

Living With PTSD

Living with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) isn't black & white. Not everybody feels, reacts or lives the same way with the condition. There are many different incidents that can lead to someone contracting PTSD. You can find out more on www.lwptsd.com.

This leaflet aims to help you to find some support. The website lists agencies that can assist you in various ways, whether it's emotional, medical or financial support.

One important thing to bear in mind is that PTSD isn't something that just happens as a result of military service. It can happen as a result of you surviving or witnessing any life threatening incident, e.g. a Road Traffic Accident, sexual abuse, child abuse, a violent crime, a natural disaster, etc.

The website tells you more about PTSD and helps you to recognise some of the symptoms of the condition.

Being socially isolated, misunderstood and stigmatised by people that were previously happy to associate with you is one of the most damaging side effects of living with PTSD, whether you're a civilian or a veteran.

This leaflet was produced as part of my project 'Living with PTSD' - a set of rolling exhibitions that were funded by Arts Council England and The National Lottery.

I hope it gives you some options and ideas to be able to have a better quality of life.

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Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Wolf.Photographer>

PTSD resources page: www.lwptsd.com

Main website: <http://www.wolf-photography.com>



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How does PTSD start?

PTSD can start after any traumatic event. A traumatic event is one where you see that you are in danger, your life is threatened or where you see other people dying or being injured. Typical traumatic events would be:

- ♦serious accidents
- ♦military combat
- ♦violent personal assault (sexual assault, physical attack, abuse, robbery, mugging)
- ♦being taken hostage
- ♦terrorist attack
- ♦being a prisoner-of-war
- ♦natural or man-made disasters
- ♦being diagnosed with a life-threatening illness

Even hearing about the unexpected injury or violent death of a family member or close friend can start PTSD.

When does PTSD start?

The symptoms of PTSD can start immediately or after a delay of weeks or months, but usually within 6 months of the traumatic event.

What does PTSD feel like?

Many people feel grief-stricken, depressed, anxious, guilty and angry after a traumatic experience. As well as these understandable emotional reactions, there are three main types of symptoms:

1. Flashbacks & nightmares

You find yourself re-living the event, again and again. This can happen both as a 'flashback' in the day and as nightmares when you are asleep. These can be so realistic that it feels as though you are living through the experience all over again. You see it in your mind, but may also feel the emotions and physical sensations of what happened - fear, sweating, smells, sounds, pain.

Ordinary things can trigger off flashbacks. For instance, if you had a car crash in the rain, a rainy day might start a flashback.

2. Avoidance & numbing

It can be just too upsetting to re-live your experience over and over again. So you distract yourself. You keep your mind busy by losing yourself in a hobby, working very hard, or spending your time absorbed in crosswords or jigsaw puzzles. You avoid places and people that remind you of the trauma, and try not to talk about it.

(How does PTSD start - continued)

You may deal with the pain of your feelings by trying to feel nothing at all – by becoming emotionally numb. You communicate less with other people who then find it hard to live or work with you.

3. Being 'on guard'

You find that you stay alert all the time, as if you are looking out for danger. You can't relax. This is called 'hypervigilance'. You feel anxious and find it hard to sleep. Other people will notice that you are jumpy and irritable.

Other symptoms

- ♦muscle aches and pains
- ♦diarrhoea
- ♦irregular heartbeats
- ♦headaches
- ♦feelings of panic and fear
- ♦depression
- ♦drinking too much alcohol
- ♦using drugs (including painkillers).

Why are traumatic events so shocking?

They undermine our sense that life is fair, that it is reasonably safe and that we are secure. A traumatic experience makes it very clear that we can die at any time. The symptoms of PTSD are part of a normal reaction to narrowly-avoided death.

How can PTSD be helped?

Do

- ♦keep life as normal as possible
- ♦get back to your usual routine
- ♦talk about what happened to someone you trust
- ♦try relaxation exercises
- ♦go back to work
- ♦eat and exercise regularly
- ♦go back to where the traumatic event happened
- ♦take time to be with family and friends
- ♦be careful when driving – your concentration may be poor
- ♦be more careful generally – accidents are more likely
- ♦speak to a doctor
- ♦expect to get better.

Don't

- ♦beat yourself up about it - you are not weak
- ♦bottle up your feelings
- ♦avoid talking about it
- ♦expect the memories to go away immediately
- ♦expect too much of yourself. Cut yourself a bit of slack
- ♦stay away from other people
- ♦drink lots of alcohol or coffee or smoke more
- ♦get overtired
- ♦miss meals
- ♦take holidays on your own.

