

Clinical Psychological Service Branch(CPSB)

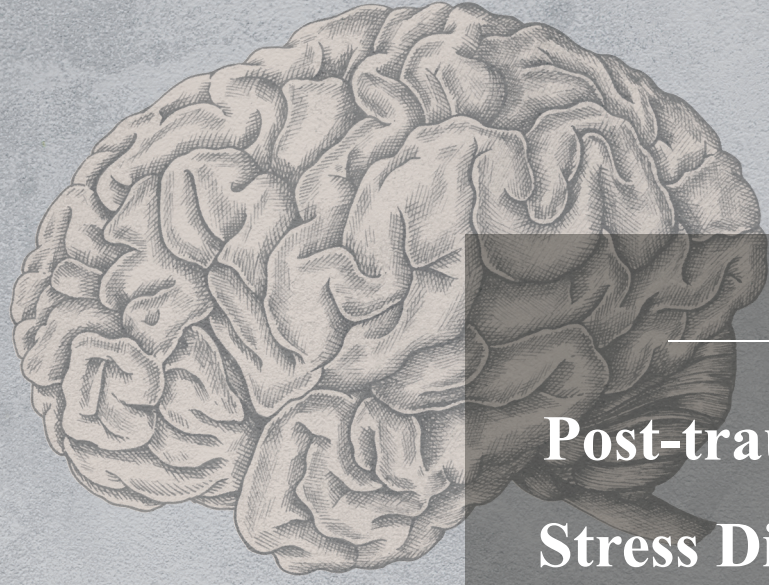
Integrated Family Service Centres

The CPSB of the Social Welfare Department(SWD) provides early psychological intervention, consultation, psychological assessment and treatment to people who have experienced critical incidents.

People seeking services from the CPSB would be referred through the Integrated family Service Centres of the SWD.

SWD hotline: 2343 2255

SWD Website: <http://www.info.gov.hk/swd>



Post-traumatic Stress Disorder



What is Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?

When we experience or witness traumatic events (e.g. natural disaster, fire, traffic accident, robbery, assault, and family tragedy), our physical and psychological safety would be under serious threat or harm. We may experience stress reactions, such as anxiety and panic (please refer to our pamphlet “ Critical Incident – Stress Management”). If such distress persists for 1 month or longer with a significant impact on our daily life, PTSD may have developed.

Symptoms of PTSD:

The traumatic event is re-experienced repeatedly and uncontrollably in the following ways, including:

- Recurrent and intrusive distressing flashbacks of the traumatic event
- Recurrent nightmares related to the traumatic event
- Feeling or acting like re-experiencing the traumatic event
- Intense emotional distress or physical reactivity (e.g. increased heart rate, sweating) after exposure to stimuli or scenarios related to the traumatic event

Apparent changes in alertness or behavioural reactions, including:

- Irritable or easily annoyed
- Reckless or self-destructive behaviours
- Hypervigilance
- Feeling nervous or frightened easily
- Problems with concentration
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep, early wakening or easily woken up

Negative changes in thoughts or feelings, including:

- Inability to recall key aspects of the traumatic event
- Having negative views on self, others, and even the world (e.g. "I am a bad person", "Nobody can be trusted", and "The world is full of dangers")
- Having the belief that oneself or others should be held accountable for the traumatic event
- Having intense negative emotions (e.g. panic, anxiety, anger, and guilt)
- Loss of interest in things or activities that one used to like
- Feeling detached or isolated from others
- Having difficulty experiencing positive emotions (e.g. joy, contentment, and love)

Persistent avoidance of trauma-related stimuli and scenarios, including:

- Avoidance of memories, thoughts, and feelings related to the traumatic event
- Avoidance of things, activities, places or persons related to the traumatic event

Research findings on PTSD

Anyone who has experienced traumatic event(s) can develop PTSD , regardless of age and sex. According to overseas research, the lifetime prevalence of PTSD in the general population is about 8%, i.e., about 8 out of 100 persons have experienced PTSD at some point in their lives.

Prevalence rate among women is higher than that of men. Findings suggest that PTSD symptoms would subside in 3 months after the traumatic event in around 50% of these adults. However, some may experience PTSD symptoms for 1 year or longer.

Is PTSD treatable?

PTSD is treatable with suitable professional service. Effective treatment includes psychological treatment and medication. Common psychological treatment for PTSD includes Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing therapy (EMDR), both manage traumatic memories and reactions.

Do not hesitate to seek help if you find yourself, family members, or friends exhibiting the symptoms above.

Take action as soon as possible by seeking assistance from professionals such as social workers, clinical psychologists or medical professionals.

Reference:
Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition, American Psychiatric Association, 2013