



C-PTSD



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Listen Believe Support & Empower

What is C-PTSD?

C-PTSD is short for Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder although this is also sometimes referred to as 'Complex Trauma Disorder'. As the name suggests, it is very similar to PTSD – though its causes can be more... complex!

If you think you might be suffering with C-PTSD, it may be worth speaking with your doctor (GP) to discuss your options. This diagnosis needs to be made by a specialist such as a psychiatrist.

What causes C-PTSD?

Like PTSD, Complex PTSD occurs as the result of trauma, however, unlike PTSD this usually develops as the result of trauma experienced repeatedly or over an extended period of time. You are also more likely to develop C-PTSD if you experience trauma at an early age, particularly from someone close to you, or if you experienced multiple or varied traumas. In other words, this develops with chronic trauma.

Some known causes of C-PTSD are:

- Childhood abuse (emotional, physical, or sexual)
- Neglect
- Repeatedly witnessing violence or domestic abuse
- Bullying
- Being a victim of kidnap or slavery
- Being a prisoner of war

What are the symptoms of C-PTSD?

Many of the symptoms of Complex PTSD overlap with those of PTSD, such as Dissociation (where we experience a detachment from our emotions or body), Avoidance (where we avoid thinking about our experience, talking about it, or going back to the place our trauma started) and being 'jumpy'. People suffering with C-PTSD may also hold a very negative and persistent view of themselves and the world. For instance: they might feel as though they're worthless and carry with them a very deep sense of shame; they may also have a deep distrust of others and feel as though the whole world is against them.

As a result of trauma, the individual may find it hard to control their emotional responses to certain situations. In other words they may experience emotions much more intensely than a person without C-PTSD (the feelings often being considered disproportionate to the triggering event), and it may take them much more effort to bring their feelings back under control. This is sometimes referred to as Emotional Dysregulation (ED). ED can also be symptomatic of other mental health problems such as Borderline Personality Disorder. The deep feelings of mistrust and shame, as well as experiencing very intense emotions often takes its toll on relationships for those with C-PTSD.

As with PTSD, C-PTSD may also be present alongside other mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, or personality disorders.

How is C-PTSD treated?

The treatments for C-PTSD are essentially the same as for PTSD:

- Talking therapies
- CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy)
- EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing therapy)

However, the course of treatment may last substantially longer than with PTSD.

Further Reading

If you're suffering with C-PTSD, you might also want to read our guides on PTSD, breathing techniques, distraction and grounding techniques, meditation and mindfulness, and dissociation.