



MDwise

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Helping a Family Member Who Has PTSD

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Overview

If you care about someone with PTSD, here's what you can do to help.

- Learn what you can about PTSD.
The more you know, the better you can understand what your loved one is going through.
- Encourage contact with family and close friends.
A support system will help your family member get through hard changes and stressful times.
- Learn how to deal with anger.
Both you and your loved one may be angry at times.
- Learn the best way to talk with your loved one.
When a loved one has PTSD, communication can be hard. These tips may help.
 - Be clear and to the point.
 - Be a good listener.
 - Put your feelings into words.
 - Don't give advice unless you are asked.
- Offer to go to doctor visits with your loved one.
You can help keep track of appointments, and you can be there for support.
- Be open to talking.
Tell your loved one you want to listen and that you also understand if they don't feel like talking. Give your loved one space, but let them know you're there to help.
 - If the person doesn't want your help, keep in mind that withdrawal can be a symptom of PTSD.
 - A person who withdraws may not feel like talking, taking part in group activities, or being around other people.
- Stay active.
Take a walk, go for a bike ride, or do some other physical activity together. Exercise is important for health and helps clear your mind.
- Take care of yourself.
Take time for yourself, and have your own support system.

Dealing with anger

When a loved one has PTSD, he or she may feel angry about many things. Anger is a normal reaction to trauma. But it can hurt relationships and make it hard to think clearly. Anger also can be scary.

If anger leads to violent behavior or abuse, it's dangerous. **Go to a safe place and call for help right away. Make sure that children are in a safe place too.**

It's hard to talk to someone who is angry. One thing you can do is set up a time-out system. This helps you find a way to talk even while angry. Here's one way to do this.

- Agree that either of you can call a time-out at any time.
- Agree that when someone calls a time-out, the discussion must stop right then.
- Decide on a signal you will use to call a time-out. The signal can be a word that you say or a hand signal.
- Agree to tell each other where you will be and what you'll be doing during the time-out. Tell each other what time you will come back.

While you are taking a time-out, don't focus on how angry you feel. Instead, think calmly about how you will talk things over and solve the problem.

After you come back:

- Take turns talking about solutions to the problem. Listen without interrupting.
- Use statements starting with "I," such as "I think" or "I feel." Using "you" statements can sound accusing.
- Be open to each other's ideas. Don't criticize each other.
- Focus on things you both think will work. It's likely you will both have good ideas.
- Together, agree on which solutions you will use.

Credits

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