Danger causes strong feelings.

- It's normal for people who live through a shocking event to have stressful feelings.
- They may feel scared, sad, angry or numb after the event is over.
- In time, the feelings fade. People move on with their lives.

Sometimes these feelings don't go away.

- For some people, the strong feelings don't go away. The feelings keep them from doing the things they used to do.
- This is called post-traumatic stress disorder (post trau-MAT-ic stress dis-OR-der), PTSD or just "stress disorder."
- Stress disorder is an illness. It can be mild. Or it can be very serious.
- In both cases, a person can get treatment to feel better.

Who gets post traumatic stress disorder?

People who live through an event that puts them in danger may get stress disorder.

You might get stress disorder if:

- You've been in combat.
- You've been raped, robbed or beaten.
- You survived an airplane or car crash.
- You were in an earthquake, tornado, flood or hurricane.

You don't have to be in danger yourself. You might get stress disorder if:

- You see a shocking event or help save people after an event.
- A friend or family member is a victim.

Some people show signs of stress disorder right away. Other people may have feelings come up years later.
Why get treated?

Stress disorder can cause problems if a person doesn’t get help.
- The feelings can get worse over time.
- Without treatment, a person might:
  - Use alcohol or other drugs to try to stop the feelings.
  - Become depressed.
  - Not be able do daily tasks.
  - Pull away from family and friends.
  - Lose his or her job or home.
- People who don’t get treated are more likely to kill themselves.

How is stress disorder treated?

- **Talk therapy.** You tell a counselor you trust about the event and your feelings. You learn skills to help you accept and cope with what happened.
- **Group therapy.** You talk about the event and your feelings with a counselor and others who have stress disorder.
- **Medicines.** You take medicine to relieve symptoms. It may take a few weeks for the medicine to work.

If you are using alcohol or other drugs to cope, or if you are depressed, you may need other treatments too.

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4 Things You Can Do

- Know that stress disorder is an illness.
- Find a counselor you trust.
- Choose a treatment plan and stick with it.
- Let family and friends know how they can help.

Stress disorder can be treated. You can get help to feel better.

To Learn More

National Institute of Mental Health
1-800-421-4211
www.nimh.nih.gov

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Could you have stress disorder?

Not everyone who lives through a scary event gets stress disorder. But many people do.

Check the box if you’ve had this sign for more than a month.

- [ ] You feel like the event keeps happening and can’t stop thinking about it.
- [ ] You have nightmares or trouble sleeping.
- [ ] You feel jumpy, angry or tense much of the time.
- [ ] You feel confused, sad or violent.
- [ ] You feel guilty that you lived when others died.
- [ ] You have trouble trusting people.
- [ ] You have headaches or chest pain, or feel dizzy.

If you checked some of these boxes, you could have stress disorder. Tell your doctor.

There are many ways to treat stress disorder. Your doctor will help you choose based on your symptoms.