

**A Guide To Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) In Children & Young People**



(21)

**Let Us Help You To Put The Pieces Together!**



**About this Guide**

This document is for anyone who has experienced a traumatic, distressing or disturbing event and aims to provide some education around Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and the effects of PTSD not just on the mind, but the body. This is a quick simple guide and it is not intended to provide all information or to be taken as such.



Hi my name is Sam and I am here to tell you about something called Trauma, and take you through this guide.

**What is a traumatic experience?**

- Something you have experienced or seen that was very upsetting, scary and frightening.
- Something that has threatened or caused danger to you or someone you love.

There is a difference between an event or situation that has been upsetting and sad for us, to one that has been upsetting scary and frightening. This would be called "traumatic".

We can tell the difference in how we feel and behave



## What is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?



This is when a traumatic experience keeps bothering you. Maybe with thoughts when you do not want to think about it, making you feel sad, frightened, angry, or confused by so many feelings. This is normal but it would be good to let someone know so they can help.

## What Does PTSD Feel Like?

Sometimes, when something reminds you of the traumatic event, you might experience some of the symptoms straight away, like an instant reaction that feels out of control. You might feel this as a strong feeling of fear or anger; it might be felt in your body as a physical symptom like a tight chest or shortness of breath. <sup>(21)</sup>



This is a completely normal reaction to upsetting, scary and frightening events.

## The Dinosaur Suit - My Life with PTSD

access to higher mind, logic and rationality

things are relatively OK

access to memory

reptilian brain is calm

cut off from higher mind, logic and rationality

cut off from memories

life and death!

I'm gonna get you!

reptilian brain is overactive

roar!

Before PTSD, I didn't have a Dinosaur Suit.

When I got PTSD, I got a Dinosaur Suit. I didn't know how to take it off.

Grrr! Squeak! Meow! Hiss! Growl!

???

roar?

The Dinosaur Suit feels rage and terror. It sees everything as life or death. It doesn't know how to use language. It speaks "animal."

Now that I am recovering, I can take the Dinosaur Suit off sometimes.

by Heidi Hanson, The Art of Healing Trauma Blog



**Common Symptoms of PTSD by age group.**



**INFANTS**

Are you scared of strangers or when mummy/daddy drops you at playschool?

Do some people or places make you feel scared and not want to go?

Have you trouble sleeping?

Do you find yourself drawn to pictures or objects that are about the event?

Do you repeat the subject of the event in play?



**CHILDREN**

Do you struggle with the order of the event when talking about it?

Do you believe there were warning signs?

Are you reckless in behaviour or do you take risks that could put you in danger?

Have you problems with your self image

Have you found concentrating difficult?

Do play situations, artwork or stories seem to be about the event?



**YOUNG PEOPLE**

Is your behaviour impulsive and dangerous?

Are you not sleeping or having nightmares?

Are your thoughts about revenge?

Do you feel numb?

Are you having troubled thoughts about life?

Re-enactment of event: Are you bringing aspects of the event into daily life?

**What Causes PTSD in Children and Young People?**

There are many different examples of events that can be upsetting, scary and frightening (traumatic); some are in the picture below.



**THE GOOD**

- Moving up a grade
- Graduation
- Getting into the school musical or play
- Meeting new friends
- Having a new boyfriend
- New School
- New Sister or Brother



**THE BAD**

- Too Busy
- Hard Classes
- Moving
- Arguing with brothers or sisters
- A person or group making you do something you dont want to do
- Bad Teacher
- Natural Disasters
- Car Accident



**THE UGLY**

- Family Verbal/Physical Violence
- Someone touched you somewhere you didnt like
- Death of a Family Member
- Divorce
- Bullying
- Internet Grooming

Almost half of all boys and girls will experience a traumatic event, most will feel better after a few weeks but sometimes, a small number of boys and girls will develop PTSD.<sup>(4)</sup>



