

# Experiencing or Witnessing a Traumatic Event

## Traumatic Events

- Rape or Sexual Abuse
- Victim of a violent crime
- Airplane or car crash
- Hurricane
- Tornado
- Fire
- War
- Any event where a person experienced or witnessed actual threat of death or injury or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others

### Questions?

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You may have experienced, witnessed, or have been confronted with an event involving the actual threat of death or serious injury, or threat to the physical integrity of self or others. Some people as a result of the experience may feel intense fear, helplessness, terror or horror or may find themselves just feeling numb. They may experience nightmares and try to stay away from anything that reminds them of the experience they had. They may not be able to connect well with others and feel angry and upset, especially when something happens suddenly or without warning.

If you experience any of these symptoms you may have Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Most people experience symptoms about three months after an incident but for some people the signs don't show up until years later. In any year 5.2 million Americans have PTSD.

## If I think I have PTSD, what can I do to help myself?

- Seek professional help by seeing your doctor or a counselor.
- Make sure your doctor and/or counselor has experience in treating people with PTSD. Treating people with this illness requires special training
- Counseling can help you make sense of your experience to understand how the trauma has affected you and to understand your feelings and reactions.
- Talk about the experience that has upset you and the associated feelings.
- Describe symptoms such as difficulty sleeping or problems with anger.
- Let your professionals know how these problems affect your life.
- Make sure you get a physical check-up.