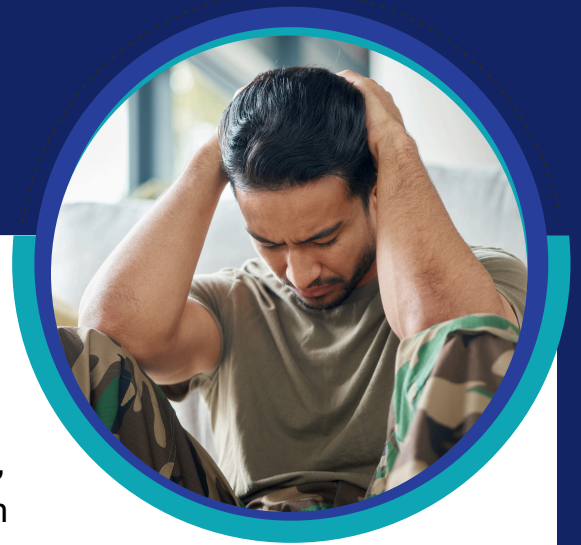


Understanding Trauma

The Basics & Treatment



What is Trauma?

Trauma is defined in the DSM-5-TR (2022) as exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence. Trauma can be experienced directly, witnessed, learned of a close friend's or relative's trauma, or through repeated, extreme exposure to aversive details.

Clinicians distinguish **acute trauma** resulted from a single, discrete event such as a physical assault or natural disaster, from **complex trauma**, which describes repeated events that take place over time such as ongoing sexual abuse, prolonged neglect, and domestic violence.

PTSD

While individuals may experience distress after exposure to a potentially traumatic event, most do recover and start to feel better after a brief period. Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) may develop after a potentially traumatic event and include four general types of symptoms:

- 1 Intrusive symptoms (recurrent involuntary memories, nightmares, and flashbacks)
- 2 Avoidance of reminders of the traumatic event
- 3 Negative change in our mood and thoughts about ourselves and the world
- 4 Feeling on edge or keyed up (hyperarousal) such as hypervigilance, startled reactions, sleep or concentration problems

CPTSD

Complex Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (CPTSD) overlaps with the criteria for PTSD, with an additional set of symptoms related to disturbances in self-organization:

- 1 Emotion regulation: extreme reactivity with feelings, self-destructiveness, dissociation
- 2 Self-concept: guilt and shame about trauma, feeling of worthlessness
- 3 Relationship functioning: difficulties with sustained emotional intimacy

Trauma-focused Therapy

Two well-known and proven effective trauma-focused treatments include Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) and Prolonged Exposure (PE) Therapy.

What's CPT Like?

- Twelve therapy sessions
- Work to understand the meaning and causes of our trauma and how this understanding impacts us now
- Engages us to process and change how we get stuck with unhelpful beliefs about ourselves, others, and the world



What's PE Like?

- Eight to fifteen 90-minute sessions
- Psychoeducation
- In vivo exposure (i.e., approaching feared situations in real life)
- Imaginal exposure and processing (i.e., recounting the memory of the worst traumatic event followed by discussing the experience of retelling the account).
- Goal: Gradually reduce avoidance symptoms, make contact with emotions, and open up to new experiences to accurately distinguish safety and danger.

Keep In Mind...

It is important to remember the process of therapy is a collaboration and partnership. It is not a procedure that is done to us. In addition to trauma-focused treatment, it is often helpful to engage in trauma-informed therapy to address other deeper concerns due to the broad impact of trauma.

We Are Here For You

The Perfect Therapy Group offers trauma-focused assessment and therapy.

Give Us a Call
202-952-7105