

*Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder in detail (do any apply to you?)*

This could be used as your checklist:

## INTRUSION

- ❑ **Flashbacks** – you feel like the trauma is literally **happening all over again**, often with vivid sensory experiences of sound, smell, sight, etc.
  
- ❑ **Intrusive memories** – you get vivid recollections of ‘pieces’ of the traumatic event; you can’t stop thinking about certain aspects of the experience; horror images keep popping into mind as if your brain is stuck there.

- ❑ You might also be unable to recall other important details – your memory has ‘missing pieces’.
- ❑ **Upsetting dreams/nightmares** – your dreams may be like re-living the experience in sleep and may connect to the **arousal cluster** of symptoms, as you wake sweating and terrified; your nightmares may be **worse** than what actually happened, as they may symbolise your worst fears or represent the deepest terror connected to how you felt during the event.
- ❑ **Memory ‘triggers’** – a small occurrence in everyday life, such as a sound, smell, a look on someone’s face or a news broadcast, may set off a chain of memory ‘bits’ and you have intense distress reactions associated with them.
- ❑ **Feeling ‘triggers’** – sometimes referred to as ‘feeling flashbacks’, where being in an anxious/aroused state that resembles feelings experienced during the traumatic event (for example, being squeezed and jostled by the crowd while waiting to get on a train) will trigger reactions such as profound fear, twitching or a sense of utter helplessness that’s an over-the-top response to the current situation.

## AVOIDANCE

- You make serious **efforts to avoid** any thoughts, feelings, persons, activities or locations that could remind you of the trauma, even those very remotely linked to the event.
- You **change your behaviour** so that memories of the trauma won't be triggered.
- You **pull away from others** so that you won't have to explain your reactions: 'I don't have the words to tell you what happened to me.'
- You **avoid social activities** or celebrations, especially if you would be expected to take a lead role or even make general conversation about how things are going for you: 'I'm not the person I was before.'
- You **put off** even short-term **future plans**.

## PERSISTENT NEGATIVE THOUGHT/ MOOD

- You have new and/or **exaggerated negative beliefs** about yourself.
- You **blame yourself** for aspects of the trauma that you could not possibly have foreseen.
- You feel ultra-responsible, or **permanently harmed or changed**.

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- You **doubt your ability** to cope with even simple things that would not have been a problem before.
- You feel **isolated and set apart** from others.
- You **cannot remember important aspects** of the trauma(s) and feel that is your fault.
- You feel **emotionally numb**, and have persistent **difficulty experiencing positive emotions** like satisfaction, happiness or loving feelings, in a way that you didn't before.
- You feel **set apart and detached** from activities or causes that used to be important to you.
- You **dwell on negative aspects** of the world and yourself in an exaggerated way, such as: *'The world is dangerous'*, *'No one can be trusted'*, *'I'm not safe to be around'*.
- You feel **'doomed' or 'jinxed'**.

### AROUSAL

- You feel **keyed-up or 'hyper'** all the time.
- You're uncharacteristically **irritable**; you have angry **outbursts** or outraged confrontations with others, which is not like your normal self.
- You're constantly **scanning for danger** and

you have **extreme startle reactions** when surprised by something trivial.

- You **can't fall asleep** – you're '**afraid**' to **sleep**, and you have difficulty staying asleep or going back to sleep when wakened.
- You have **problems** (not present before the trauma) **maintaining concentration** or focus on tasks.
- You've become **hyper-sensitive to loud/sudden noises**.
- You engage in **reckless** or potentially **self-harming behaviours** or significantly increase **substance abuse**.