

TRAUMA IN THE TERROR AGE
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1. Defining trauma

Trauma is an emotional reaction that people experience in response to a drastic event that poses a threat to a person's life, like an accident, a natural disaster, a war, the loss of a family member, an act of terrorism, ... A very important characteristic of trauma is the *feeling of helplessness, intense fear or disgust* while undergoing the event...

2. Defining PTSD

A minority of people who undergo a trauma are not able to carry on anymore with their lives. They develop severe symptoms of mental un-wellbeing and are in dire need of adequate treatment. This condition is called *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*...

3. Understanding the time frame for developing PTSD

PTSD is thought to occur right after a trauma, but in practice often develops within a time frame of a few months until even a few years after the traumatic happening...

4. Understanding why not every traumatic experience leads to PTSD

Typically, in situations where entire groups or families have been exposed to the exact same trauma, every member will show a different reaction. One of the most extreme differences that may occur is that some might develop PTSD and other not...

Some of the mechanisms may seem counterintuitive and hence explain why people can get stuck after a seemingly not so dramatic trauma, while others will not develop PTSD after experiencing a very gruesome event...

5. Preventive interventions

Research has shown that some preventive interventions can actually reduce the likelihood of trauma turning into PTSD...

6. **Treatments that have proven to be effective**

According to the specific circumstances and fit with the person, ***CBT, EMDR and psychoanalytic techniques*** are most often used, sometimes in combination with medication. The underlying ideas of non-medicinal techniques are quite similar: identifying potential cognitive distortions that stand in the way of processing the event, rewriting the script of what happened, enabling the venting of suppressed extremely negative emotions towards the inflictor of the trauma, ...

7. **Secondary traumatization**

The question whether people can be traumatized by exposure to the traumatic story of significant others has been the object of a lot of controversy. As late as 2014, the concept of ***secondary traumatization*** has been recognized.

Another way secondary traumatization can occur is through attachment difficulties...

8. **Formulating hypotheses for residual categories that do not fit any of the above criteria**

Sometimes people who don't seem to have undergone any trauma and who don't fit any criteria for primary or secondary PTSD or even sub-threshold PTSD, may develop some symptoms of psychological un-wellbeing, mostly anxieties, that relate to some kind of external trauma to them...