How to get help

Visit your GP and get the ball rolling. Your GP should know about what support is available in your area. Visit www.lwptsd.com and see if any of the resources there can help you in any way.

If you're having a bad episode or need help urgently, you may find help right now with some of the agencies below:

Childline runs a helpline for children and young people in the UK. Calls are free and the number will not show up on your phone bill. Tel 0800 1111.

Domestic Violence Helpline.

If you find yourself in an emergency situation, for example, if you are being subjected to physical violence, always call 999.

For confidential advice, support and information, ring the Nottinghamshire 24 Hour Freephone Domestic Violence Helpline. Tel 0808 800 0340 or the National helpline on 0808 200 0247.

Mind - a UK mental health charity.

Lines are open 9am - 6pm, Monday - Friday.
Tel 0300 123 3393, Email info@mind.org.uk
or Text: 86463.

<http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/a-z-mental-health/>

Samaritans operate a 24-hour service available every day of the year. Tel (free) 116 123, or email jo@samaritans.org.

Ex Armed Forces specific support

Veterans UK (0808 1914 2 18) provides free advice on many topics to all veterans and their families. When the Veterans UK helpline is closed callers can opt to be routed to the Combat Stress or the Samaritans 24 hour help lines (UK only).

Combat Stress is a UK Veterans' mental health charity.
Helpline 0800 138 1619 - Text 07537 404 719
Email helpline@combatstress.org.uk.

Forces in the Community provide a range of advice and assistance for veterans in the East Midlands.
Tel 01159 220320 or Email info@forces.org.uk.

SSAFA Forcesline provides confidential telephone support on a range of services, including financial support and emotional support. Tel 0800 731 4880.

The Royal British Legion can help you with representation as well as some financial assistance. They also offer a free handy person service for those unable to do small DIY jobs in the home.
Telephone 0808 802 8080 - 8am to 8pm, 7 days a week.



Nottingham

City Council

Advice and information isn't always easy to find.

Here are some services available at Nottingham City Libraries & Information Service:

Free membership

60 minutes of free computer time per week

Free Wi-Fi in most libraries

Free One2One sessions - One to One tutoring covering computer basics, including an introduction to the internet and email.

Free Group sessions - Advanced computer sessions covering a variety of topics, including social networking and online shopping.

Library staff will help visitors to find useful information via the internet or will provide printed information or telephone numbers. A range of activities including Reading Groups, Knit & Natter Sessions & Language Cafes.

Welfare Rights Service

If you need advice and help, this service offers free, confidential and impartial advice about debt, benefits, housing, employment and more. Try the Nottingham City Welfare Rights Service.

They also offer advocacy on:

Benefit checks to make sure you're claiming all you're entitled to.

Help with benefit claim forms.

Supporting you to challenge decisions.

Representing you at benefit appeal tribunals.

Preparing financial statements and offering budgeting advice.

Negotiating repayment arrangements with creditors.

Supporting tenants and home owners with arrears and possession proceedings.

Helping you with court forms.

Advice and help with insolvency options such as bankruptcy or Debt Relief Orders.

Call them on 0115 915 1355, Mon to Fri 8.30am to 4.50pm.

Email them: welfarerights@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

Home visits can also be arranged if you are unable to attend an appointment because of mobility problems.

Help with Council Tax reductions for disabled people.

There are two schemes for disabled people:

1. Disabled band reduction scheme. This scheme makes sure disabled people don't pay more Council Tax if they need:

A bigger property.

To adapt their home because of their disability.

The property must be the main home of at least one disabled person. They can be an adult or a child and don't have to be responsible for paying the Council Tax.

The property must have one or more of the following:

An extra bathroom, kitchen or other room for the disabled person.

Extra space inside the property for using a wheelchair.

2. People who are severely mentally impaired and some live-in carers are exempt when working out Council Tax.

To find out more please contact Nottingham City Council's Council Tax department on telephone number 0115 915 5555 and then option 0 - then ask to speak with the Council Tax team. Please explain that you have a mental health problem and need additional support.

Scheme 1 comes under 'Reduction for Disabilities'.

Scheme 2 comes under 'Severe Mental Impairment'.

Wolf Photography is a Not For Profit project with the following aims:

To raise awareness of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), educate on Intellectual Property issues and promote creative arts as a coping mechanism for disability.

To book an awareness session or to find out more about my project, please visit <http://www.wolf-photography.com>.

