

## Prolonged Exposure Therapy PROVEN RESULTS\* for Posttraumatic Stress

- Approximately **80%** of clients experience significant gains after 9 to 12 sessions of PE therapy. Specific symptoms are reduced in all domains of PTSD, including decreases in:
  - Distressing thoughts, feelings, and flashbacks
  - Avoidance of thoughts and reminders of the trauma
  - Being easily startled
  - Irritability
- **Improved daily functioning** also results from treatment with PE. Clients experience marked reductions in problems that often occur with PTSD, such as:
  - Depression
  - Anxiety
  - Anger
- Clients continue to enjoy long-term treatment gains after PE sessions end.

*\*Compared to control group.*

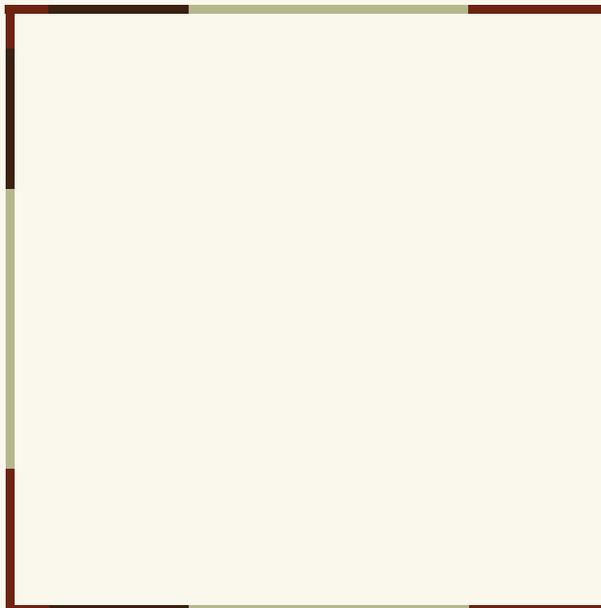
Source: SAMHSA

(<http://www.modelprograms.samhsa.gov/pdfs/model/PE-PTSD.pdf>)



### Contact

Your Local VA Provider for  
More PE Information



DISSEMINATED BY  
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA)  
NATIONAL CENTER OF PTSD (NCPTSD)  
[WWW.PTSD.VA.GOV](http://WWW.PTSD.VA.GOV)



EMBRACE YOUR

# LIFE

AGAIN



# It's time to get your life back!

## *What is Prolonged Exposure Therapy?*

Prolonged Exposure (PE) therapy is a type of cognitive-behavioral treatment that focuses on decreasing symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It is an individual therapy that addresses the common causes and symptoms of PTSD in four ways. These are education about treatment and common reactions to trauma, breathing retraining, in vivo exposure, and imaginal exposure.



## How does PE work?



PE addresses symptoms by decreasing avoidance, one of the underlying causes of PTSD. The therapy allows you to work through painful memories in a safe and supportive environment. It also allows you to engage with activities you have been avoiding because of the trauma.

In PE, the process of addressing the trauma memory is called "imaginal" exposure. The therapist works with you to change thoughts and feelings surrounding your trauma.

The process of engaging with real life situations is called "in vivo" ("in real life") exposure. This is where you and your therapist work together to identify activities that you have been avoiding due to the trauma. The goal of in vivo and imaginal exposure is to help you return to activities that you used to enjoy. This process helps to improve quality of life.

## Will PE work for me?

Individuals with many different types of trauma have experienced positive results with PE. This includes traumas related to combat, sexual assault, childhood abuse, natural disasters, and accidents.



PE is most effective when you are committed and motivated to engage with all aspects of the treatment. This commitment involves attending all sessions and completing "homework assignments" between sessions.

## How long does it take?

PE typically lasts 8-15 sessions. The exact length of time is determined with your therapist. Each session is approximately 90 minutes in length. You and your therapist may meet once or twice per week.

## What happens during treatment?



Throughout treatment, you will learn about PTSD: its causes, symptoms, and the reasons you are continuing to have symptoms. During the second and third sessions, you will start the in vivo and imaginal exercises. These steps will begin a process of recovery and improving the quality of your life.

## How do I find out more?

PE is only one of many treatments available for PTSD. Talk to your therapist to see if PE is right for you. You can also look on-line at the National Center for PTSD's website at <http://www.ptsd.va.gov>