*PTSD does not compare or compete, BUT PTSD you can beat!*

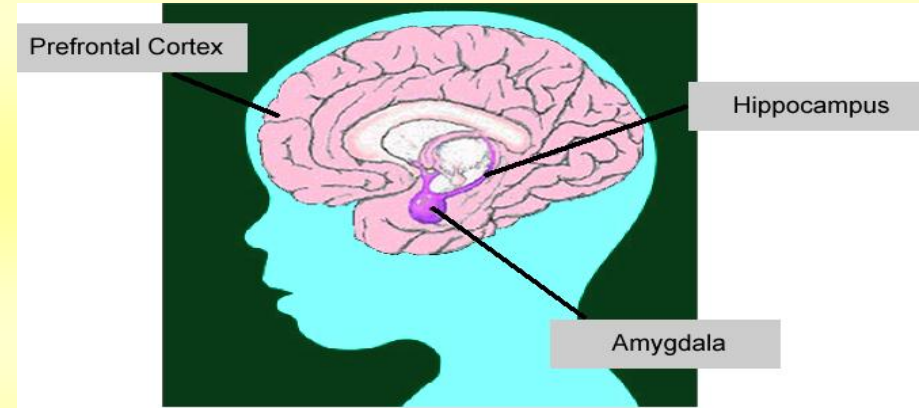
### How does Trauma impact the young mind and body?

- Changes our brain's development effecting this and higher functions of the brain, increasing risk of PTSD in adulthood<sup>(32, 33)</sup>
- Creates a bigger risk of long term illness and disease

The main parts of the brain responsible for our reactions are the

- Amygdala
- Hippocampus
- Prefrontal Cortex

Together these form "**The Limbic System**" controlling our emotional response to a situation. The hippocampus is important for memory



When there is danger, **the amygdala** comes to our rescue, but in doing this it stops talking to **the prefrontal cortex** and information cannot be stored properly by **the hippocampus**. It also instructs our body to release two stress hormones of **cortisol**, to increase our blood sugar, and **adrenalin** to increase our heart rate, so we can react to the dangerous situation.<sup>(34)</sup>

After a traumatic experience the amygdala can become sensitive and can come to the rescue even when there is no danger. This can cause too much of the stress hormones to be released in the body and reduces our ability to manage stress.<sup>(33)</sup>

The amygdala didn't know there was no need to come to the rescue until it was too late and the moments passed. If this keeps happening it can cause many physical symptoms and emotional feelings.



## Diagnosis and Treatment of Children & Young People

### Suffering from PTSD

Your doctor will discuss your symptoms with you, It can be difficult to describe what happened and label your thoughts and feelings; you can use the examples on the next page to help. <sup>(11) (12)</sup>



The doctor will help find the best treatment for you, I have listed some below.

**KIDNET**, <sup>(31)</sup> has been designed for young children like you.

Trauma Focussed **CBT** (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) – another set of big adult words, but don't be worried, this is **adapted** to suit your age group. <sup>(6)</sup>



**EMDR**, stands for Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing, however, someone just like you calls it Eye Moving to Digest and Recover. <sup>(30)</sup> All it means is that

the therapist will ask you to move your eyes in a special way.

Here are some words to help you to describe how you feel

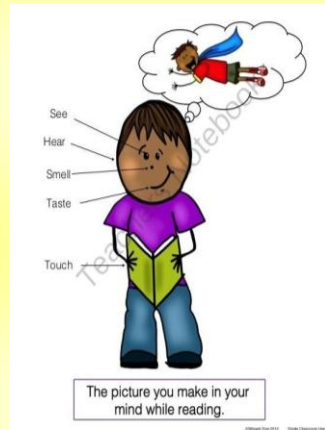
 <p><b>JOY</b></p> <p>JOYFUL INTERESTED PLAYFUL CONFIDENT LOVING SENSITIVE COURAGEOUS HOPEFUL</p>	 <p><b>SADNESS</b></p> <p>SAD BORED SLEEPY UNHAPPY IGNORED GUILTY LONELY ALONE</p>
 <p><b>SURPRISED</b></p> <p>STARTLED CONFUSED AMAZED EXCITED SHOCKED ASTONISHED EAGER DISMAYED</p>	 <p><b>ANGER</b></p> <p>MAD JEALOUS EMBARRASSED FURIOUS IRRITATED WITHDRAWN FRUSTRATED SKEPTICAL</p>
 <p><b>DISGUST</b></p> <p>AWFUL DISAPPOINTED HESITANT REVOLTED LOATHING JUDGEMENTAL</p>	 <p><b>FEAR</b></p> <p>HUMILIATED REJECTED WORTHLESS INSECURE ANXIOUS SCARED</p>
<p><b>HOW ARE YOU FEELING TODAY?</b></p>	

## Ways to Feel Better and Relax

If one doesn't work for you, try another until you find the ones that make you feel good.

**Laugh with friends and family, they can say some funny things!**

**Deep Breathing:** This is a great way to feel better, breath in slowly for a count of three and then breath out for a count of three. Listen to your breathing – and you will find you are becoming calmer and relaxed.



### Visualisation, (Imagining) (27)

Imagine your favourite place or something happy & fun. Imagining colours such as those in a rainbow can also be helpful and can help you to feel more calm and relaxed.



