
Understanding Post- Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Counseling and Wellness Center

AGENDA

- COMMON REACTIONS TO THE HURRICANE KATRINA EXPERIENCE
 - DEFINITION OF POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)
 - “CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS”
 - EXCEPTIONALLY STRESSFUL EVENTS
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Agenda Continue:

- COPING MEASURES THAT WORK
 - COPING MEASURES THAT DO NOT WORK
 - REFERRAL RESOURCES
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COMMON REACTIONS TO THE HURRICANE KATRINA EXPERIENCE

- Memory problems
 - Anxiety or panic disorders (panic attacks)
 - Depressed mood, guilt and hopelessness
 - Brief psychotic reactions
 - Substance abuse
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Common Reactions Continue:

- Suicidal Behavior
 - Stress Related physical diseases
 - Family Problems
 - “Critical Incident Stress”
 - PTSD
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DEFINITION OF POST- TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

- **PTSD** is an emotional and behavioral disturbance that may occur after exposure to an exceptionally stressful, threatening or catastrophic event.
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Exceptionally Stressful Events Include:

1. Combat
 2. Disasters
 3. Life threatening accidents
 4. Witnessing violent death or mutilation of others
 5. Torture
 6. Sexual assault
 7. Violent crimes
 8. Threat of serious injury or death
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CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS

- Normal, adaptive response of normal people to an abnormal event.
 - Psychologically painful.
 - Typically resolves when managed carefully.
 - Most people do recover relatively quickly with no long term effects.
 - May turn into PTSD if not well managed and left unresolved.
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Symptoms Associated with PTSD:

1. **Arousal Symptoms:** restless, sleepless, hyper-alert, unable to relax, jumpiness, difficulties concentrating.
 2. **Intrusive Symptoms:** mental “replays” and dreams in which the person sees, hears, feels, smells, tastes aspects of the event and has repeated bad dreams or nightmares. Sometimes replays appear real, vivid and frightening.
 3. **Avoidance Symptoms:** “shutting off one’s emotions,” avoiding reminders such as places, people, conversations and stimuli. Shutting oneself off from the world.
 4. **PTSD Symptoms last beyond a month.** Sometimes they appear long after the original trauma.
 5. The condition causes **significant disruption to and impairment of normal life pursuits**
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Low Intensity PTSD

- Some distressing symptoms, memories and disturbing dreams.
 - Distraction from home and work duties, but functions are maintained
 - The condition often resolves spontaneously.
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Moderate Intensity PTSD:

- Greater quantity and intensity of symptoms.
 - Intense intrusive images. Greater efforts to avoid trauma stimuli.
 - Heightened arousal.
 - Restless, sleep difficulties, depression, loss of faith.
 - Greater disruption to normal life activities.
 - Diminished family life, parenting and productive work.
 - Professional help is usually required.
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SEVERE INTENSITY PTSD

- Very serious condition.
 - Inability to work or participate in family life
 - Nightmares, panic attacks, rage reactions, intense feelings of guilt anxiety, depression, powerful disturbing intrusive images. Spiritual symptoms may appear.
 - Suicidal actions can occur.
 - Professional help is required.
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COPING MEASURES

- Participate in crisis and stress management programs.
 - Obtain a psychological evaluation to confirm PTSD.
 - Accept appropriate help.
 - Eat a health diet.
 - Exercise! Exercise!
 - Get adequate rest.
 - Pray! Pray! Pray
 - Remember that most people recover from PTSD.
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COPING MEASURES THAT DO NOT WORK

- ***Alcohol or drug*** us to sleep, relax, lowerer anxiety or block thoughts and images about the traumatic event.
 - ***Social Isolation.*** Avoiding people cuts back on friendships, social support and emotional closeness.
 - ***Dropping out*** of pleasurable or recreational activities. This means fewer opportunities to feel good about one self and to develop a sense of achievement.
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REFERRAL RESOURCES:

- Xavier University Counseling Center -(504) 520-7315
 - Central City Mental Health Clinic – (504) 568 – 6650
 - Trinity Counseling Center (Sliding Scale Starting at \$15) – (504) 522-7557
 - Catholic Charities Counseling Solutions (504) 835-5007
 - Family Services – East Bank- (504) 733-4031
West Bank - (504) 361-0926
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MATERIAL ADAPTED FROM:

- The Quick Series Guide to: ***Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*** For Military Personnel And Their Families, Chevron Publishing Corporation.

