

## **Criteria for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder**

### **DSM-5 (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*)**

Full copyrighted criteria are available from the American Psychiatric Association. All of the criteria are required for the diagnosis of PTSD. The following is a summary:

**Criterion A (one required):** The person was exposed to: death, threatened death, actual or threatened serious injury, or actual or threatened sexual violence, in the following way(s):

- Direct experience
- Witnessing the traumatic event as it happened to others
- Learning that a relative or close friend was exposed to a trauma
- Indirect exposure to aversive details of the trauma, usually in the course of professional duties (e.g., first responders, medics)

**Criterion B (one required):** The traumatic event is persistently re-experienced, in the following way(s):

- Unwanted upsetting memories
- Nightmares
- Flashbacks
- Emotional distress after exposure to reminders of the traumatic event
- Physiological reactions to reminders of the traumatic event (e.g. heart racing, shortness of breath)

**Criterion C (one required):** Avoidance of trauma-related stimuli in the following way(s):

- Avoidance of trauma-related thoughts, feelings, or memories
- Avoidance of reminders of the traumatic event

**Criterion D (two required):** Negative thoughts or feelings that began or worsened after the trauma, in the following way(s):

- Inability to recall key features of the trauma
- Overly negative thoughts and assumptions about oneself or the world (e.g. "I am bad," "The world is a terrible, dangerous place," "People can't ever be trusted.")
- Exaggerated blame of self or others for causing the trauma
- Persistent negative emotions (e.g. fear, horror, shame, guilt, or anger)
- Decreased interest in activities
- Feeling isolated
- Difficulty experiencing positive feelings (e.g. happiness, satisfaction, loving feelings)

**Criterion E (two required):** Trauma-related physiological arousal and reactivity that began or worsened after the trauma, in the following way(s):

- Irritability or angry outbursts
- Risky or destructive behavior
- Hypervigilance
- Heightened startle reaction
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty sleeping

**Criterion F (required):** Symptoms last for more than 1 month.

**Criterion G (required):** Symptoms create distress or affect the person's ability to function at home, socially, or at work

**Criterion H (required):** Symptoms are not due to medication, substance use, or other illness or injury

American Psychiatric Association. (2013) Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders, (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.