

Living with PTSD

You can live a healthy life with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD, a mental health condition that's triggered by a traumatic event. Symptoms, including anxiety, nightmares and depression, can be managed with treatment and healthy lifestyle changes. This starts by keeping your healthcare appointments.

"It's very important to stay in touch with your provider so that you can have that support that you need and stay on track with your recovery."-Dr. Martha Carlson, Clinical Psychologist

Learning how to cope with your PTSD symptoms, will help you live a healthier life.

"They can't reduce all anxiety, but they can alter it in some way. So, to get them to practice a coping skill and that could be anything from engaging in fun activities where there's no danger, it could be doing some sort of breathing or meditation, as long as it doesn't remind them of the trauma itself."-Dr. Chad Wetterneck, Clinical Psychologist

Dana was sexually assaulted in high school and struggled with anxiety. She started going to therapy just a few years ago. It helped her realize what causes her PTSD symptoms to flare up.

"When I feel threatened. When I fight with someone I love."-Dana, Patient

Through therapy, Dana learned how to cope with those situations.

"I generally will stop whatever that interaction is and say you know what, I'm going to need a minute and we can come back to this. I need to just walk away and take care of myself a little bit."-Dana, Patient

Marine veteran, Dan Van Buskirk also suffers from PTSD. He served in Vietnam, where he experienced and witnessed a lot of painful things. Dan's symptoms are triggered by things most people don't even notice.

"Loud noises, people that are not in control of their mental faculties, drunk, or I can't go into bars or anything like that. Airplanes. The scream of jets overhead."-Dan, Patient

To ease that anxiety.

"What I do is work on my breathing and I focus on my breath."-Dan, Patient

Dan also joined a music program with other vets.

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"It's not about becoming a great guitar player. It's about just picking up the instrument, practicing each day. It's a form of meditation."-Dan, Patient

"It offers this wonderful opportunity for veterans to learn a skill with something that has an emotional connection, the personal connection because of the music they end up playing. It gives them something to focus on versus the thoughts that race around."-Sheppard Crumine, Music Therapist

Dana's focus for relaxation is sailing.

"When I can feel the stress, when I can feel the tension, when I can feel the emotions, that sailing is where I go. It's where I escape to."-Dana, Patient

Having support is also key to managing your PTSD. You don't necessarily have to talk about the actual trauma that changed your life – just spending time with loved ones can comfort and heal.

"I can't imagine really feeling like I'm better if I didn't have a group of support. If I didn't have people I could call on."-Dana, Patient

If you suffer from PTSD, it's also important to eat healthy, stay active, and get enough sleep.

"When you don't sleep well, there's an area of the brain that becomes more activated the next day. And that area of the brain makes you hyper sensitive to triggers and makes you irritable. Makes you unable to think clearly."- Dr. Martha Carlson, Clinical Psychologist

PTSD can put you at greater risk for alcohol and drug abuse to try to numb the pain.

"When someone with PTSD uses substances, it often serves as avoidance. So, it helps you to manage the immediate trigger. But in the long run avoiding that trigger leads to worsening PTSD symptoms."- Dr. Martha Carlson, Clinical Psychologist

With your healthcare team, a treatment plan and support, you can take back control of your life from PTSD.

"I want to embrace the possibilities. I want to know what the next challenge is instead of being afraid of what might happen, and I love that."-Dana, Patient