How to Manage Trauma

Trauma occurs when a person is overwhelmed by events or circumstances and responds with intense fear, horror, and helplessness. Extreme stress overpowers the person’s capacity to cope. There is a direct correlation between trauma and physical health conditions such as diabetes, COPD, heart disease, cancer, and high blood pressure.

How Common is Trauma?

70% of adults in the U.S. have experienced some type of traumatic event at least once in their lives. That’s 223.4 million people.

In public behavioral health, over 90% of clients have experienced trauma.

Trauma is a risk factor in nearly all behavioral health and substance use disorders.

In the United States, a woman is beaten every 15 seconds, a forcible rape occurs every 6 minutes.

More than 33% of youths exposed to community violence will experience Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, a very severe reaction to traumatic events.

Nearly all children who witness a parental homicide or sexual assault will develop Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Similarly, 90% of sexually abused children, 77% of children exposed to a school shooting, and 35% of urban youth exposed to community violence develop Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that’s triggered by a terrifying event. Symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares and severe anxiety, as well as uncontrollable thoughts about the event.
People can and do recover from trauma

SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA CHECKLIST
- Headaches, backaches, stomachaches, etc.
- Sudden sweating and/or heart palpitations
- Changes in sleep patterns, appetite, interest in sex
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Easily startled by noises or unexpected touch
- More susceptible to colds and illnesses
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs and/or overeating
- Fear, depression, anxiety
- Outbursts of anger or rage
- Emotional swings
- Nightmares and flashbacks — re-experiencing the trauma
- Tendency to isolate oneself or feelings of detachment
- Difficulty trusting and/or feelings of betrayal
- Self-blame, survivor guilt, or shame
- Diminished interest in everyday activities

HELPFUL COPING STRATEGIES
- Acknowledge that you have been through traumatic events
- Connect with others, especially those who may have shared the stressful event or experienced other trauma
- Exercise — try jogging, aerobics, bicycling, or walking
- Relax — try yoga, stretching, massage, mediation, deep muscle relaxation, etc.
- Take up music, art, or other diversions
- Maintain balanced diet and sleep cycle
- Avoid over-using stimulants like caffeine, sugar, or nicotine
- Commit to something personally meaningful and important every day
- Write about your experience for yourself or to share with others

ASK YOUR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL ABOUT TREATMENTS

TRADITIONAL TREATMENTS
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapy
- Talk Therapy
- Exposure Therapy
- Group Therapy

ALTERNATIVE TREATMENTS
- Energy Processing
- Hypnotherapy
- Neuro-Linguistic Programming
- Massage Therapy
- Pet or Equine Therapy
- Trauma and Recovery
- Peer Support Groups
- Wellness Recovery Action Planning (WRAP)

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR
- Make your doctor aware that you have experienced trauma, past or recent
- Help them understand what is helpful to you during office visits, i.e., asking permission to do a procedure, staying as clothed as possible, explaining procedures thoroughly, or having a supporter stay in the room with you
- Ask for referrals to therapy and behavioral health support

For more information, interviews, and research on trauma check out the National Council’s magazine edition on the topic

www.TheNationalCouncil.org

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