebody close
- seeing other people hurt or killed
- abuse, harassment or bullying
- extreme violence or war e.g. military combat

These can stir or create strong, unwanted and disturbing feelings which are best treated through seeking professional help. They can often lead to developing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

After experiencing a traumatic event, feelings can range from those of shock, feeling stunned, dazed or numb to anger, self-harming and potentially suicide. There can also be feelings of denial – the person cannot accept what has happened to them so may behave as if it hadn't. This behaviour can be typical and should not be confused with misconceptions that they are being brave or don't care about what has happened to them.

Don't be judgemental or make assumptions about anybody. As Almoner it is important that you remember people react differently to traumatic events and take varying amounts of time to come to terms with and deal with what has happened to them.

They may feel:

- **Frightened** – that the same thing will happen again or that they may lose control of their feelings and break down.
- **Helpless** – that the event has taken place and they could do nothing about it. They may feel helpless, vulnerable and completely overwhelmed.
- **Angry** – about what has happened and with whoever was responsible.
- **Guilty** – that they have survived when others have suffered or died. They may feel that they could have done something to prevent it.
- **Sad** – if people were injured or killed especially if it was someone they knew.
- **Ashamed or embarrassed** – that they have these strong feelings they can't control especially if they need others to support them.
- **Relieved** – that the danger is over and gone.
- **Hopeful** – that their life will return to normal.

Physical effects

In the weeks after a traumatic event a person may start to experience the resulting physical effects. They may experience the following:

- Sleeplessness
- Tiredness
- Dreams and nightmares
- Poor concentration or memory
- Difficult thinking clearly
- Headaches or light headedness
- Change in appetite, sex drive or libido
- Aches and pains
- Heart beating faster
- Anxiousness
- Low mood or mood swings

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

PTSD is a type of anxiety disorder which may develop after experiencing a traumatic event. If diagnosed a person might be told they have mild, moderate or severe PTSD, or one of the following:

- **Delayed-onset PTSD** – if symptoms emerge more than six months after experiencing the trauma.
- **Complex PTSD** – if the trauma was experience at an early age or it lasted for a long time.

In addition to the aforementioned effects, if suffering from PTSD somebody might also experience the following:

- Flashbacks or nightmares about the event
- Avoidance and numbing, trying to keep busy and avoid thinking about the event
- Being tense and on guard all the time in case the event happens again

It's important to note that experiencing one or more of these effects doesn't mean somebody is definitely affected by PTSD. A full diagnosis must be sought from a GP.



Things to do

As Almoner, giving somebody reassurances, normalising their feelings, experiences, behaviours and physical symptoms is really important. You should encourage them to:

- Give themselves time to accept what has happened.
- Not cut themselves off from others.
- Take some time out for themselves.
- Talk it over at a pace they feel comfortable with.
- Do normal activities with people including resuming pastimes they had once enjoyed.

If you feel that somebody is suffering then you should gently encourage them to speak to their GP or seek further support from an appropriate organisation.

Getting help

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- **PTSD UK**

Campaigns to improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding of the condition and treatments available for those dealing with trauma – www.ptsduk.org or call 01282 787 172.

- **ASSIST trauma care**

Information and specialist help for people with PTSD and anyone supporting them – www.assisttraumacare.org.uk or call 0178 856 0800.

- **Anxiety UK**

Support, help and information for those with anxiety disorders including PTSD – www.anxietyuk.org.uk or call 0844 477 5774.

- **Young Minds**

Leading the fight for a future where all young minds are supported and empowered, whatever the challenges – www.youngminds.org.uk or call 020 7089 5050.

- **Childline**

Help for anyone under the age of 19 with any issue they're going through – www.childline.org.uk or call 0800 1111.

- **The Masonic Charitable Foundation**

The MCF runs the Counselling Careline which has specialist counsellors for anyone struggling to cope emotionally. Additional Counselling sessions can be provided, if necessary face to face, rather than on the telephone. This is a free service and requires no form filling or application. A call should be made to the MCF to make an enquiry on 0800 035 60 90.



- **The MCF's Advice and Support Team**

The AST are able to offer advice, guidance and support on a range of issues and organisations that can help. Contact them by calling 0800 035 60 90.

- **Your Provincial Grand Almoner**

Your PGA may be able to signpost you to local support and assistance.

The information contained in this factsheet is intended for general guidance only and does not constitute advice. The MCF does not endorse any of the organisations listed.

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