



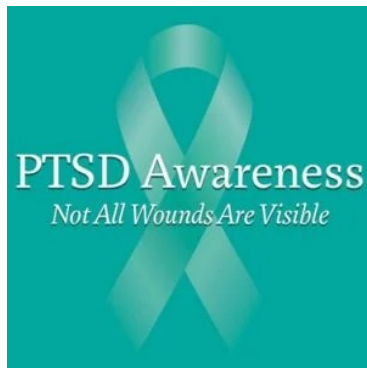
SOMS Newsletter

June 2022



June is Post-Traumatic Stress Awareness Month

We've got a heartfelt article for you from Member Breanna Tolles.



June 27th is National PTSD Awareness Day

The Truth and Lies about PTSD

~ By Breanna Tolles ~

Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome: An occurrence when someone has experienced, witnessed or been confronted with a terrible or life changing event

First off, I want to start with the fact that what you're feeling doesn't make you abnormal. About 7–8% of Americans develop PTSD at some point in their lives, and approximately 8 million are diagnosed with PTSD each year.

Anyone can develop PTSD at any age. The disorder isn't exclusive to those serving in the military — it also impacts people who experience abuse, assault, accidents, disasters, and other traumatic events.

The sudden death of a loved one may also cause PTSD. Usually, PTSD appears within three months of a traumatic event. But people respond differently, and symptoms may not occur until years later. Childhood trauma can delay or impair age-appropriate development milestones, thoughts and behaviors.

Studies show childhood trauma victims may have lower IQs, and language and learning issues.

What kind of symptoms do you get with PTSD, you ask. Generally, there are three categories: Re-experiencing, Hyperarousal, and Avoiding and Numbing.

Re-experiencing is a form of frequently reliving the trauma. This would be along the lines of nightmares, flashbacks, panic attacks, or any other psychological distress.

Hyperarousal is stated as to be constantly feeling "on guard" for danger. This leads to things like irritability, lack of concentration, heightened reflexes, and sleep problems

Avoiding and Numbing is exactly what it states: avoiding people and activities that are reminders of the trauma, and avoiding the pain by simply disconnecting emotionally.

PTSD can disrupt your whole life. It affects your job, your relationships, your health, and your enjoyment of everyday life. As with most mental illnesses, PTSD isn't curable, but people with the condition can improve significantly and see their symptoms resolved.

Where are the lies, you ask, because the title of the article is *The Truth and Lies*. Glad you are wondering, just as I was.

Lie #1: PTSD ONLY affects military and combat vets: **Wrong**. PTSD can affect anyone with a trauma. PTSD doesn't care about what kind of trauma you had, just that you had one.

Lie #2: Your trauma happened forever ago; you should be "over it" by now: **Wrong**, yet again. Sometimes with disconnecting, things get delayed, especially when trauma happens at a young age. Suppressed memories can easily trigger symptoms.

Lie #3: There's no cure, so treatment is wasteful. **Wrong. Wrong. Wrong.** There are many effective treatments to help effectively manage symptoms.

Lie #4: PTSD is a sign of weakness: **WRONG**. This one upsets me more than any other lie. PTSD is a sign of what you went through. You made it through and survived that trauma. Getting help for PTSD is courageous, and shows a commitment to improving yourself.

When you suffer from physical illnesses or injuries, you don't hesitate to get medical treatment. Your mental health deserves the same care. Get the care you need to live a happier, healthier life. So what I'm telling you is: after everything you went through with your trauma, PTSD followed you. That is okay. It's a sign of strength. But sometimes with strength, help is needed to manage the damage that was done.

There are therapies such as EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) and cognitive behavioral therapy. Also, your doctor has a list of approved medications that could help. Don't lose hope. Help is available to take that darkness and bring some kind of light to it. Your life may never be fully the same, and that's okay. With everything you went through, it's okay for life not to be the same. Life after trauma does not have to be all dark and stormy. With help (medical or natural healing), you will just find a new normal.

