



# Steps Toward Healing from PTSD

People who have witnessed or experienced a traumatic event, such as a car accident, military action, a terrorist attack, sexual violation, serious injury or any act of violence, can suffer severe stress as a result. Some people can improve on their own with time. For others, help from a mental health professional is necessary. If you've experienced trauma and your symptoms and reactions are affecting your daily life, you may have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

## Here are some steps you can take to cope and heal:

**Reach out for professional help right away.** The longer you go without treatment, the harder it can be to heal. The best place to start is to see a psychiatrist or other mental health provider. Your primary care physician, employee assistance programs, police departments, other healthcare providers and crisis hotlines can recommend counselors/therapists in your area. Therapy can provide a safe place for you and your family to talk about and learn to cope with your PTSD.

**Be patient with yourself.** Realize this will be a hard time in your life. Allow yourself to mourn the losses you've experienced and learn to be okay with slow progress.

**Eat healthy, exercise and get enough sleep.** When you're stressed, you're more open to illness. Eating a well-balanced diet and getting enough sleep can help you stay well. Regular exercise can relieve depression and stress.

**Try relaxation methods.** These can include full-body relaxation or breathing exercises, meditation, stretching, yoga, listening to quiet music and spending time in nature settings.

**Join a support group.** Being in a group with other people who have PTSD may help reduce isolation. It can also help rebuild your trust in others.

**Stay away from negative coping actions.** These include using drugs or alcohol, workaholism, violent behavior and angry intimidation of others. These may seem to help by giving quick relief, but they worsen the illness and make recovery more difficult.

**Get involved and spend time with others.** Attend a place of worship, book club, exercise class or other gatherings as often as you can. Consider volunteering to help at the American Red Cross, AmeriCares or other charitable groups. Helping others can give you a sense of purpose.

Most importantly, don't neglect your mental health. Show yourself the kindness you deserve, and don't try to tackle your problems alone. Lean on your support system, community or a behavioral health professional to help you on your journey. Healing is possible.

**8% of Americans  
will suffer from  
PTSD at some  
point in their lives.**

[ptsd.va.gov](https://ptsd.va.gov)

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