

Excerpt from
Diagnostic and Statistical Manual

The diagnostic criteria for PTSD, stipulated in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV (Text Revision) (DSM-IV-TR), may be summarized as:[

A: Exposure to a traumatic event. This must have involved both (a) loss of "physical integrity", or risk of serious injury or death, to self or others, and (b) a response to the event that involved intense fear, horror, or helplessness (or in children, the response must involve disorganized or agitated behavior). (The DSM-IV-TR criterion differs substantially from the previous DSM-III-R stressor criterion, which specified the traumatic event should be of a type that would cause "significant symptoms of distress in almost anyone," and that the event was "outside the range of usual human experience." [81])

B: Persistent re-experiencing. One or more of these must be present in the victim: flashback memories, recurring distressing dreams, subjective re-experiencing of the traumatic event(s), or intense negative psychological or physiological response to any objective or subjective reminder of the traumatic event(s).

C: Persistent avoidance and emotional numbing. This involves a sufficient level of:

- avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma, such as certain thoughts or feelings, or talking about the event(s)
- avoidance of behaviors, places, or people that might lead to distressing memories as well as the disturbing memories, dreams, flashbacks, and intense psychological or physiological distress [18]
- inability to recall major parts of the trauma(s), or decreased involvement in significant life activities
- decreased capacity (down to complete inability) to feel certain feelings
- an expectation that one's future will be somehow constrained in ways not normal to other people.

D: Persistent symptoms of increased arousal not present before. These are all physiological response issues, such as difficulty falling or staying asleep, or problems with anger, concentration, or hypervigilance. Additional symptoms include irritability, angry outbursts, increased startle response, and concentration or sleep problems. [18]

E: Duration of symptoms for more than 1 month. If all other criteria are present, but 30 days have not elapsed, the individual is diagnosed with Acute stress disorder. [18]

F: Significant impairment. The symptoms reported must lead to "clinically significant distress or impairment" of major domains of life activity, such as social relations, occupational activities, or other "important areas of functioning". [82]