

## QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT HAVE

### How can talking to a therapist help?

Talking with a friend or loved one may be helpful. However, talking with a trained therapist is different because a therapist can help you understand the impact of trauma, reduce your symptoms, and learn new coping skills.

### A friend said that PTSD therapy was the toughest thing they've ever done. Why would I want to do that?

Therapy can be hard work, but not getting any help can make things worse. Confronting your trauma can be difficult, but therapy can help you feel better and see lasting changes.

### When is it the right time for treatment?

Anytime can be the right time for treatment but making the commitment to attend psychotherapy sessions and practice what you learn between sessions will set you up for success.

### What if I need help, but don't feel ready for PTSD psychotherapy?

As you prepare for PTSD psychotherapy, consider talking to your clinician about treatment options. Depending on your symptoms, there may be other types of treatment that can help to improve your quality of life.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### About Face Understanding PTSD and PTSD Treatment

National Center for PTSD  
[https://www.ptsd.va.gov/publications/print/understandingptsd\\_booklet.pdf](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/publications/print/understandingptsd_booklet.pdf)

### PTSD Treatment Works

National Center for PTSD  
<https://www.ptsd.va.gov/publications/print/NCPTSD-Treatment-Works.pdf>

### The Best Treatment for PTSD: The Evidence Is In

National Center for PTSD  
[https://www.ptsd.va.gov/publications/print/PTSD\\_Best\\_Treatment.pdf](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/publications/print/PTSD_Best_Treatment.pdf)

### PTSD Treatment Decision Aid

National Center for PTSD  
<https://www.ptsd.va.gov/apps/decisionaid>

### National Center for PTSD Website

<https://www.ptsd.va.gov/>

### Veterans Crisis Line

Dial 988 Then Press 1  
or text 838255, or chat online  
<https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>



## TAKING THE FIRST STEP: PSYCHOTHERAPY FOR POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)



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## DEFINING PTSD

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that can occur after a life threatening or traumatic event.

### **PTSD may include the following symptoms:**

- Flashbacks or nightmares
- Avoiding reminders of the event
- Negative mood
- Feeling especially tense

If you have concerns about PTSD, let your health care provider know.

## TREATMENT HELPS

### **Treatment can relieve PTSD symptoms.**

Psychotherapy provides tools that can decrease symptoms and increase coping skills, both of which improve overall well-being.

This brochure introduces the most effective psychotherapy treatments for PTSD that VA offers and helps answer some questions about taking the first step to receive treatment.

## PTSD PSYCHOTHERAPY WORKS

Talk therapy, “psychotherapy,” is the most effective treatment for PTSD.

### CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

<b>53</b> OUT OF 100 trauma-focused psychotherapy	<b>42</b> OUT OF 100 of medication- only treatment	<b>9</b> OUT OF 100 without treatment
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WILL NOT HAVE PTSD AFTER ABOUT 3 MONTHS

For most Veterans, PTSD symptoms may stick around, or get worse, without treatment.

Each form of PTSD psychotherapy uses a specific way to address PTSD symptoms. With the guidance of a therapist, you may revisit the memory of your trauma and overcome the responses that it causes. By purposefully talking about your trauma with the support of a therapist, the memories will lose some of their power, and you will gain a new perspective.

## THE TREATMENT COURSE

- You will meet with a therapist at least once per week for 8-16 sessions.
- Each session lasts 60-90 minutes and has a specific focus to address your treatment goals.

## TAKING THE FIRST STEP

It may be challenging, but many take this step because they do not want PTSD symptoms to control their life. They may also recognize that some symptoms may not go away on their own.

### **Types of PTSD Psychotherapy Offered by VA Include:**

- Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)
- Prolonged Exposure (PE)
- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)
- Written Exposure Therapy (WET)

### **About Medications:**

- For some, medication may have a role in their treatment. Veterans may take medication while completing psychotherapy.
- Veterans may need to continue medication-treatment to maintain progress, even after symptoms improve.