

PTSD Triggers: Definitions, Examples, and Treatment

Learn how to identify PTSD triggers and minimize their impact on your mental health. Heroes' Mile offers PTSD treatment for veterans in Florida.

It can happen on a perfectly normal day. Someone walks around outside when, suddenly, they hear a car backfire. The sound, like other PTSD triggers, stirs up past feelings and intrusive memories of a traumatic event. In the next moments, that person is plunged into a state of anxiety or panic.

PTSD triggers such as these can be difficult to predict. As a result, someone may not want to engage in life around them, preferring to avoid the risk of encountering a trigger. However, it is important to recognize that PTSD and its symptoms can be managed, and even if triggering events can't always be predicted, there are still many ways to prepare for them.

What Is PTSD?

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that may emerge after experiencing a traumatic incident. The majority of people experience a traumatic event at some point in their lives, but only a few will live with long-lasting effects of it.

Sexual assault, car accidents, childhood abuse, and being threatened with a weapon are all examples of traumatic events that could lead to PTSD. [Roughly one third of individuals](#) who live through experiences such as these will develop PTSD afterward, and those who do must learn to identify and manage their PTSD triggers.

Why some people develop PTSD while others don't is not understood in its entirety. However, research suggests a number of factors could be responsible, including genetics and other, pre-existing mental health conditions.

When someone has PTSD, it's as though their body did not fully or correctly process the traumatic event. They can become stuck in the physical response known as "fight or flight," with any reminders of the incident causing adrenaline spikes and other adverse symptoms.

For example, PTSD symptoms [may also include](#):

- Flashbacks
- Recurring thoughts of the traumatic event
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Irritability
- Feelings of isolation

- Loss of interest in hobbies or activities
- Persistent feelings of fear, shame, anger, or guilt
- Negative thoughts about oneself

When these symptoms persist well after the traumatic incident has ended, someone may be experiencing PTSD.

Veterans and PTSD

Recent data suggests that [at least one in ten veterans](#) will be diagnosed with PTSD. This is a substantially higher number than those seen in civilians, but there are clear reasons as to why.

For example, experiences specific to veterans, such as combat exposure, training accidents, and [military sexual trauma](#), contribute to their higher rates of PTSD. In addition, these distinct challenges can result in unique PTSD triggers.

What Are PTSD Triggers?

When traumatic events occur, the brain processes it as best as it can. However, this can include [attaching certain details to the memory](#) in a way that makes it difficult for them to be associated with anything else.

Because of this, certain stimuli can suddenly remind someone with PTSD of their trauma memories. More than just thinking about the past, though, they may experience full panic attacks and other physical symptoms. These events are known as PTSD triggers.

Different types of triggers can include:

- **Sounds.** Sounds similar to those that occurred during a traumatic event can trigger someone. For veterans, loud noises such as fireworks or slamming doors are particularly common triggers.
- **Smells.** Certain scents have been known to elicit memories more strongly than other senses. For those with PTSD, smells like smoke and burning rubber may evoke trauma memories.
- **Anniversaries.** Specific dates can remind someone of the day a traumatic incident occurred. This awareness may cause them to fixate on the event more than usual.
- **Locations.** Places associated with traumatic events can trigger anxiety. These can be specific locations or more general, such as inside a car, tunnel, or in an open field.
- **People.** Whether a fellow witness or the perpetrator of someone's trauma, being around certain individuals who were involved in the incident may induce anxiety.
- **Feelings.** Certain feelings, like sadness, fear, or anger, can put someone in a similar headspace as they were during a traumatic event. These feelings can spiral further into trauma-induced episodes.

Due to the subtle or mundane natures of some PTSD triggers, it can be challenging for someone to identify the exact situations that aggravate their symptoms. Similarly, the effect they may have on someone often varies between individuals. Some people respond with [anxiety or panic](#), while others become aggressive or defensive.

Coping Strategies for PTSD

!Things you can do at home [coping strategies](#)

PTSD Treatment

At-home coping strategies provide an excellent, foundational level of support for those living with PTSD. That being said, some individuals may find that they need additional, professional help to achieve their long-term recovery goals.

Seeking PTSD treatment does not mean someone is weak. In fact, knowing when to ask for help is one of the strongest traits someone can have. It's wise to utilize the tools around you to maximize your recovery, not only for your own sake, but for your family, friends, and community as well.

Treatment Programs

The treatment programs available at Heroes' Mile are designed to help veterans with substance abuse disorders. This matters in the context of PTSD treatment because almost half of individuals with PTSD [meet the criteria for substance use disorder](#) as well. It is important to seek treatment for both to have the best chance of recovering in full.

Heroes' Mile offers a [residential rehab program](#) as well as an intensive [outpatient program](#). Residential care is often best for people with severe addiction or whose home environments aren't conducive to recovery. An outpatient program may work better for those with less severe symptoms or calm, supportive home lives.

Both programs consist of numerous evidence-based treatment options and can be tailored to suit any individual's unique needs. Many of these treatment options can help someone learn to manage PTSD triggers.

Some of our therapeutic activities include:

- [Individual therapy](#)
- [Group therapy](#)
- [Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing \(EMDR\) therapy](#)
- [Cognitive behavioral therapy](#)
- [12-step programs](#)

These treatment options teach crucial coping skills that help people minimize the impact of addiction symptoms and PTSD triggers on their everyday lives.

The Heroes' Mile Difference

Trauma-informed care in behavioral health services can be difficult to find on the level that veterans need. However, Heroes' Mile removes the need for questions like, "Will I be understood?" or "[Can they really relate to me?](#)"

Heroes' Mile is an addiction rehab center with treatment programs developed for veterans by veterans. By providing a safe, healing space exclusively for veterans, we give people the chance to connect with others who know what they're going through. Shared experiences, even when traumatic in nature, forge deep bonds that can support you throughout your recovery journey.

Peers and staff at civilian treatment centers may struggle to relate to certain veteran experiences. At Heroes' Mile, however, that is far from the case. Here, everyone carries personal insight into the unique struggles of veterans. They can discuss those thoughts and feelings openly without fear of alienation.

If you're ready to seek PTSD treatment and improve your mental health, contact Heroes' Mile. You can call our admissions team at [888-838-6692](tel:888-838-6692) or submit a [confidential contact form](#). With our flexible, trauma-informed care, we can help you manage PTSD triggers and recover from substance abuse.