

UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA

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Trauma occurs when something bad happens that makes you feel unsafe and scared. Because this experience was a big deal for you, it has an ongoing impact on your life.

Lots of different kinds of events can cause trauma. Some common examples are:

Seeing something bad happen to a loved one

Being bullied

Losing a loved one

Feeling unsafe at home

Abuse

Feeling unsafe in your neighborhood

Seeing something violent

Living through a disaster like a bad accident, fire, or hurricane

Signs of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Your mind can be put under a lot of stress if you are experiencing trauma over a long period of time or dealing with an extreme event. When this happens, it's possible to develop post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD. If you have some of the symptoms below, you might be dealing with PTSD.

- Stressful memories of the event that pop up often and distract you during the day
- Nightmares or trouble sleeping
- Flashbacks, which make you feel like you are reliving the traumatic event
- Feeling jumpy and on edge
- Feeling emotionally or physically bad when you are reminded of the event
- Trouble concentrating
- Blaming yourself for what happened
- Negative feelings and thoughts about yourself, other people, or the world
- Difficulty feeling positive or happy emotions
- Avoiding people, activities, or places that remind you of what happened
- Angry outbursts
- Trouble remembering things that happened before or after the traumatic event

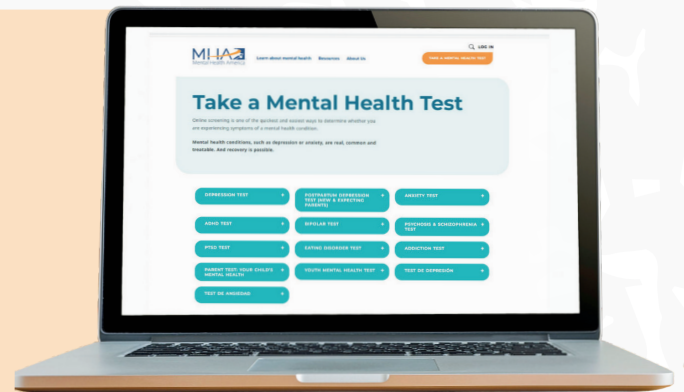
What to do if you've experienced trauma

Trauma is hard for the mind and body, and you may not feel "normal" for a while. To recover from the effects of trauma and PTSD, your mind and body have to learn how to feel safe again. Learning how to feel safe again is best done with support. Some things that might help include: talking about what happened, being in tune with your body's reactions to stress, changing upsetting and untrue thoughts that are in your head because of the trauma, or finding ways to help you sleep.

Traumatic events can also cause people to start having symptoms of anxiety, depression, or psychosis for the first time in their lives.

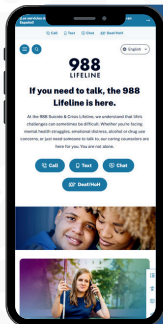
MHAScreening.org is an anonymous, free, and private way to learn about your mental health and see if you are showing warning signs of a condition. A screening is not a diagnosis, but it can be a helpful tool for starting a conversation with someone you trust about your mental health.

Take a screen



If you just don't feel right or notice that someone else is struggling, it's important to get help.

Reach out to a friend or trusted adult and tell them how you feel or that you are worried about someone. If you need help starting a conversation, visit mhanational.org/timetotalk for tips.



In crisis?

Call or text 988, chat at 988lifeline.org, or text HOME to 741741. Trained counselors are available 24/7.

Sources

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed.). Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing.

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