

Post-traumatic stress disorder

[Health & Medicine](#), [Stress](#)



Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a serious condition that can develop after a person has experienced or witnessed a traumatic event in which serious physical harm occurred or was threatened, causing intense fear, helplessness or horror.

If I were a psychiatrist treating this disorder, I would combine psychotherapy with antidepressant drug therapy. The goal of PTSD treatment is to reduce the emotional and physical symptoms and to help the person better cope with the event that triggered the disorder. Some effective psychotherapy techniques include

- Cognitive-behavior therapy - learning to recognize and change thought patterns that lead to troublesome emotions, feelings and behavior.
- Exposure therapy - re-living the traumatic experience, or being exposed to objects or situations that cause anxiety in a well-controlled and safe environment.
- Psychodynamic therapy - examining personal values and the emotional conflicts caused by the traumatic event.
- Group therapy - allowing the person to share thoughts, fears and feelings with other people who have experienced traumatic events.
- Family therapy - PTSD can have an affect on other family members.

(B) In an April 2005 news release entitled, "Evaluating Virtual Reality Therapy for Treating Acute Post Traumatic Stress Disorder" the Office of Naval Research stated that they planned to continue studying the effects of

virtual reality treatment on acute PTSD for early intervention. They have already had success treating chronic PTSD with virtual reality treatment.

(C) I feel that this article fits right in with the treatment option Exposure Therapy. The virtual reality combat situations the PTSD sufferer is exposed to mimics the traumatic experiences. This can be much more realistic than anything that can be brought about in a typical psychiatrist's office.

(D) There are still two questions I would like to have answered regarding PTSD. All of the aforementioned treatments are geared toward adults. What methods of treatment have been studied that could be effective with children? Also, I would ask if there seems to be any DNA link to a propensity for PTSD, and does it seem to run in families?

(E) If I were a patient with PTSD, I think the most difficult symptom to deal with would be the detachment and isolation from family and events that may trigger episodes of anxiety. When dealing with such a difficult disorder, it is important to have the support of loved ones. If they do not understand, however, they may feel abandoned and your isolation may lead to greater symptoms of PTSD in yourself and in them.