## Listen to Music or Watch a Funny Movie

Listen to your favourite songs to feel better, why not have a dance to help you feel happy. (28)



*Remember.... How you're feeling is a normal reaction to such events, but there is help available to feel better again.*

Child line <a href="http://www.childline.org.uk">www.childline.org.uk</a> 0800 1111 (free)	Child Abuse Survivor Services <a href="http://www.parentsprotect.co.uk">www.parentsprotect.co.uk</a>
NSPCC <a href="http://www.nspcc.org.uk">www.nspcc.org.uk</a> 0808 800 5000 (Help for adults concerned about a child)	Samaritans <a href="http://www.samaritans.org.uk">www.samaritans.org.uk</a>



## Guide for parents, guardians & carers

Your parents, guardians or carers can help by:

- Allowing you to talk about the event at your own speed.
- Reassuring you that your feelings are understandable and normal.
- Letting you have control over some part of the day, so you feel that you have some influence to affect things that happen around you.





## Children Learn What They Live

If children live with **CRITICISM**, they learn to **CONDEMN**.  
If children live with **HOSTILITY**, they learn to **FIGHT**.  
If children live with **FEAR**, they learn to be **APPREHENSIVE**.  
If children live with **PITY**, they learn to feel **SORRY** for themselves.  
If children live with **RIDICULE**, they learn to feel **SHY**.  
If children live with **JEALOUSY**, they learn to feel **ENVY**.  
If children live with **SHAME**, they learn to feel **GUILTY**.  
If children live with **ENCOURAGEMENT**, they learn **CONFIDENCE**.  
If children live with **TOLERANCE**, they learn **PATIENCE**.  
If children live with **PRAISE**, they learn **APPRECIATION**.  
If children live with **ACCEPTANCE**, they learn to **LOVE**.  
If children live with **APPROVAL**, they learn to **LIKE** themselves.  
If children live with **RECOGNITION**, they learn it is good to have a **GOAL**.  
If children live with **SHARING**, they learn **GENEROSITY**.  
If children live with **HONESTY**, they learn **TRUTHFULNESS**.  
If children live with **FAIRNESS**, they learn **JUSTICE**.  
If children live with **KINDNESS** and consideration, they learn **RESPECT**.  
If children live with **SECURITY**, they learn to **HAVE FAITH**  
in themselves and in those about them.  
If children live with **FRIENDLINESS**, they learn the world  
is a **NICE** place in which to live.



Thank you for reading  
this guide, I hope it  
has helped you.

**Goodbye!**

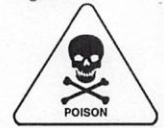
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### The Poisoned Parrot

Imagine you're given a parrot. This parrot is just a parrot - it doesn't have any knowledge, wisdom or insight. It's bird-brained after all. It recites things 'parrot fashion' - without any understanding or comprehension. It's a parrot.



However, this particular parrot is a poisoned and poisonous parrot. It's been specifically trained to be unhelpful to you, continuously commenting on you and your life, in a way that constantly puts you down, criticising you.

For example, the bus gets stuck in a traffic jam, and you arrive at work 5 minutes late. The parrot sits there saying: "There you go again. Late. You just can't manage to get there on time can you. So stupid. If you'd left the house and got the earlier bus you'd have arrived with



loads of time to spare and the boss would be happy. But you? No way. Just can't do it. Useless. Waste of space. Absolutely pathetic!"

How long would you put up with this abuse before throwing a towel over the cage, or getting rid of the parrot?

Yet we can often put up with the thoughts from this internal bully for far too long. Decades. We hear that 'parrot', believe the 'parrot', and naturally get upset. That then affects the way we live our lives - the way we behave towards others, how we are, what we think about others, what we think about the world, and how we think and feel about ourselves.



Who do you think you are..!

We can learn to use the antidote: just notice that parrot, and cover the cage! "There's that parrot again. I don't have to listen to it - it's just a parrot". Then go and do something else. Put your focus of attention on something other than that parrot. This parrot is poison though, and it won't give up easily, so you'll need to keep using that antidote and be persistent in your practice!



Eventually it will get tired of the towel, tired of you not responding. You'll notice it less and less. It might just give up it's poison as your antidote overcomes it, or perhaps fly off to wherever poisoned parrots go.



Adapted from "The Malevolent Parrot" (Kristina Ivings)

[www.getselfhelp.co.uk/esteem.htm](http://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/esteem.htm)

[www.get.gg](http://www.get.gg)

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