

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): What is it? What can be done about it?

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a term that you may have heard before or will hear as you or your child begins their recovery from sexual abuse. In a nut shell, PTSD is a series of symptoms suffered by individuals who have experienced a traumatic (or “emotionally wounding”) event. The symptoms can include:

- Experiencing traumatic events in which the individual experiences the event as threatening their own or someone else’s physical safety or life
- The trauma is re-experienced in the form of dreams, “flashbacks”, intrusive memories, or a sense of uneasiness in situations that remind the individual of the traumatic experience
- The individual shows evidence of avoidance behaviors such as feeling “numb” or having little or no feelings; showing a reduced interest in others and the outside world
- The individual demonstrates “hyper arousal” such as insomnia, agitation, irritability, or outbursts of rage
- These symptoms last for at least one month

Recovery from PTSD takes time. The best way to begin the healing process is to seek a qualified mental health professional, such as the professionals available to you through SOAR, Inc.. As part of the recovery process, survivors of sexual abuse can:

- Learn that the effects of the trauma are real and not related to some other “psychological”, family or personal problem
- Learn that they are a “survivor” capable of healing, not a willing participant in the trauma or a “hopeless” psychiatric case
- Learn about how their emotionally wounding experiences affect them and their family and, then the healing process will begin
- Learn coping skills such as assertiveness, anger and stress management, relaxation techniques, etc...
- Learn how to address stereotyping and the “blame the victim” attitude about survivors of sexual abuse

If you have questions about PTSD and how it impacts your or your child’s experience, speak with a SOAR therapist.

*Information gathered from: *I Can’t Get Over It*, by Aphrodite Matsakis, Ph.D., (1992)

