

Educational Implications

The severity and persistence of symptoms vary greatly among children affected by PTSD. Their symptoms may come and go for no apparent reason, and their mood may change drastically. Such variability can create a perception that there are no explanations for behavior or that they are unpredictable, making it difficult for teachers to respond with helpful interventions. Children with PTSD will often regress. They may act younger than their age, which can result in increased emotional and behavioral problems. They may become clingy, whiny, impatient, impulsive, and/or aggressive. They may be unable to perform previously acquired skills, even basic functions like speech. Their capacity for learning may be decreased. They often have difficulty concentrating, are preoccupied, and become easily confused. They may lose interest in activities, become quiet and/or sad, and avoid interaction with other children.

Resources

National Center for PTSD

VA Medical Center

White River Junction, VT 05009

802-296-5132

www.ncptsd.org

Links to interdisciplinary index database, publications, books, research quarterly, clinical quarterly, assessment instruments

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)

Office of Communications

6001 Executive Boulevard Room 8184

MSC 9663

Bethesda, MD 20892-9663

866-615-6464

www.nimh.nih.gov

Free educational materials for professionals and the public

PTSD Alliance

www.ptsdalliance.org

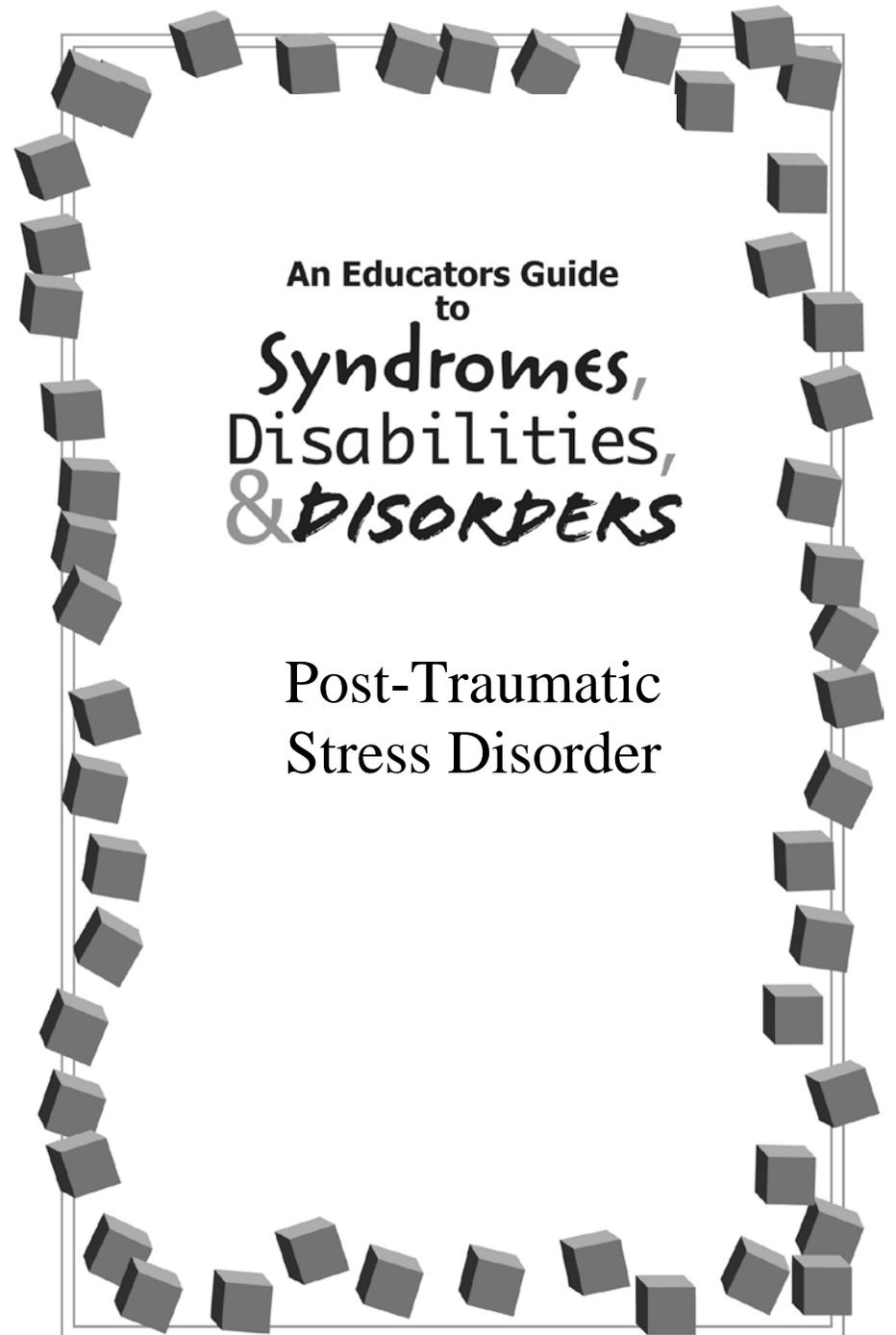
SAMHSA'S National Mental Health Information Center—Center for Mental Health Services

PO Box 42557

Washington, DC 20015

800-789-2647

www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov



Symptoms or Behaviors

- Flashbacks, hallucinations, nightmares, recollections, re-enactment, or repetitive play referencing the event
- Emotional distress from reminders of the event
- Physical reactions from reminders of the event, including headache, stomachache, dizziness, or discomfort in another part of the body
- Fear of certain places, things, or situations that remind them of the event
- Denial of the event or inability to recall an important aspect of it
- A sense of a foreshortened future
- Difficulty concentrating and easily startled
- Self-destructive behavior
- Irritability
- Impulsiveness
- Anger and hostility
- Depression and overwhelming sadness or hopelessness

Instructional Strategies and Classroom Accommodations

- Try to establish a feeling of safety and acceptance within the classroom. Greet the child warmly each day, make eye contact, and let the child know that he/she is valued and that you care. You can make a tremendous impact on a child by what you say (or don't say); a child's self-perception often comes from the action of others.
- Don't hesitate to interrupt activities and avoid circumstances that are upsetting or retraumatizing for the child. Watch for increased symptoms during or following certain situations, and try to prevent these situations from being repeated.

- Provide a consistent, predictable routine through each day as much as possible. A regular pattern will help re-establish and maintain a sense of normalcy and security in the child's life. If the schedule does change, try to explain beforehand what will be different and why. Consistency shows children that you have control of the situation; they may become anxious if they sense that you are disorganized or confused. However, allow children choices within this pattern wherever possible. This will give them some sense of control and help to build self-confidence.
- Try to eliminate stressful situations from your classroom and routines: make sure your room arrangement is simple and easy to move through; create a balance of noisy versus quiet activity areas and clearly define them; and plan your day or class period so that it alternates between active and quiet activities (being forced to maintain the same level of activity for too long may cause the child to become restless and anxious).
- Make yourself available and open to listening, remembering to always respect the child's need for confidentiality.
- Do not tell a child to forget about the incident. PTSD symptoms may be a result of trying to do just that. This request also minimizes the importance of the trauma, and children may feel a sense of failure if they can't forget.
- Reassure children that their symptoms and behaviors are a common response to a trauma and they are not "crazy" or bad.
- Incorporate large muscle activities into the day. Short breaks involving skipping; jumping, stretching, or other simple exercises can help relieve anxiety and restlessness. For young children, you can also use games like London Bridge or Ring around the Rosy.