Why Do We Wear Orange for Gun Violence Awareness?

Hadiya Pendleton was shot and killed on a playground in Chicago on January 21, 2013. After her death, her friends wanted to honor her life by wearing orange, the color hunters wear in the woods to protect themselves and others.

Wear Orange began on June 2, 2015, which would have been Hadiya's 18th birthday. Since then, the event has expanded to three days a year: National Gun Violence Awareness Day (the first Friday in June) and Wear Orange Weekend (the accompanying weekend).

Also since then, orange has been the defining color of the gun violence prevention movement. The color orange honors the more than 110 lives cut short and the hundreds more wounded by gun violence every day.

So far this year (as of June 1, 2022), according to the Gun Violence Archive, there have been a total of 18,057 gun violence-related deaths. The numbers are as follows:





Pride Awareness Month - Homicides

Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, or gender non-conforming individuals are nearly four times as likely to be victims of violent crime than those outside these communities.

A study published in Science Advances in 2020 looked at data that has been collected since 2016, and found that LGBTQ individuals and gender minorities are disproportionately affected by crime.

The study found that individuals of sexual and gender minorities experienced a rate of 71.1 violent victimizations per 1,000 persons per year, compared with 19.2 per 1,000 per year among non-sexual and gender minorities.

Individuals of the LGBTQ population are much more likely to be victimized by someone they know well than a person who is a non-sexual and gender minority.

In the first three months of 2022, 238 bills have been proposed that would limit the rights of LGBTQ+ Americans; about half of them target transgender specifically. Recent data shows that public opinion and attitudes about transgender and gender non-conforming people have direct impacts on rates of violence against these communities.

In 2021, the Human Rights Campaign recorded 50 fatalities against transgender and gender non-conforming people. In 2022, 14 transgender individuals have already been fatally shot or killed by other violent means. In previous years, the majority of individuals have been Black and Latinx transgender women.

Those lost so far this year:

Amariey (Myara) Lei, a 20-year-old black transgender woman, was found lying lifeless in the street on January 1, 2022. She had been shot. As of right now, her death is unsolved. If you have any information, please contact the Allegheny County Police at 1-833- ALL-TIPS.

Duval Princess, a 24-year-old transgender woman, was killed on January 3, 2022, when an individual got into her car, shot her, then exited her vehicle. As of right now, her death is unsolved. If you have any information, please contact Crime Stoppers at 1-866-845-TIPS.

Cypress Ramos, a 21-year-old Latina transgender woman, was found dead in a storage unit on February 13, 2022. The suspect says a song told him to kill Cypress, but that he also believed that Cypress heard a song with instructions to kill him. The suspect is currently being held on a \$500,000 bond.

Naomie Skinner, a 25-year-old black transgender woman, was fatally shot by her boyfriend on February 12, 2022. Her boyfriend has been charged and arrested for Naomie's death.

Matthew Angelo Spampinato, a 21-year-old white transgender man, was killed on February 9, 2022 in a hit and run car crash. As of right now, investigators have no leads on the driver that killed Matthew.

Paloma Vazquez, a 29-year-old Latina transgender woman, was fatally shot on February 26, 2022. Police currently have no leads in regards to Paloma's death. If you have any information, please call the Houston Police Department's homicide division at [713-308-3600](tel:713-308-3600), or Crime Stoppers at 713-222-TIPS.

Tatiana Labelle, a 33-year-old black transgender woman, was beaten to death and her body was thrown in the garbage on March 18, 2022. Police have no suspects or leads as of now.

Kathryn "Katie" Newhouse, a 19-year-old Asian-American neurodivergent transgender woman, was murdered on March 19, 2022 by her father, who subsequently committed suicide. Court records show that her father had been previously arrested for assaulting her in 2019, when she was 16.

