



SENIOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH



Monthly Newsletter



we're so glad you're here!

UNDERSTANDING PTSD IN OLDER ADULTS

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can significantly impact older adults, often surfacing or worsening as they age. This condition arises from experiencing or witnessing traumatic events, leading to symptoms such as flashbacks, nightmares, severe anxiety, and uncontrollable thoughts about the trauma. For older adults, PTSD may be linked to past experiences such as wartime service, accidents, or personal losses. The symptoms can disrupt daily life, causing difficulty sleeping, irritability, and withdrawal from social interactions. Additionally, the cognitive changes associated with aging, such as memory loss, can exacerbate PTSD symptoms, making it harder for older adults to manage their emotions and stress. Recognizing and addressing PTSD in older adults is crucial, as timely intervention can improve their quality of life. Caregivers and loved ones should be vigilant for signs of PTSD and seek professional help to provide appropriate support and treatment.

Signs & Symptoms of PTSD

Re-experiencing Symptoms:

- Flashbacks: Reliving the traumatic event as if it were happening again.
- Nightmares: Disturbing dreams about the traumatic event.
- Intrusive Thoughts: Unwanted and distressing memories of the trauma.

Avoidance Symptoms:

- Avoiding Reminders: Steering clear of places, people, or activities that trigger memories of the trauma.
- Emotional Numbing: Feeling detached from others or emotionally numb.
- Loss of Interest: Diminished interest in activities once enjoyed.

Emotional and Behavioral Changes:

- Social Withdrawal: Avoiding social interactions or becoming isolated.
- Changes in Mood: Experiencing mood swings, anxiety, or depression.

- Behavioral Changes: Engaging in risky or self-destructive behaviors.

Cognitive and Mood Symptoms:

- Negative Thoughts: Persistent negative beliefs about oneself, others, or the world.
- Guilt or Blame: Unjustified feelings of guilt or blaming oneself for the trauma.
- Memory Issues: Difficulty remembering key aspects of the traumatic event.
- Difficulty Concentrating: Trouble focusing on tasks or making decisions.

Arousal and Reactivity Symptoms:

- Hypervigilance: Being easily startled or feeling on edge.
- Irritability or Anger: Experiencing outbursts of anger or irritability.
- Sleep Disturbances: Difficulty falling or staying asleep, or restless sleep.
- Physical Symptoms: Experiencing physical symptoms like headaches, dizziness, or chest pain.



A minute with Mike

MIKE WILLIS, OUTREACH COORDINATOR, THERAPIST

4th of July

The 4th of July can be a challenging time for older adults with PTSD due to the loud noises and bright lights of fireworks. Caregivers can help by creating a calm and quiet environment, using noise-canceling headphones or playing soothing music to mask the sound of fireworks. It's important to avoid triggers by staying indoors during peak fireworks times and keeping windows closed. Engaging in relaxing activities, such as reading or watching a favorite movie, can provide a distraction. Discuss the holiday plans in advance to reduce anxiety, and ensure the older adult feels safe and supported. If necessary, consult with a healthcare provider about strategies or medications to manage symptoms during this period. By taking these steps, caregivers can help older adults with PTSD navigate the holiday more comfortably.