

# COMPLEX PTSD FACT SHEET



## WHAT IS COMPLEX PTSD?

Complex PTSD, also called complex trauma or C-PTSD, results from persistent, repetitive abuse over time. In many cases, it starts during childhood or adolescence and it often comes at the hands of a trusted adult. Because of this, complex PTSD can lead to difficulty forming healthy relationships.

## HOW IS IT DIFFERENT FROM TRADITIONAL PTSD?

Traditional PTSD can develop after a single traumatic event, such as witnessing an act of violence or surviving a tsunami. The abuse leading to complex PTSD is ongoing. Moreover, it almost always takes place at the hands of another person.



## WHAT ARE COMMON SYMPTOMS?

The repetitive abuse that leads to complex PTSD results in a host of symptoms, many of which are not seen in traditional PTSD. These include trust issues, a distorted sense of self, and an inability to organize thoughts. Victims also experience symptoms that overlap with traditional PTSD, such as flashbacks, unwanted thoughts and hyperarousal.

## WHO IS LIKELY TO SUFFER?

Children of physical or sexual abuse, neglect, and violent home environments are common victims of complex PTSD. The disorder also commonly affects survivors of domestic abuse, human trafficking, refugee camps and cults. Veterans, particularly prisoners of war, can also develop complex PTSD.



## HOW IS COMPLEX PTSD TREATED?

Treatment for complex PTSD may include a combination of psychotherapy and somatic therapies, such as mindfulness or breathing techniques to manage physical symptoms. Treatment should also address co-occurring disorders. Common co-occurring disorders include substance abuse, eating disorders, anxiety and ADHD.

## RESOURCES FOR TRAUMA VICTIMS

- [National Center for Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health](#)
- [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#)
- [The Child Trauma Academy](#)
- [Child Witness to Violence Act](#)
- [Zero to Three](#)

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