Kenyatta "Kesha" Webster, a 24-year-old black transgender woman, was killed in what the family was told by media was a "robbery-homicide" on March 26, 2022. This has not been confirmed by police. If you have any information, please call Jackson Police investigators at [601-960-1217](tel:601-960-1217).

Miia Love Parker, a 25-year-old black transgender woman, was shot on April 1, 2022. She was transported to the hospital, but succumbed to her injuries. Local police have identified a suspect, but have not released any information about a motive. Any with information should call Chester Police at [610-447-8424](tel:610-447-8424).

Ariyanna Mitchell, a 17-year-old black transgender girl, was fatally shot while protecting her friend during a fight at a party. The suspect questioned her gender identity and shot her multiple times upon receiving her response. Police have arrested the suspect and charged him with her murder.

Fern Feather, a 29-year-old transgender woman, was stabbed and their body was left on the side of the road on April 12, 2022. Fern was stabbed by someone they had been hanging out with. The suspect has been arrested and charged with second-degree murder.

Raymond "Ray" Muscat, a 24-year-old white transgender man, was shot and killed by his girlfriend on May 8, 2022. The girlfriend also killed her own brother, and then committed suicide.

Nedra Sequence Morris, a 50-year-old black transgender woman, was fatally shot on May 14, 2022. Police are currently looking for a 2017 Jaguar F-PACE that left Nedra's body at the intersection of NW 32nd Avenue and NW 132nd Terrace in Opa-locka, Florida. If you have any information, please call the Miami Dade Crime Stoppers at 305- 471-TIPS.

PTSD and Intrusive Thoughts

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can cause intrusive thoughts, which are distressing thoughts and memories that can arise suddenly. Intrusive thoughts can trigger other PTSD symptoms, and make how you feel even worse.

What Are Intrusive Thoughts?

Intrusive thoughts are when the traumatic event is persistently re-experienced in a different variety of ways. These include the following:

- Recurrent, involuntary, and intrusive memories.
- Traumatic nightmares or upsetting dreams with content related to the event.
- Dissociative reactions, such as flashbacks, where it feels like the traumatic event is happening again.
- Intense or prolonged distress after exposure to traumatic reminders.
- Marked physiological reactivity, such as increased heart rate, after exposure to traumatic reminders.

How Can You Manage Intrusive Thoughts?

While going about your day without thinking (being on auto-pilot) may be useful at times, this lack of awareness may make us feel as though our thoughts and emotions are completely unpredictable and unmanageable. You can use self-monitoring to help increase awareness. Self-monitoring is the ability to monitor and regulate self-presentations, emotions and behaviors in response to social environments and situations. It means you are aware of your behavior and the impact it has on your environment. This helps you to change your behavior to adapt to the situation, instead of behaving in accordance with your internal needs and feelings.

When you are having intrusive thoughts, it is important to address these negative thoughts, often called catastrophic thinking. The first step to managing intrusive thoughts and catastrophic thinking is knowing that you are having them (self-monitoring). The next step is to allow yourself to consider other options. You can do this by asking yourself some questions:

- What evidence do I have that this thought is realistic? What evidence do I have that it isn't?
- Have there been times when I've had this thought and it didn't come true?
- Do I have this kind of thought when I'm feeling okay, or when I feel sad, angry, or anxious?
- What would I tell someone else who was having this thought? Is it possible that I'm having this thought just out of habit?
- What might be a different, more realistic thought in this situation?

By asking yourself these questions, you can learn to consider your options, and you'll know you're doing it successfully when you're not as anxious as you were before and your anxiety isn't getting any worse.

Intrusive thoughts can take control of your life. Mindfulness can be used to take a step back from your thoughts and reduce their ability to affect your life. Mindfulness can help you get back in touch with the present moment and reduce the extent to which you feel controlled by intrusive thoughts. Research has shown that mindfulness may help to mitigate the relationship between intrusive thoughts and post-traumatic distress.

