



# Navigating Stress

Recognizing Symptoms of Stress, Acute Stress, & PTSD

## Stress

In our normal day-to-day lives we all have some stress such as work deadlines, family quarrels, planning functions, or other activities that may cause us to feel **nervous, excited, worried, anxious, or frustrated**. While each of us may respond differently to stress, for the most part, our minds and bodies can handle the normal stressors (things that we identify as causing stress). A small amount of stress can even be positive because it can move us into action to address our stressors and move our energy into action.



## Acute Stress

In extreme situations, external stressors may cause us to have acute stress. The loss of a loved one, loss of a job, incidents of harassment, discrimination, violent crime, or other situations outside of our control are examples of severe external stressors. After experiencing one or several severe external stressors, it is important to recognize when our mind and body is unable to cope with the higher levels of stress.

The symptoms include:

- **Difficulty concentrating** - can't complete tasks at work, at school, or even follow conversations with families or friends
- **Feeling detached from their body** - it might feel like one is looking at their body from outside of themselves
- **Feeling like they are in a dream**, that nothing is real
- **Difficulty in remembering details** of the traumatic event

## Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

PTSD is often associated with veterans who have served in wars and have experienced situations in which their lives have been in danger. PTSD has also been prevalent in survivors of car accidents, survivors of violent crimes, and others who have survived near death situations. The traumatic event can either be one-time or a series of violent incidents. In addition to experiencing some of the symptoms of acute stress, the following additional symptoms occur:

- **Flashback**- the dangerous event is experienced over and over - it might feel like the rewind button on a video is playing back the same event and then the event rewinds and starts again
- Your body and emotions respond as they did at the time of the event- racing heart, shortness of breath, feeling fear, anger, helplessness, or other emotions experienced at that moment
- Similar sights or sounds that occurred at the time of the traumatic event cause one to have a flashback
- Avoiding places, people, or situations that remind one of the traumatic event
- Fear of losing friends and family members and not wanting to physically be away from them
- One's body is "on alert" all the time- can't sleep, irritable, poor concentration, always aware of what or who is around you, overreacting to things that startle you or to little things that didn't used to bother you

## Physical Symptoms

In all types of stress, the body can react with increased physical symptoms such as: **headaches, stomachaches, tightness in chest, and digestive problems.**

