Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that's triggered by a terrifying event. Symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares and severe anxiety, as well as uncontrollable thoughts about the event.

- Many people who go through traumatic events have difficulty adjusting and coping for a while. But with time and taking care of yourself, such traumatic reactions usually get better. In some cases, though, the symptoms can get worse or last for months or even years. Sometimes they may completely shake up your life. In a case such as this, you may have post-traumatic stress disorder.
As with most mental health problems, PTSD is probably caused by a complex mix of:

- Your inherited mental health risks, such as an increased risk of anxiety and depression
- Your life experiences, including the amount and severity of trauma you've gone through since early childhood
- The inherited aspects of your personality — often called your temperament
- The way your brain regulates the chemicals and hormones your body releases in response to stress
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Post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms typically start within three months of a traumatic event. In a small number of cases, though, PTSD symptoms may not appear until years after the event.

Post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms are generally grouped into three types: intrusive memories, avoidance and numbing, and increased anxiety or emotional arousal (hyperarousal).
Symptoms of intrusive memories may include:

- Flashbacks, or reliving the traumatic event for minutes or even days at a time
- Upsetting dreams about the traumatic event
Symptoms of avoidance and emotional numbing may include:

- Trying to avoid thinking or talking about the traumatic event
- Feeling emotionally numb
- Avoiding activities you once enjoyed
- Hopelessness about the future
- Memory problems
- Trouble concentrating
- Difficulty maintaining close relationships
Symptoms of anxiety and increased emotional arousal may include:

- Irritability or anger
- Overwhelming guilt or shame
- Self-destructive behavior, such as drinking too much
- Trouble sleeping
- Being easily startled or frightened
- Hearing or seeing things that aren't there
Post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms can come and go. You may have more post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms when things are stressful in general, or when you run into reminders of what you went through. You may hear a car backfire and relive combat experiences, for instance. Or you may see a report on the news about a rape and feel overcome by memories of your own assault.
Acute Stress Disorder:

- Acute stress disorder is most often diagnosed when an individual has been exposed to a traumatic event in which both of the following were present:
- The person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others
- The person’s response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror
Acute Stress Disorder

Either while experiencing or after experiencing the distressing event, the individual has 3 or more of the following dissociative symptoms:

- A subjective sense of numbing, detachment, or absence of emotional responsiveness
- A reduction in awareness of his or her surroundings (e.g., “being in a daze”)
- Derealization
- Depersonalization
- Dissociative amnesia (i.e., inability to recall an important aspect of the trauma)
Acute Stress Disorder

- The traumatic event is persistently re-experienced in at least one of the following ways: recurrent images, thoughts, dreams, illusions, flashback episodes, or a sense of reliving the experience; or distress on exposure to reminders of the traumatic event.
Acute stress disorder is also characterized by significant avoidance of stimuli that arouse recollections of the trauma (e.g., avoiding thoughts, feelings, conversations, activities, places, people). The person experiencing acute stress disorder also has significant symptoms of anxiety or increased arousal (e.g., difficulty sleeping, irritability, poor concentration, hypervigilance, exaggerated startle response, motor restlessness).
For acute stress disorder to be diagnosed, the problems noted above must cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning or impairs the individual’s ability to pursue some necessary task, such as obtaining necessary assistance or mobilizing personal resources by telling family members about the traumatic experience.
Acute Stress Disorder

- The disturbance in an acute stress disorder must last for a minimum of 2 days and a maximum of 4 weeks, and must occur within 4 weeks of the traumatic event. Symptoms also cannot be the result of substance use or abuse (e.g., alcohol, drugs, medications), caused by or an exacerbation of a general or preexisting medical condition, and cannot be better explained by a Brief Psychotic Disorder.