It is important to catch intrusive thoughts and combat them with positive thoughts. This will allow you to serve as your own source of social support.

First, identify your intrusive thoughts, then slow them down. You can do that by using distraction techniques like deep-breathing, self-soothing, and mindfulness. This will help reduce the intensity of your thoughts, making them easier for you to address.

After you have reduced the intensity of your thoughts, look at them and challenge them. Ask yourself questions such as: what evidence do I have for this thought; what evidence do I have against this thought; are there times when this thought hasn't been true; do I have this kind of thought when I am feeling OK, as opposed to feeling sad, angry, or anxious; and what may be an alternative explanation? Use **positive self-supportive statements**, like listing your good qualities, what you have accomplished that you are proud of, or that it's okay to feel anxious.

Lastly, describe a time when you handled your PTSD symptoms well, and tell yourself that your feelings are valid and important.

Know what your triggers are that cause intrusive thoughts, flashbacks and dissociation. Knowing your triggers can help you either try to limit your exposure to triggers, or you can prepare for these triggers by devising ways to cope with your reaction to those triggers. Try to identify as many early symptoms as possible to prevent future episodes.

You can also use grounding techniques, which use the five senses (sound, touch, smell, taste, and sight). If you know you're going to be in a situation that may trigger you, bring along a support person.

Know that you are not alone in having intrusive thoughts, and that we are here to help you. Please reach out to us; we have resources to help.

Please help to support the siblings of Uvalde victims. We have created an Amazon wishlist containing books that are written specifically for children who have experienced loss. You can donate one (or more) books here:

[Donate Books to Uvalde Siblings](#)

Sibling Birthdays

June 2 – Stefanie Eckles' brother, Ian
June 6 – Melissa Paustian West's sister, Hannah
June 9 – Amy Bonnett's brother, Travis
June 13 – Michele Schottelkorb's sister, Samantha
June 14 – Kelly Feldman Weinblatt's sister, Allison
June 14 – Jessica Burt Smith's brother, Dustin
June 21 – Joanne Chosa's sister, Karina
June 22 – Sherry Lee's brother, Nickalas
June 25 – Mariah Russell's brother, Justin
June 25 – Chelsea Speck's brother, Daniel
June 25 – Kirah Jane's brother, Taelor
June 25 – Stella Ann Grant Rodriguez's brother-in-law, Rafael
June 26 – Jana Logan's brother, Terry
June 26 – Kendra Leigh's brother, Todd, & brother's girlfriend, Annette
June 26 – Gail Sax Orfanos' sister, Andrea
June 27 – Raven Way Valdez's brother, Adam
June 29 – Tara Michaud's brother, Tory

Sibling Angelversaries

June 5 – Michelle Joslin Myers' sister, Mona
June 5 – Joan Anderson-Shelly's brother, Walter "Jaye"
June 7 – Sara Leopard Earl's mother, Sunny, & sister, Sabrina
June 15 – Kathleen Suzy Evans' brother, Samuel
June 15 – Lindsey Garris' brother, Dustin
June 15 – Sherry Lee's brother, Nickalas
June 15 – Joanna Melissa's sister & Unborn Baby
June 15 – Christina Griffin's brother, Dakota
June 16 – Danya Rosen's brother, Barak
June 17 – Kelly Goodwin Johnstone's brother
June 20 – Sylvia Romero's brother, Mark
June 22 – Vicki Miller's sister, Stacy
June 22 – Karla Andersen's brother
June 23 – Rose Scanes' brother, Roger
June 29 – Lynn Cuenca's sister, Janel
June 30 – Karla and Greg Rivers' brother, Donny
June 30 – Adriana Barriga's brother, Junior

Discover What SOMS Can Do!

Visit our website and learn the many ways SOMS can help you in your grief journey.

<https://siblingsofmurderedsiblings.org/how-we-help/>

Siblings of Murdered Siblings, Inc.

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