

## Living in a violent world

Violence is unavoidable. It can cause stress and fear. We cannot predict violent events. But we can focus on other things to help get on with life.

If you have experienced a violent event in the past, you may develop post-traumatic stress disorder. This is also known as PTSD. It can happen to anyone. Often current events can be a reminder of what happened in the past. Know and understand the signs of PTSD. It is a good way to recognize and be aware of your feelings.

### Symptoms of PTSD

There are many things that can trigger PTSD. Knowing the signs is an important part of healing. They include:

- **Flashbacks:** This is when a person relives an experience. They may have the same mental, emotional, and physical feelings. These could be feelings that occurred during or after an event. When someone has a flashback, they may feel and act as if the event is happening again.
- **Emotionally re-living an event:** Reliving an event is not pleasant. But it shows that the mind is trying to cope with it. The following are signs of this.
  - Upsetting thoughts.
  - Bad dreams.
  - Feeling in danger.
  - Anger.
  - Trouble thinking clearly.
- **Avoidance:** People who have been through violent events try to avoid reminders. Ways people do this include the following.
  - Not talking about it.
  - Staying away from certain places or people.
  - Shutting down emotionally.
  - Feeling alone.
  - Lack of interest in normal activities.

Some people try not to think about violent events. Many avoid treatment. This may make a person feel better at the time. But not getting treatment may prevent healing.

Violence of any kind can cause high levels of stress. This can happen even if you are not directly involved. People process events differently. It is important to work through the emotions of a violent event. One way to do this is to focus on reducing your stress. Here are some ways to do this.

- **Limit your news exposure.** Staying informed about events is important. But seeing too much violence can increase stress. Listen to the first few minutes of the news to get the facts. Then turn off the television. You can also read the newspaper to keep up with events. But try to focus only on the basic information.
- **Talk to others.** Discuss events with family and friends. You may feel better after talking about your feelings. Hearing from others may help. Speak with a mental health professional if you do not feel you are getting better. Or if you think you have signs of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- **Stick to your routine.** Try to stick to your regular schedule. If a violent event has occurred this may be hard to do. But sticking to your routine helps control stress. It also keeps you focused on other things. This keeps you from dwelling on the event.

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